



# Point-and-shoot cameras in focus

Innovative technology helps the latest compact cameras take the hassle out of taking a great picture – and each of our nine new Best Buys costs less than £270

**T**oday's digital cameras make it easier than ever to do as much, or as little, as you like with your photography.

If you want to capture great images, but are less interested in direct manual control, there are many point-and-shoot digital cameras packed with features designed to help you take great pictures effortlessly.

Our tests of the latest cameras show that these digital snappers do the work so you don't have to, making automatic adjustments to ensure impressive final results. Many of our new Best Buys have limited manual controls, but improved automatic modes mean that you can still take great pictures, even in tricky situations.

Technology to automatically focus on faces – called face detection – can be

found in nearly all newer digital cameras. This automatically recognises individuals within your shots, ensuring faces are intelligently contrasted and properly focused. Using the Best Buy Panasonic Lumix DMC-TZ7 we experimented to find out how effective this feature can be (see 'How face detection works, opposite).

You will also find a growing number of cameras offering dynamic range priority. This is the ability for the camera to take two shots at once – one focusing on dark areas, the other focusing on light areas – before merging the two for a balanced image. It can be found in models including the Ricoh CX1. See 'Mastering light and dark' on p36 for more on dynamic range priority.

WHICH.CO.UK

**Not sure where to start? Get expert advice that will help you buy the best camera for your needs**  
[www.which.co.uk/buyingcamera](http://www.which.co.uk/buyingcamera)

## OUR TESTS

Which? tests more than 100 of the latest digital cameras each year, including the top models from major manufacturers, as well as some lesser known brands, to give a complete overview of the market.

By covering as many models as we do, we make it easier for you to choose the ideal camera for your needs and budget. At [www.which.co.uk/digitalcameras](http://www.which.co.uk/digitalcameras) you'll find reviews of more than 300 digital cameras and digital SLRs to help you choose the best model, full explanations of technical features, and straightforward advice.



## Ricoh CX1 £269

**Which? test score 72%**

**Brand reliability rating 86%**

**PROS** The Ricoh CX1 is an outstanding 9Mp compact camera that has some useful features to help you take better pictures. These include a high-speed continuous-shooting mode for action shots and a dynamic-range double-shot mode (see p36).



The picture quality is very good, and colour reproduction is truly excellent.

**CONS** The camera's movie mode is less impressive. It has a few manual controls for users to experiment with, but there are no priority modes for shutter speed or aperture.

**Full review at [www.which.co.uk/ricohcx1](http://www.which.co.uk/ricohcx1)**

We found it cheapest Online



## Sony Cyber-shot DSC-H20 £205

**Which? test score 72%**

**Brand reliability rating 97%**

**PROS** The DSC-H20 impressed our testers with the high standard of its pictures. It handled contrast between shadow and highlight well, and subtle colour distinctions were accurately captured. The x10 optical zoom lens is more generous than you'd typically find on a compact



camera, making it great for shooting far away subjects, and it has a good image stabiliser.

**CONS** It's a little bulky, and the optical zoom range begins from a wide angle of 38mm (see p37). There are no priority modes for aperture or shutter speed.

**Full review at [www.which.co.uk/cybershotdsc20](http://www.which.co.uk/cybershotdsc20)**

We found it cheapest Online Also available Comet, Currys, Jessops, John Lewis



## Canon Powershot SX200 IS £245

**Which? test score 71%**

**Brand reliability rating 97%**

**PROS** This is a superb 12Mp compact camera that takes impressive pictures. Given that the camera is only 4cm thick, it's impressive to see a x12 optical zoom lens, beginning from a wide angle of 28mm. It features a full complement of manual controls, including priority



modes for shutter speed and aperture, as well as full manual focusing. It also has an impressive macro mode for close-up shots.

**CONS** At 248g, it's not the lightest compact camera, and it has no viewfinder. It's sluggish in burst mode.

**Full review at [www.which.co.uk/powershotsx200is](http://www.which.co.uk/powershotsx200is)**

We found it cheapest Online Also available Comet, Currys, Jessops, John Lewis

## How face detection works

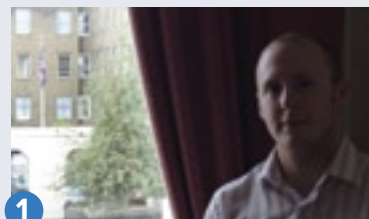
**We test the benefits of face detection technology using the Panasonic Lumix DMC-TZ7**

When photographing a person against a bright background such as a window, faces can be poorly contrasted and overly dark. This is because the background can be overexposed and the subject in the foreground can be underexposed. Detail on the face can be very poor, leading to disappointing photographs of friends and family.

By using face-detection technology, a camera can detect the individual within your shot and adjust the picture settings to focus on

the person, rather than the background. As shown here, face detection can help prevent underexposed pictures of individuals, as the camera intelligently judges which parts of the picture to focus on.

In the first shot (1), the focus on the bright background causes the person in the foreground to be dark and underexposed. With face detection enabled (2), the camera focuses on the individual to create a more impressive second shot.







## Canon Digital Ixus 990 IS £269

**Which? test score 71%**

**Brand reliability rating 97%**

**PROS** This is a slim, stylish point-and-shoot camera. Picture quality is extremely good, particularly in bright sunlight. Even in more challenging artificial lighting, the 990 IS maintains excellent colour distinctions and good contrast. It has a superb macro mode to help you take detailed

close up photographs, and is generally a fast camera in operation.

**CONS** It doesn't have priority modes for aperture or shutter speed, and there's no full manual focusing. The zoom begins from a wide angle of 37mm (see p37).

**Full review at** [www.which.co.uk/ixus990is](http://www.which.co.uk/ixus990is)

**We found it cheapest Online Also available** Comet, Currys, Jessops, John Lewis



## Canon Powershot D10 £260

**Which? test score 71%**

**Brand reliability rating 97%**

**PROS** The D10 is ideal for travellers. It can withstand temperatures as cold as -10°C, can be dropped on hard surfaces from 1.2m, and copes with underwater plunges to a depth of 10m. The picture quality is good, with consistently crisp, focused shots. It has a face

self-timer setting, which allows you to compose a shot, and then get into the frame yourself without having to hurry.

**CONS** It's 5cm thick, and at 222g the D10 is reasonably heavy too, so it's unfortunate that the optical zoom is limited to x3, and the wide angle is just 35mm.

**Full review at** [www.which.co.uk/powershotd10](http://www.which.co.uk/powershotd10)

**We found it cheapest Online Also available** Jessops



## Panasonic Lumix DMC-TZ7 £269

**Which? test score 69%**

**Brand reliability rating 99%**

**PROS** Like Canon's SX200 IS, the DMC-TZ7 has a x12 optical zoom, which you don't often see on slim cameras like these. Rarer still, the lens on the begins from a wide angle of 25mm – ideal for group shots. Photos taken in bright daylight were good in our tests. It has an excellent intelligent-auto

mode that makes point-and-shoot photography easy.

**CONS** There are no priority modes for aperture or shutter speed, and no full manual focusing. The built-in image stabiliser isn't effective.

**Full review** [www.which.co.uk/lumixdmctz7](http://www.which.co.uk/lumixdmctz7)

**We found it cheapest Online Also available** Argos, Comet, Currys, Jessops, John Lewis



## Mastering light and dark **Some cameras can merge two pictures to create a balanced final shot**

When photographing scenes that have bright backgrounds and darker foregrounds, many cameras struggle to capture detail in every part of the picture, leading to shadowy images or overbright areas that lose detail. Some new cameras, such as the Ricoh CX1 and the Fujifilm FinePix F200EXR use a technology called 'dynamic range priority' to counter this problem.

Dynamic range priority means that the camera takes two simultaneous

photos – one to capture darker areas of the scene, and one to capture brighter areas – before merging the two shots to create a final picture.

To test this effect, we took this first shot (1) with the F200EXR with the dynamic range priority switched off. The foreground is so dark it's difficult to make out any fine detail.

With the dynamic range priority enabled (2), the bright sky and darker foreground are more pleasingly balanced in the resulting image.





## Panasonic Lumix DMC-FX550 £230

**Which? test score 69%**

**Brand reliability rating 99%**

**PROS** At 166g and just 2.4cm thick, this is an extremely light and compact model. The picture quality is generally impressive – it's great in bright daylight situations and is good for indoors. It has an excellent intelligent auto mode, as well as priority modes for aperture and

shutter speed. One of the best features of this model is its 25mm wide-angle lens. **CONS** There is noticeable vignetting in wide angle shots, distorting colours around the picture's edges. The image stabiliser is ineffective. No full manual focusing. **Full review at [www.which.co.uk/lumixdmcfx550](http://www.which.co.uk/lumixdmcfx550)**

We found it cheapest Online **Also available** Currys, Jessops



## Canon Powershot A2100 IS £179

**Which? test score 69%**

**Brand reliability rating 97%**

**PROS** Packed with features that do much of the work for you, this is a great camera if you want your pictures to be as effortless as possible. In automatic mode, it's easy to use. The autofocus system is quick, and the delay between pressing the shutter button and the camera focusing

and taking a shot is only 2.13 seconds. Picture quality is impressive. **CONS** It is relatively bulky at 3.5cm thick and weighing 246g. It has no priority modes for aperture or shutter speed, and no full manual focusing. Its image stabiliser isn't effective. **Full review at [www.which.co.uk/powershotA2100is](http://www.which.co.uk/powershotA2100is)**

We found it cheapest Online **Also available** Jessops



## Casio Exilim EX-S12 £172

**Which? test score 68%**

**Brand reliability rating 98%**

**PROS** Lightweight and stylish, at only 1.7cm thick, this is one of the slimmest models currently on the market. It impressed us with its image quality – pictures are sharply focused, with excellent distinctions between subtle colour differences and intelligent contrasting. It has an

impressive 37 scene modes to choose from, and it has an excellent shutter delay. **CONS** Only a x3 optical zoom, and the lens begins from a not very wide angle of 36mm. It has no image stabiliser, there are no priority modes for aperture or shutter speed. **Full review at [www.which.co.uk/exilimexs12](http://www.which.co.uk/exilimexs12)**

We found it cheapest Online **Also available** Currys



## Wide-angle lenses

**Having a wide-angle lens can give you the freedom to take the shots you want**

When you're photographing group shots or wide landscape pictures, it can really help to have a camera with a good wide-angle lens. Cameras with optical zooms that begin at 28mm, 26mm, or even 24mm make it easier to capture these kinds of shots.

For example, if you're trying to photograph a group of friends, it can be difficult to fit

everybody in using a camera with a 36mm wide angle (1). A camera with a 26mm wide angle (2) allows you to fit the entire group into your picture without having to take a few steps back.

Be sure to check the optical zoom range on a camera before you buy. This figure is often displayed on the lens itself, as well as the packaging of the camera.



## HUGHES DIRECT DEAL

### Save on Best Buys

Hughes Direct is offering Which? members an exclusive discount on Best Buy digital cameras until 30 November 2009: the Panasonic DMC-FX550, £220; Panasonic DMC-TZ7, £269; Samsung IT100, £159; Samsung PL60, £135; Samsung ST50, £141; and the Sony DSC-H20, £224 (plus delivery, from £5). For more details about this offer and other member-only discounts from Hughes Direct, see [www.hughesdirect.co.uk/which](http://www.hughesdirect.co.uk/which) or call 01473 321883.