

Tips on Buying Your Next Digital Camera

Bill Popejoy, November 2008

The type of photographer you are will determine the type and price of your next digital camera.

TYPES OF PHOTOGRAPHERS:

1. The “Casual photographer”: take photos at special events such as family get-togethers, birthdays, holidays, weddings, vacation trips, etc. They make mostly “Snapshots.” A simple inexpensive camera works well for them \$150 to \$200.
2. In the middle we find those who have a greater interest in photography up to those who are a member of a Camera Club. In the “Point and Shoot” category of cameras they use cameras that cost up to \$500 and more. These cameras have better “sensors” that give better images and have many more features than those in the “Casual Photographer” category. The Camera Club members will have the most expensive cameras.
3. Camera Club members who enter Competitions fall into the category, called, “Advanced Amateur” photographers. They frequently use “Single Lens Flex” (SLR) cameras. They seldom use the green, do everything, setting, rather they use Aperture Preferred, Av, Shutter Preferred, Tv, or Manual settings. For example, when I take a flash picture, I use a manual setting, 1/250 sec., f 5.6. Otherwise, I may be using 1/15 sec. At f 5.6.

These people are frequently members of the Photographic Society of America and are entering juried “International Exhibitions of Photography” which are held all over the world.

4. Part-time or full-time Professional Photographers. I won't discuss them at this time, other than to say that they have the most expensive systems with cameras that cost \$5000 and up.

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CAMERAS FOR THE CASUAL PHOTOGRAPHER:

Samsung Digimax L21g, 10.2 MP, 34-102mm Zoom, \$170

Kodak Easy Share Z8612, 8.1 MP, \$220

Canon PowerShot A590 IS, 8 MP, 35-140mm Zoom, \$180 (A best buy for a gift)

Canon PowerShot SD870IS, 8 MP, 28-105mm Zoom, \$280

Canon PowerShot SD1100, 8 MP, 38-114mm Zoom, \$250

Casio EX 510, 10MP, \$250

CAMERAS WITH SLIGHTLY MORE FEATURES

Panasonic Lumix DMC-FS5, 10.1 MP, \$205

If you can find one, Panasonic Lumix DMC-LX2, 24-60mm Zoom, \$410

MOST ADVANCED POINT AND SHOOT CAMERAS

Sony CyberShot DSCW 360, 13.6 MP, 28-140mm Zoom, \$350

Canon PowerShot G10, 14.7 MP, 28-140mm Zoom, \$500 (Rated #1 in many tests)

Nikon Coolpix P6000, 13.5 MP, 28-112 Zoom, \$500

Panasonic Lumix DMC LX3, 10.1 MP, 24-60mm Zoom, \$500

Rico Caplio, 12.1 MP, 24-72mm Zoom, \$600

Sigma DP1, 3x4.7 MP, 3-layer sensor, 28mm non-zoom lens, \$700

Note that all of these start their zoom at 24mm or 28mm, which is great!

UNDERWATER, POINT AND SHOOT

Olympus E-520, 14-42mm Zoom, \$380 (See *Popular Photography*, Sep. 2008, p. 72)

MEGAZOOMS: These Point and Shoot cameras zoom out to 400-500mm and are great for telephoto use. They cost \$350 to \$560, with one for \$1000. Most have 8-10 MP sensors. Most start their zoom at 27 or 28mm which works well for everyday shooting. **THEY ARE BIG AND HEAVY BUT LIGHTER THAN A SLR.** For a listing of specs, see the August 2008 edition of *PC World*, pp. 101-106.

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SINGLE LENS REFLEX (SLRs) are sold without a lens or in a “kit” form with a basic lens, covering from wide angle to a short telephotos, for about \$100 extra. Tests of the “kit” lenses have given favorable results. Versatility comes with the ability to buy extra lenses covering various focal lengths, such as: 50mm f1.4 or 50mm f1.2 for shooting in candle light. I use an 18-85mm Zoom for most of my work. I have a 16-35mm constant aperture, f2.8 for dim light shooting or for flash. I have a 60mm macro for closeups. I use a 70-300mm Zoom for outdoor sports and for indoor sports using flash. Most professional sports photographers use a 70-200mm constant aperture, f2.8 for indoor sports, Canon \$1700, Nikon \$1650, along with a 300mm f2.8 (you don't want to know the price).

Most professionals use either a Nikon or a Canon system and only lenses made by Nikon or Canon.

Advanced Amateurs can save by using other systems. For an excellent article on building a SLR system see the Oct. 2008 edition of *PC Photo*, pp. 32-37. It covers “People and Portraits,” “Sports Action,” “Landscapes,” “Wildlife,” and “Night and Indoor Low Light” photography. Please be advised that to change from one system to another is very costly.

Recent articles on tests or buying cameras:

PC World, Aug. 2008, pp. 101-106, “Dawn of the Megazooms”

PC World, Sep. 2008, p. 61, “Top 5 SLR Cameras”

PC World, Nov. 2008, p. 76, “Top Point and Shoots”

Consumer Reports, Oct. 2008, p. 33, “Best Sub-Compact Cameras”

Popular Photography, Aug. 2008, pp. 60-67, “Top SLRs under \$9000”

Popular Photography, Sep. 2008, pp. 72-78, “Top Buys 2008”

Popular Photography, Nov. 2008, pp. 13-20, “The Goods” (see page for “Point and Shoots”)

PC Photo, Sep. 2008, pp. 34-41, “Top Digital SLR's”

PC Photo, Oct. 2008, pp. 32-37, “How to Build a Camera System”

WHERE YOU CAN GET TEST REPORTS ON CAMERAS

www.dpreview.com: Tests the most cameras

Popular Photography magazine (www.popularphoto.com)

PC World magazine (www.pcworld.com)

Check my article on Shopping Online, which was included in the Club newsletter recently.

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