

Buying a Digital Camera? Understand the Basics and Find the Best Equipment For Your Needs

It seems like everyone has a digital camera these days and digital cameras have revived the art of photography as a hobby. As digital camera manufacturers improve equipment in quality and price, more people are embracing the benefits of digital photography and putting their film cameras on the shelf. If you're looking to make the move to a digital understanding the basics of a digital camera can help guide you through understanding how the differences and similarities with film cameras can provide you with a digital camera that fits your needs.

My first digital camera has a 640 by 480 pixel resolution and saved images to floppy disks. It was a little clunky, but it worked well and I was happy with the results. Today, the quality of that camera would barely qualify as a web cam for some people. The technology curve continues to move along for digital cameras but today most digital cameras should be able to provide you with a simple "point and click" experience and provide enough resolution to print 4 by 6 inch prints that you'll be happy to archive in a scrapbook.

The resolution of most digital cameras is measured today in "mega pixels." This is a measure of the number of dots which are available to digitally describe the image as a computer file. A digital camera with a 3.1 mega pixel resolution is usually enough to produce pictures that look like a film print on a 4 by 6 print. Moving up to a digital camera with a 5.1 mega pixel resolution will provide a sharper image at the same print size. Can everyone tell the difference? No they can't. When shopping for a camera, don't be mesmerized by claims that you must have the very highest resolution to be happy with your digital pictures. Look at samples and select the camera that meets your price range and quality desires.

Generally, digital cameras with a resolution lower than 1 mega pixel are good for images you plan on emailing to people, or posting on the web, but the resolution is not high enough for quality prints. If you plan on making film-style prints of your pictures, you should make your minimum 3.1 mega pixels.

The next issue with digital cameras is how it gets the electricity it needs to function. Many cameras today use rechargeable batteries but some still use AA size batteries. If you plan on taking lots of pictures, a camera that uses disposable batteries can become a very expensive camera, but if the camera has a rechargeable battery with a short life between charges, you might find yourself without power when a great photo opportunity presents itself or you may be stuck buying an extra, and often expensive, rechargeable battery which is custom designed to only fit that specific camera. When you have made your short list of digital cameras meeting your quality requirements, be sure to compare battery life statistics from the manufacturer.

As with film cameras, most digital cameras have automatic settings that adjust to provide a "point and shoot" experience. Some cameras also have manual settings which mimic advanced film camera settings such as aperture and exposure. Digital cameras often have additional features which allow for special effects and even picture taking in very low light settings. These features may or may not be important to you in a digital camera. How often did you load black and white film in your film camera? Chances are these nice-to-have features are not a high priority for most digital camera owners.

Most of the digital cameras feature an LCD view screen. This lets you shoot the image perfectly and then to check it. and is probably one of the most appreciated features of a digital camera over a film camera. The LCD does use up electricity though and by turning your camera off when you are not shooting pictures will preserve battery life.

Most digital cameras use a removable memory card on which pictures are stored. If you have a computer with a built-in reader of a memory card, checking to see if the digital camera uses a compatible type of memory card can make it much easier for you to transfer images to your PC and reduce the expense of a separate memory card reader. If your digital camera comes with a data transfer cable, keep in mind that the memory card readers are usually much faster and provide greater flexibility. It's best to keep the data transfer cable in the box.

Overall, most digital camera manufacturers have done an excellent job in making the transition from film cameras to digital cameras a painless one. By knowing some small details about the minor differences, you should have no problem finding a digital camera that you will enjoy and use frequently.

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About the Author

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