

Choosing the **BEST DIGITAL CAMERA** for **YOU**

A Guide
by Ingrid Owens of
Camera*Shy*



Welcome to a guide for choosing the Best Digital Camera for You.

About the Author

I'm Ingrid Owens, a native of Monaghan, Ireland and I've been involved in the photographic industry for more than 25 years. While living in Ireland I managed my family's photographic business "Diamond Imaging" which is where I began teaching digital photography in 2000. My experience in dealing with customers on a daily basis has given me a unique insight into what people really want to learn about digital photography. I have earned the reputation of being able to relate this information in a clear, easy to understand way.

I moved to Atlanta, USA in 2006 and started my own private photography instruction business - CameraShy, where I bring my teaching into your home in a relaxed and friendly manner. My classes are fun, informative and my teaching style is clear and concise.

In 2009 I brought my instruction online with my **Beginners Photography Blog** providing tips, videos and techniques to beginners in photography. I also teach a variety of **online photography classes** and mentor and coach students who want to turn their photography into a profitable business.

Why I wrote this guide...

Although most people have now jumped on board and own some type of digital camera, I still get asked every single day what camera would I recommend.

I take the same attitude now as I did when I was working behind the counter – there isn't any one particular camera that is suitable for everyone. In order for you to figure out what digital camera you need to buy, I believe that there are several things that you need to ask yourself before you make your purchase. This guide will help you answer these questions.

Some of you will already know the things you want because your old camera has let you down in these areas. Or you may have seen features on a friend's camera that you would like. Some of you will have been using your mobile phone camera and now want something that will give you more control. Others are transitioning from a compact to a DSLR. And others will be making the move to digital for the very first time.

**Whoever you are -
don't worry! I can help you!**

Use this guide to figure out what it is that is important to you and you'll be able to wade through the choices, wherever you choose to buy. I will of course include some of my favorite picks which you should definitely take a look at, however choosing a camera is a very personal thing so feel free to move away from my recommendations as you see fit.

Good luck with your search!

Ingrid Owens

*Your Personal
Photography Instructor*

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*A must Read for anyone
who wants to improve their
photographic skills or those who
just want to know how to get the
most out of their camera.*

Questions to ask yourself...

What kind of photographs do I like to take?

This has to be the first question you ask yourself when thinking about buying a new digital camera. Not everyone wants their camera to perform the same tasks and I am a firm believer on matching the camera to the user so, with that said, think about what it is that you most like to photograph.

- ☛ **Do you consider yourself just a snap-shooter who just takes the camera out for family events, kids parties or vacations?**

If so, then a basic point and shoot model may be all you need.

- ☛ **Perhaps you like to take photos of sporting events, even your kid's softball games?**

In this case, a telephoto zoom lens and a fast shutter speed are important.

- ☛ **Do you love to travel?**

Do you mind lugging about a large camera or do you want to be able to fit it in your shirt pocket?

- ☛ **Do you love to photograph nature and the great outdoors?**

If this is case a good macro mode is one of the most important features you need.

A lot of questions! In most cases, people want to do a little of all of the above so your choice is about getting the right combination of features that suits your needs at the right price.

What it is that you most like to photograph?



The Right combination of features that suits your needs at the Right price

Size matters!

Now you've given a little thought about your expectations of what you want your camera to be able to do, you can begin to narrow your choice down to one of three types of camera:

	Compact	Mirrorless	DSLR
PROS	Easy to Use Small Cheap	Lightweight Easy to Carry Full Manual Mode	Best Picture Quality Most Creative Control
CONS	Picture quality not as good Limited creative control	Expensive	Can be confusing to operate Bulkier cameras Expensive

① Compact

- These are the smallest camera models
- Very compact
E.g. [Canon Powershot Elph 130 IS](#)
- Fit easily into your pocket or purse
- Great for snap-shooters
- Have some modes but Auto is the dominant feature of these cameras.

A word about budget

It's important to think about how much you are able to spend on your camera before you go to shop. Digital camera prices have stabilized in the past two/three years and you no longer need to worry about paying over the odds for something that next year is going to be rock bottom price. If you are buying from a reputable source you can be confident that you are not getting an over inflated price.

② Mirrorless

- Very small, and lightweight cameras with removable lenses
e.g [Olympus OM-D M5 Mark ii](#)
- The Micro 4/3 system has been developed with brand new technology
- Great for travel photography or for anyone who doesn't want the hassle of a large DSLR camera
- Wide variety of lenses and accessories now available.

③ DSLR (Digital Single Lens Reflex)

- Designed for those who want to have the maximum creativity options. E.g. [Canon EOS/Rebel T6i](#)
- Entry level models can be used in full Auto, Semi-Auto or Fully Manual modes
- Can add different lenses for various shooting effects
- The functions can be overwhelming but you can take your time and learn them at your own pace, using auto while you learn.
- Provide the best quality images.

What features do I really need and why?

When it comes to features cameras these days are bursting with them. But which ones do you really need? In my opinion there are some features that are crucial for most people.

Mega Pixels – How Many?

When digital photography was just in its infancy, we were all obsessed with getting more and more mega pixels squeezed into our cameras. Every year we saw camera manufacturers come out with increasing numbers of mega pixels and we boasted to our friends about how many mega pixels our little compact had. Thankfully that race is now over. This is largely due to the fact that most people never print their pictures any larger than a 10" x 8" size and therefore any higher pixels more than, say 8 million, are wasted. Also the quality of most digital cameras is now equal to the quality of 35mm film and therefore we are happy. Hurray!

The quality of your picture will be determined by the quality of your lens

The Lens – The heart of the camera.

The most important part of any camera in my opinion is the lens. At the end of the day the quality of your picture will be determined by the quality of your lens. If your camera has a cheap plastic lens then the pictures will only be of fair quality. If you choose instead something that has high quality optics the results will be far superior. The major camera manufacturers such as Canon, Nikon, Olympus and Fuji all use high quality optics in their camera lenses and these guys have been making cameras for a long time so they know their stuff. You really can't surpass them in terms of quality.

So what types of lenses are out there?

Very basically there are two types of lenses on digital cameras:

- optical zoom lenses
- wide-angle lenses

Zoom Lens

In order to have the most flexibility when it comes to taking pictures, most people need to have a zoom lens. This will allow you to get closer to the action without having to physically move closer. There are also added effects that you can get from using a zoom lens such as decreasing your DOF (Depth of Field) which is of interest to people who want to take portrait shots with a blurred out background.

The size of the zoom is indicated by the magnification e.g. x3 is a 3 times Optical Zoom, that is using this zoom brings you three times closer to your subject. Other popular zooms are x5 and x10 and x12.

- The larger the zoom, the more expensive and also the more bulk your camera will have in order to accommodate the larger zoom lens.
- Subcompact cameras can usually only accommodate a x3 times optical zoom.

Wide-angle Lens

If you take a lot of landscape, travel or large group photography you might want to consider something with a wide-angle lens. This is the opposite to a zoom lens, allowing you to fit more width of your scene in without having to back up. This is really popular with realtors and estate agents who are trying to take photos in a tight spot. [Panasonic Lumix DMC-ZS7](#)

- Digital cameras with wide-angle settings are usually more expensive as these types of lenses are more costly to produce.
- They are found in compact cameras or you can buy an additional add on wide-angle lens for your DSLR.

Image Stabilization (IS)

We are starting to see many cameras now have this feature and it really is a must if you use your telephoto zoom lens a lot or if you shoot in low light conditions. Image stabilization helps to get rid of any camera shake that may be caused by the action of pressing the shutter button which is accentuated in low lighting situations or you're your zoom fully extended. Look for IS after the model number

e.g. **Canon Powershot SX30 IS**

Face Detection

This mode actually can pick out faces in the scene to make sure your focus is locked in on the people in the shot. This is a really clever feature and is especially good for group shots. Some cameras even boast a blink alert feature, which lets you know if someone in your shot has closed their eyes so that you can retake your picture.

The Creative Modes

Landscape Mode

Landscape mode is a great automatic mode that really enhances any landscape photography you do. Landscape photography includes any outside scenic shots. It firstly ensures that your focus is set to infinity so that your entire image is in focus. Secondly it applies a digital filter to your image so that the greens and blues are more pronounced and really pop! There are also many variations on this mode including sunset mode that enhances reds and yellows or foliage mode, which enhances greens.

Portrait Mode

Use portrait mode when you are shooting a photo of one person on his or her own, usually from the waist up. This mode enhances the blurry background behind your subject or bokeh to give it the correct term. This means that your subject will really stand out from the background and it creates quite a dramatic effect. Portrait mode also softens skin tone and gives the finished photo a softer, more flattering look.

Sports Mode

Sports mode is a must for anyone who loves to shoot sports events, racing or anything with a fast moving subject. This includes your kids running around the playground or Fido at the dog park. This mode freezes action and allows you to shoot continuously with your finger held on the shutter button.

Macro Mode

Macro mode allows you to focus your camera at an extremely close distance to your subject allowing you to photograph tiny objects such as insects on flowers, coins or jewels. This mode is crucial if you love taking flower shots or photographing anything very small. The result is a picture where in your subject will end up being larger than life.

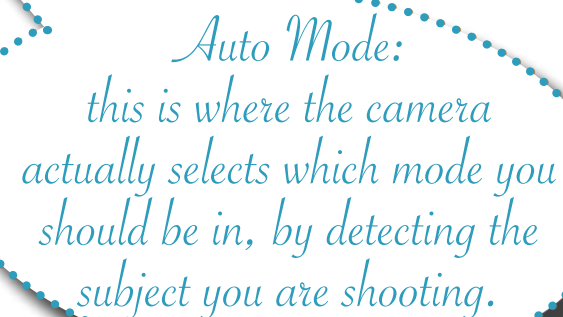
Different cameras have different macro settings ranging from 0.5 – 2 cms in distance. The smaller the distance, the closer you can focus on your subject.

Movie Mode

All cameras now have this feature, which allows you to capture moving images or movies. The quality of the movie depends on the individual camera model and you will pay more for a higher resolution movie capability. Also, bear in mind that this mode will gobble up all of your memory card extremely fast, as movies are very memory hungry.

WiFi

Most new compact, mirror less and DSLR cameras all come with Wifi as standard making uploading your images to your computer, the cloud or social media sites a breeze. Wifi of course does away with the need to connect via USB cables and once you get it set up it works very easily. Some cameras also have apps available for mobile devices which connect with the camera's wifi and do lots of really fun things such as acting as a remote for your camera, an external screen & full camera control.



*Auto Mode:
this is where the camera
actually selects which mode you
should be in, by detecting the
subject you are shooting.*

Other considerations...

Batteries

All digital cameras require some sort of battery to power them and considering they have an LCD screen and microprocessor, they are energy hungry. Hence batteries are very important. My personal opinion is to buy a camera with a Nickel Metal Hydride Rechargeable battery, which will come along with the recharger, kitted with the camera. These batteries charge quickly and last a long time. Some cameras still use AA type batteries. If this is the case, do not waste your time with alkaline AA batteries and opt instead for single use lithium batteries e.g. **Energizer e2**. The plus side of these type of cameras is that if you run out of batteries while shooting on location you can just pop in a new set without having to charge them up first. However, this does become expensive after a while with each pack costing around \$20 each. Stay away from any camera that runs off AAA batteries. They simply don't have the power to run for any time worth taking about.

Size of Screen

Nearly all Compact and Sub-Compact camera now have a fairly decent size screen (at least 2 inches.) A bigger screen is something that you will pay more for but they really do look impressive, are easy to use and make reviewing your pictures a breeze. Watch out for big screens that compromise on the cameras ability to have a viewfinder if having a viewfinder is something that is important to you.

Viewfinder

For all of us nostalgic film photographers, the viewfinder is one of the things that keeps digital cameras in line with the cameras of yesteryear. These days though a lot of camera manufacturers have eliminated viewfinders, opting instead for bigger LCD screens. It's a personal preference, but I find that a viewfinder is still useful in very bright sunlight where the screen can sometimes be difficult to see. Also watch out for EVFs or electronic viewfinders on some of the more advanced compact cameras. Rather than looking through the lens as you do in a DSLR, you see an electronic vision of your subject akin to the image that's you can see on the LCD. Again this is a matter of personal preference.

Waterproof/Weather proof

Many camera manufacturers have come out with waterproof and weather proof models, which can survive all sorts of weather conditions. Its an important distinction to note that weather proof means that if it gets damp from being caught in a shower of rain it will be fine but waterproof means that can actually take it into the ocean the pool or bath or whatever takes your fancy.

Check on the specs of the camera how deep it can go for diving purposes.

Note: you can also get a waterproof case for many camera models and hence the presence of an under-water mode. This mode alone does not mean you can take it swimming with you – Yes, I've seen people do that!

Ruggedness

For those of us who like to climb mountains or perhaps need a camera to be able to withstand the possibility of being dropped, you may want to consider one of the newer types of rugged cameras such as the **Olympus TG-860**. These cameras are designed to withstand extreme temperatures, drops and falls and are fairly robust. A great idea if you have a camera “dropper” in your house or maybe even just a budding two-year-old photographer.

Sleek and Slim

Size is always going to be important in a camera. After all, what's the point in having a camera if you feel it's too big to take around with you? There are negatives though of having a camera that is too small. For example, sometimes the buttons can be too close together and you can accidentally execute the wrong command. Also you might find that it's difficult to find it at the bottom of your purse – no wait sorry that's probably just me! A more compact design usually means making sacrifices regarding size of zoom lens, viewfinder etc so watch for these things if that's important to you. Also a bigger camera can sometimes feel more comfortable in your hand, with easier access to the controls.



Food for thought...



Color

Yes believe it or not one of the big trends with digital cameras is the array of colors they come in. This is something to really consider if you're purchasing a camera as a gift - What color would they like it in? As if you didn't have enough to worry about!



Additional accessories you'll need

Memory

Once you've decided on the camera you want you will absolutely need a memory card for it. This is the external storage that will allow you to take lots of pictures. Although the price of memory has plummeted in recent years the card capacity has risen and so has the speed at which these cards can save information.



This is especially important if you take very large files say if you shoot using a DSLR. I recommend at least a 1 GB card. The number of photos you can store depends on the exact model and make of your camera, the type of card you are using and the quality setting of your camera.

Bag

A good quality camera case is a must for every camera. This will help it to withstand any drops or knocks and protect it from extreme heat or cold say for example you leave the camera in the car. Always use the neck or wrist strap provided with your camera!

Spare batteries

You may consider investing in a spare battery for your camera. If you have AA type camera then a few extra sets of batteries is a must. Otherwise I would just buy a spare battery if I were going on a very long trip where perhaps recharging is not an option.

Tripod

For all keen landscape photographers a tripod is essential. If you just shoot landscapes casually you may find that something like the **Gorillapod** will let you out when the need for something stable presents itself.

Where to buy

As with most consumer electronic items, camera models are frequently replaced by newer, more up to date models (about every 6 months for compact cameras.)

That being said, prices have stabilized quite a bit over the last two years as digital cameras have become adopted by the masses. You will however see specials on a particular model when its successor is about to be launched. Canon often can be seen using this tactic, offering rebates and money off just before a new product hits the stores – a good time to grab a bargain!

My favorite place to shop for electronics is [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). They are safe and secure and usually there is an excellent return policy so even if you are unhappy with your purchase you can simply return it for a refund.

If you are looking for something more specialist [B & H Photo](https://www.bhphoto.com) stock everything to do with cameras! This store is amazing and they people there really know their stuff. They also have a great return policy and are well worth checking out especially if you are looking for accessories, additional lenses or have any unusual requests.

[Ebay](https://www.ebay.com) is a great place to look for deals but obviously, as with buying anything from [Ebay](https://www.ebay.com) you must be careful! Research your buyer using the Ebay feedback system and make sure that you are happy that you are dealing with a reputable seller. Make sure that all cables, batteries and necessary add-ons come with the camera. Check that you are buying the right voltage (for the battery recharger) for your country otherwise you will have make additional purchases for this after you get your camera.

Specialty stores

Your local camera store is a great place to shop for your camera. Although they may be slightly higher priced than some of the online stores, you'll greatly benefit from the advice and expertise of the staff. You can also usually try and bargain with them a little – e.g. get them to do you a deal on a camera plus bag plus memory. They will usually work something out for you.

Big box stores/ Warehouse clubs

These places usually have great deals. If you know what you want and your budget is set you can find great bargains here. The warehouse clubs also usually do deals on DSLR kits including bags, memory and sometimes extra lenses.



My Personal Camera Recommendations...

Compact



DSLR

Nikon D3300



Memory

Sandisk

Bags

Lowepro Range

Mirrorless

Olympus OM-D Mark II



Canon EOS/Rebel T6i



Tripods

Manfrotto

Gorillapod

Wanna learn more?

①

Check out www.IngridKellyOwens.com for lots of tips, techniques, product reviews and information on the latest photography gear. You can sign up for my newsletter there too.

②

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Follow me on Twitter



http://twitter.com/ingrid_owens

For lots of fun photography related tweets!

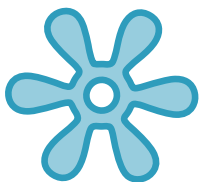
④

If your in the Atlanta area you can [email me](#) for information about private instruction or hosting a class for a small group of your friends.

happy snapping !!



www.IngridKellyOwens.com



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This publication serves as a guide to help you choose your camera. Recommendations are based on my personal opinion and if you do choose to purchase a recommended product via my links I do stand to make a small commission. 2015/16 (001)

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