

Digital cameras

NEED TO KNOW

Taking pictures on a digital camera is easy on full automatic mode. Point the camera at your subject, turn on the flash if needed, check the image on the LCD screen or viewfinder, and press the shutter. For a candid shot at a party, for instance, it's quick and usually gives good results. However, you might want to be a bit more creative.

Most cameras have scene selection modes, such as 'sport' and 'portrait'. Choosing 'sport' to take a photo of a football match freezes movement so a ball and player appear still. Without it, you might get motion blur in your shot.

If you use 'portrait' mode to take a picture of a friend, and you step in closer, it will make the background out of focus, making the friend the centre of the viewer's attention.

Although these modes are quick to use, they don't always give good results in dull or very bright conditions.

PRIORITY MODES

Aperture and shutter-speed priority modes give you more precise control.

Shutter-speed priority mode lets you select the shutter speed to control the amount of motion blur.

Aperture priority mode lets you adjust the camera's F-value, which controls how much of your scene is in focus. A low 2.8, for example, will put the background out of focus and a high 8 will put lots of the scene in focus.



BEST BUYS

All our Best Buys produce high image quality, and all but the Canon (8) and Nikon (9) come with aperture and shutter-speed priority modes (see 'Need to know', left).

5.1Mp OR MORE

The **Olympus (1)**, £550 from Jessops, has a low wide-angle lens setting of 28mm, making it great for landscape shots. Shutter delay and movie capability are OK, but it's good in all other key areas. At 772g, this is a heavy model.

No lightweight either, at 617g, the **Fujifilm (2)**, £330 from Jessops, has a short shutter delay (the time from pressing the shutter release to the shot being taken). It comes without rechargeable batteries or charger, so it's worth buying these (for around £15 to £20).

The **Canon (3)**, £450 from Jessops, has a longer shutter delay, which you can reduce by using 'focus lock' to compose your shot before snapping. As with most of our Best Buys, battery life is excellent.

The **Konica Minolta (4)** weighs almost 700g, but has

useful features such as image stabilisation, which sharpens the image if there is any minor blurring caused by shaky hands. This camera's optical zoom is versatile. Its maximum telephoto focal length is 200mm, meaning it's great for zooming in on distant objects, yet its minimum wide-angle setting is only 28mm. This camera is £500 from Jessops and Boots, although a memory card isn't included. A 128MB card is around £15 to £20.

The **Sony (5)** has no memory card either. This camera is lighter and more compact than

TABLE NOTES

We tested latest models from leading manufacturers.

Specification

Price Typical high-street price.

Optical zoom A low first number means a wider angle of view. A higher second number means you can zoom in further.

Features

Memory type The types of card the camera uses to store images. Compact Flash (CF) comes in two types, type I and II (type II is thicker). Other formats include MS (Memory Stick), Secure Digital (SD) and xD-Picture Card (xD).

Priority modes The shutter speed and aperture priority modes. See 'Need to know', left.

Performance

Shutter delay To reduce this, half-press the shutter button when you've composed the shot.

WIN

We've got five Olympus C-5060 Zoom cameras to give away See p56

KEY

★ ☆ ○ ●
Best Worst
■ Best Buy

SCORE

This ignores price and is based on:
Performance 65%
Ease of use 25%
Battery life 10%

Digital cameras

5.1Mp OR MORE

1 Olympus C-8080 Zoom

2 Fujifilm S7000 Zoom

3 Canon Powershot G6

4 Konica Minolta Dimage A200

5 Sony Cybershot DSC-V3

4Mp TO 5Mp

6 Olympus C-5060 Zoom

LESS THAN 4Mp

7 Olympus C-770 Ultra Zoom

8 Canon Digital Ixus 40

9 Nikon Coolpix 4800

10 Olympus C-760 Ultra Zoom



FOCUSING

Most cameras have autofocus but only some, such as this Olympus, have manual focusing (MF). MF is useful for close-ups as

it lets you focus on what you want. It's also handy for special effects, such as shooting out of focus for a dreamy effect.



MEGAPIXELS

Resolution is quoted in megapixels (Mp). If you pick a camera with insufficient resolution for the size of print you want, you might end up with a pixelated print – see

right. For 7x5-inch prints, pick at least a 3.2Mp camera, such as this Olympus, while for taking A4 photos, you'll need 7Mp.



its category-mates, but it still has lots of features. It's £400 from Jessops.

4Mp TO 5Mp

The **Olympus (6)**, £500 from Miller Brothers, is hard to fault. It has outstanding overall picture quality, and its 27mm-110mm lens is great for landscapes.

LESS THAN 4Mp

It's compact, but the **Olympus (7)**, £280 from Miller Brothers, has a powerful zoom. Its movie quality is the

best of all our Best Buys. The similar looking **Olympus (10)**, £200 from Jessops, has been around for a while, but it still makes the grade in our tests and zooms the furthest of all our Best Buys.

The **Canon (8)** weighs just over 150g. Its image quality is good and battery life is excellent. It's widely available for £230.

The **Nikon (9)**, £300 from Jessops, is compact but still has a powerful 36-300 zoom. Battery life is also excellent, but movie quality isn't very good.

90 more digital cameras on test

The main table shows all our current Best Buys. For results of 90 models from previous tests that are still available, see www.which.co.uk/digitalcameras.

Short shutter delay The following cameras are great for

that spontaneous shot as they have a very short shutter delay – they all scored ★.

They also score highly overall, without having the all-round star quality to make them Best Buys.

Model	Price (£)	Mp	Score (%)
Sony Cybershot DSC-P150	295	7.1	66
Sony Cybershot DSC-W1	280	5.1	65
Ricoh Caplio R1	177	4.0	64
Konica Minolta Dimage Z3	280	4.0	63
Ricoh Caplio GX	250	5.1	63

Last report March 2005

Specification					Features			Performance				Score
Price (£)	Resolution (Mp)	Optical zoom	Size (cm) hxxwxd	Weight (g)	Memory type	Priority modes	Manual focus	Battery life	Shutter delay	Ease of use	Flash	(%)
550	8.0	28-140	9x12.5x12	772	xD/CFI/CFII	✓	✓	★	○	☆	☆	76
330	6.1	35-210	8.5x13x11	617	xD/CFI/CFII	✓	✓	★	★	☆	☆	72
450	7.1	35-140	8x11.5x7.5	497	CFI/CFII	✓	✓	★	●	○	☆	68
500	8.0	28-200	8.5x11.5x12.5	692	CFI/CFII	✓	✓	★	☆	☆	○	68
400	7.1	34-136	7.5x13.5x6.5	428	MS/CFI	✓	✓	★	○	☆	☆	67
500	5.0	27-110	9x12x7.5	534	xD/CFI/CFII	✓	✓	★	★	☆	★	77
280	3.9	38-380	6.5x11.5x7.5	361	xD	✓	✓	☆	○	☆	★	70
230	3.9	35-105	6x9x2.3	152	SD			★	☆	☆	○	67
300	3.9	36-300	7x12x6	320	SD			★	○	○	☆	67
200	3.1	42-420	6.5x11.5x8	343	xD	✓	✓	☆	☆	☆	☆	67