



# Best of both worlds

If your compact digital camera isn't offering the flexibility you need, consider the advantages of a mid-sized model

When we first buy a digital camera for taking holiday snaps or family photos, most of us start out with a small, simple point-and-shoot model. There's nothing wrong with this – there are some great cameras out there and some people won't ever want to progress further. But for others there may come a time when the features a small camera offers are no longer enough.

## Focusing on features

The cameras tested for this report are the next step up and come into our mid-sized category. Typically they'll have more features than smaller models and bigger LCD screens, making it easier to see what you're shooting. The sensor that captures the image is usually bigger, too, so picture

quality is potentially better, and the zoom range of their lenses is sometimes larger.

They won't have all the fancy bells and whistles of a top-end model, but what they do offer are controls such as shutter-speed and aperture priority, so you can take good fast-action snaps or get creative with your shots. And many have manual focus, which allows you to take pictures with almost no shutter delay.

For shots where you don't want this extra control work, mid-sized models will also work as fully automatic point-and-shoot compacts. Unlike larger cameras, most are easy to use and are still small and light enough to carry around for a full day of sightseeing, so for many people they represent the ideal compromise between versatility and portability.

**They represent the ideal compromise between versatility and portability**



## GOING DIGITAL

**Ken Barber** 60, support officer  
Keen photographer Ken Barber has recently been converted to digital cameras with a Best Buy Panasonic DMC-FZ8 (*Which?*, August 2007, p10). 'I used to have a film camera but my wife bought me a Best Buy digital model for my birthday,' Ken said.

Ken tried the camera out on holiday: 'You can see the results on screen immediately. If it's not right, I can take it again'. He also loves the scene modes. 'They cater for most circumstances and you can take some beautiful twilight shots at the touch of a few buttons.'

When asked whether he was tempted to go back to film photography, Ken was quite the convert: 'I can't see any point in using my old camera. The quality is so good with digital, and I can now easily edit my pictures, too.'

## Face-saving technology

**Smart new technology helps you focus on people's faces**

Normally a camera focuses on whatever is in the central area of the picture. But face-detection technology, a clever new feature appearing on cameras such as the Best Buy Fujifilm FinePix F31fd (4), finds faces in the shot you're about to take and assumes you want them in focus (although you can switch it off). It identifies the faces by looking for a combination of two eyes and a mouth. Once it's identified a face, it locks on to it and tracks its movement, keeping it in focus, ready for when you press the shutter. This feature will work in dim and light conditions and intelligently fires the flash and optimises the exposure for the faces it's detected.

When viewing pictures you've taken on the F31fd's screen, you can zoom in on detected faces in the photo, one by one, and save a particular one as a portrait shot on the camera or view them consecutively like a slideshow.



**Face-detection technology enables digital cameras to focus automatically on any faces in the shot**

## Jargon buster

**How to shoot in dim light**

### ■ MANUAL ISO SETTING

This lets you adjust the camera's light sensitivity – the higher the ISO number, the more sensitive it is to light. So, for example, you can take shots in dim-light conditions without using the flash, although picture quality will suffer.



## 68% Fujifilm FinePix F30 £140

One of the key features of the F30 is the maximum ISO setting of 3,200, so it's a great camera for taking pictures in dim light. It's a very good camera all round, with an excellent battery life.

Movie mode is decent and picture quality is very good, with noise (small specks that can appear on images) kept under control. Shutter delay is also reasonably short, although shot-to-shot time in burst mode is slow – almost 1.8 seconds. It doesn't have a manual focus. Available from Currys.

WHICH?  
**BEST BUY**

**WORTH KNOWING** This model is very similar to the Best Buy Fujifilm FinePix F31fd (4), but lacks face-detection and infrared (see below).

**Cheapest store** Currys **Megapixels** 6.1 **Optical zoom** 36-108mm **Size** 9.5x6x3.5cm **Weight** 192g



## 67% Canon Powershot A710IS £200

The A710IS has lots of useful features, including a large LCD screen. The 35-210mm optical zoom range lets you zoom in more than with the average camera and its image stabilisation feature reduces risk of blur.

Shutter delay isn't particularly quick, so use pre-focus as much as possible or switch to manual focus. Image quality is reasonable but not quite as good as on our other Best Buys. Available from Jessops.

**WORTH KNOWING** The A710IS has a decent video mode – not always the case with digital cameras.

**Cheapest store** Jessops **Megapixels** 7.1 **Optical zoom** 35-210mm **Size** 10x7x4cm **Weight** 280g

WHICH?  
**BEST BUY**



## 65% Fujifilm FinePix F31fd £150

This model is similar to the F30 (1), but comes with face-detection technology (see 'Face-saving technology', p46).

It has a high maximum ISO of 3,200, but don't expect great quality on this setting. You also get aperture and shutter-speed priority modes. Movie quality is acceptable, although it lacks movie zoom. Photo quality is good but there's no manual focus or viewfinder. Available from Currys and Jessops.

WHICH?  
**BEST BUY**

**WORTH KNOWING** Comes with face-detection technology and an infrared link for wirelessly sharing images with compatible cameras or print kiosks.

**Cheapest stores** Currys and Jessops **Megapixels** 6.1 **Optical zoom** 36-108mm **Size** 9.5x6x3cm **Weight** 210g



## 64% Canon Digital Ixus 850IS £228

Picture quality is reasonably good on this light camera and it's easy to use. And with just 0.3 of a second between pressing the shutter button and taking the photo, there's little chance of missing that special moment. We found using the viewfinder, rather than the screen, was rather inaccurate, but if you don't use the viewfinder often, this won't be an issue. Available from Currys and Jessops.

**WORTH KNOWING** Its versatile, wide-angle lens (28mm) easily lets you squeeze everyone into the frame when you're taking pictures at a party.

**Cheapest stores** Currys and Jessops **Megapixels** 7.1 **Optical zoom** 28-105mm **Size** 9x6x3cm **Weight** 175g

WHICH?  
**BEST BUY**

The Sony Cyber-shot DSC-G1 comes with enough internal memory to store 600 images



## 66% Canon Digital Ixus 750 £225

This small and light Canon has a good burst mode. It's quick, too – shutter delay is very good at 0.3 seconds, start-up time is 1.9 seconds and it takes only 1.6 seconds to ready itself for the next successive shot. These are good figures for this type of camera.

Picture quality is decent and there's a good custom white-balance mode for more accurate colours. Unfortunately, it doesn't have aperture and shutter-speed priority modes, which give you more control, or manual focus. Available from Asda.

**WORTH KNOWING** Ideal if you want a quick camera with well above-average movie quality.

**Cheapest store** Asda **Megapixels** 7.1 **Optical zoom** 37-111mm **Size** 9x6.5x3cm **Weight** 195g

WHICH?  
**BEST BUY**



## 63% Sony Cyber-shot DSC-G1 £439

This novel camera comes with a massive 2GB of internal memory – enough to store around 600 images – so you're unlikely to need additional memory.

Image quality is reasonable and shutter delay excellent, and image stabilisation helps avoid camera shake. This model doesn't have a viewfinder but the LCD screen is huge (71x54mm) and we found it one of the easiest cameras to use. Available from Jessops. **WORTH KNOWING** It also includes an MP3 player, although we haven't tested it, and you can transfer images wirelessly to other G1 cameras.

**Cheapest store** Jessops **Megapixels** 5.9 **Optical zoom** 38-114mm **Size** 9.5x7.5x3cm **Weight** 250g

WHICH?  
**BEST BUY**

## DIGITAL CAMERA AND CAMCORDER SAVINGS

### Make great savings with Hughes Direct



Log on to [www.hughesdirect.co.uk/which](http://www.hughesdirect.co.uk/which) or call 0845 678 0084 for competitive prices on digital cameras and camcorders.

Each month, Which? members can take advantage of great deals offered by Hughes Direct. All goods are guaranteed to be a minimum of 10 per cent below high-street prices published in the 'On test' section of *Which?* – even when delivery charges are taken into account. If you find the same product cheaper elsewhere (including delivery) within seven days of purchase, Hughes Direct promises to refund 110 per cent of the difference.

Call now or go online to see how much you can save.



## Facts & scores

### More testing details

#### Movie star

For the best-quality video clips, go for either the Canon Powershot A710IS or Canon Digital Ixus 750.

#### Perfectly portable

The smallest and lightest camera on test is the Panasonic Lumix DMC-FX12. It's a featherweight for a mid-sized camera at only 150g – about the weight of two eggs.

#### Screen test

If you like a big screen, the Panasonic Lumix DMC-TZ3 has the largest of those on test, and it shows good-quality pictures, too.

| MODEL |                          | PRICE (£) | MEGAPIXELS (Mp) | OPTICAL ZOOM (mm) | SIZE (cm) (wxhxd) | WEIGHT (g) |
|-------|--------------------------|-----------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------|
| 1     | FUJIFILM FinePix F30     | 140       | 6.1             | 36-108            | 9.5x6x3.5         | 192        |
| 2     | CANON Powershot A710IS   | 200       | 7.1             | 35-210            | 10x7x4            | 280        |
| 3     | CANON Digital Ixus 750   | 225       | 7.1             | 37-111            | 9x6.5x3           | 195        |
| 4     | FUJIFILM FinePix F31fd   | 150       | 6.1             | 36-108            | 9.5x6x3           | 210        |
| 5     | CANON Digital Ixus 850IS | 228       | 7.1             | 28-105            | 9x6x3             | 175        |
| 6     | SONY Cyber-shot DSC-G1   | 439       | 5.9             | 38-114            | 9.5x7.5x3         | 250        |
| 7     | CANON Powershot A570IS   | 160       | 7.1             | 35-140            | 9x7x4.5           | 300        |
| 8     | FUJIFILM FinePix F40fd   | 147       | 8.1             | 37-111            | 10x6.5x3          | 182        |
| 9     | PANASONIC Lumix DMC-FX12 | 138       | 7.1             | 35-105            | 9.5x5.5x3         | 150        |
| 10    | CANON Powershot A550     | 125       | 7.1             | 35-140            | 9.5x7x4.5         | 235        |
| 11    | CANON Powershot A460     | 90        | 5.0             | 38-152            | 11x5.5x4          | 240        |
| 12    | PANASONIC Lumix DMC-LS60 | 90        | 5.9             | 35-105            | 9.5x6.5x3.5       | 190        |
| 13    | PANASONIC Lumix DMC-TZ3  | 300       | 7.1             | 28-280            | 11x6.5x4          | 270        |
| 14    | PANASONIC Lumix DMC-LZ7  | 140       | 7.1             | 37-222            | 10x6.5x4.5        | 250        |
| 15    | PENTAX Optio E30         | 90        | 7.1             | 36-108            | 9.5x6.5x3.5       | 194        |
| 16    | NIKON Coolpix L10        | 85        | 4.9             | 37.5-112.5        | 9.5x6.5x3         | 174        |
| 17    | KODAK EasyShare C653     | 85        | 6.1             | 36-108            | 9x7x3.5           | 220        |
| 18    | OLYMPUS FE-210           | 90        | 7.1             | 38-114            | 9x7x3.5           | 181        |
| 19    | PRAKTICA DPix 530Z       | 102       | 5.0             | 35-105            | 10x6.5x3.5        | 200        |
| 20    | SONY Cyber-Shot DSC-S650 | 95        | 7.1             | 35-105            | 10x6.5x3          | 188        |
| 21    | KODAK EasyShare V803     | 110       | 8               | 36-108            | 10.5x5.5x3        | 161        |

## For cash-strapped snappers

### Bag a bargain with a camera from a previous test, plus best budget buys

Best Buys from previous tests are worth looking for online, as end-of-line cameras are often sold at knock-down prices. These are all excellent models and are just as good as our current batch of Best Buys:

- **CANON POWERSHOT A540** £165 SCORE 64%
- **NIKON COOLPIX P2** £200 SCORE 64%
- **OLYMPUS MJU DIGITAL 800** £240 SCORE 65%

Alternatively, if you're on a budget, the Canon

Powershot A460 (11) and Panasonic Lumix DMC-LS60 (12) from this test are decent cameras and only £90 each. However, if you have an extra £50, you can bag the top-scoring Fujifilm Finepix F30 (1), £140.



Nikon Coolpix P2



Canon Powershot A540



Olympus mju Digital 800

### USING THE TABLE

We tested mid-sized models from popular brands. The more stars the better.

### Specification

**Price** For Best Buys we give the cheapest widely available high-street price as we went to press. Prices for other models are a guide. **Optical zoom** A low first number means you can zoom out further, which is good for wide-angle landscape shots. A higher second number means you can zoom in further. **Weight** Includes battery, memory card and wrist strap. **Memory card type** This shows the type of memory card that each camera accepts. MS duo = Memory Stick Duo; SD = Secure Digital; xD = Extreme Digital. **Scene modes** Presets that optimise the camera for taking popular types of pictures. A 'twilight' mode, for example, optimises the camera settings for low-light conditions.



| SPECIFICATION    |            |                       |             |             |                     |            |                | WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE |                 |               |                   |       |              |             | SCORE % |
|------------------|------------|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------|------------|----------------|-------------------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------------|-------|--------------|-------------|---------|
| MEMORY CARD TYPE | VIEWFINDER | LCD SCREEN (mm) (w/h) | SCENE MODES | MAXIMUM ISO | IMAGE STABILISATION | MOVIE ZOOM | FACE DETECTION | SHUTTER DELAY           | PICTURE QUALITY | MOVIE QUALITY | VIEWFINDER/SCREEN | FLASH | BATTERY LIFE | EASE OF USE |         |
| xD               |            | 50x37                 | 16          | 3,200       |                     | None       |                | ★★★★                    | ★★★★            | ★★★           | ★★★★              | ★★★★  | ★★★★★        | ★★★★        | 68      |
| SD               | ✓          | 50x38                 | 11          | 800         | ✓                   | Digital    |                | ★★★★                    | ★★★★            | ★★★★          | ★★★★              | ★★★★  | ★★★★★        | ★★★★        | 67      |
| SD               | ✓          | 49x37                 | 10          | 400         |                     | Digital    |                | ★★★★★                   | ★★★★            | ★★★★          | ★★★★              | ★★★★  | ★★★★★        | ★★★★        | 66      |
| xD               |            | 50x38                 | 15          | 3,200       |                     | None       | ✓              | ★★★★                    | ★★★★            | ★★★           | ★★★★              | ★★★★  | ★★★★★        | ★★★★        | 65      |
| SD               | ✓          | 50x38                 | 10          | 1,600       | ✓                   | Digital    |                | ★★★★★                   | ★★★★            | ★★★           | ★★★★              | ★★★★  | ★★★★★        | ★★★★        | 64      |
| MS duo           |            | 71x54                 | 10          | 1,000       | ✓                   | Digital    |                | ★★★★★                   | ★★★★            | ★★★           | ★★★★              | ★★★★  | ★★★★★        | ★★★★        | 63      |
| SD               | ✓          | 50x37                 | 12          | 1,600       | ✓                   | Digital    | ✓              | ★★★★                    | ★★★★            | ★★★           | ★★★★              | ★★★★  | ★★★★★        | ★★★★        | 62      |
| SD,xD            |            | 50x38                 | 14          | 1,600       |                     | None       | ✓              | ★★★                     | ★★★★            | ★★★           | ★★★★              | ★★★★  | ★★★★★        | ★★★         | 61      |
| SD               |            | 49x37                 | 21          | 1,250       | ✓                   | None       |                | ★★★★                    | ★★★★            | ★★★           | ★★★★              | ★★★★  | ★★★★★        | ★★★         | 61      |
| SD               | ✓          | 39x30                 | 10          | 800         |                     | Digital    |                | ★★★★                    | ★★★★            | ★★★           | ★★★★              | ★★★★  | ★★★★★        | ★★★★        | 60      |
| SD               | ✓          | 39x30                 | 8           | 400         |                     | None       |                | ★★★                     | ★★★★            | ★★★           | ★★★★              | ★★★★  | ★★★★★        | ★★★         | 59      |
| SD               |            | 39x29                 | 19          | 1,250       | ✓                   | None       |                | ★★★                     | ★★★★            | ★★★           | ★★★★              | ★★★★  | ★★★★★        | ★★★         | 59      |
| SD               |            | 60x45                 | 21          | 1,250       | ✓                   | None       |                | ★★★★                    | ★★★★            | ★★★           | ★★★★              | ★★★★  | ★★★★★        | ★★★         | 58      |
| SD               |            | 49x37                 | 19          | 1,250       | ✓                   | None       |                | ★★★★                    | ★★★★            | ★★★           | ★★★★              | ★★★★  | ★★★★★        | ★★★         | 57      |
| SD               |            | 48x36                 | 12          | 400         |                     | Digital    |                | ★★                      | ★★★★            | ★★            | ★★★★              | ★★★★  | ★★★★★        | ★★★         | 57      |
| SD               |            | 40x30                 | 14          | n/a         |                     | Digital    |                | ★★                      | ★★★★            | ★★            | ★★★★              | ★★★★  | ★★★★★        | ★★★         | 53      |
| SD               | ✓          | 48x36                 | 17          | 1,250       |                     | Digital    |                | ★                       | ★★★★            | ★★★★          | ★★★★              | ★★★★  | ★★★★★        | ★★          | 51      |
| xD               |            | 50x38                 | 13          | n/a         |                     | Optical    |                | ★                       | ★★★★            | ★★            | ★★★★              | ★★★★  | ★★★★★        | ★★          | 50      |
| SD               |            | 40x30                 | 11          | 400         |                     | None       |                | ★★                      | ★★★★            | ★★★★          | ★★★★              | ★★★★  | ★★★★★        | ★★★         | 50      |
| MS Duo           |            | 40x30                 | 7           | 1,000       |                     | None       |                | ★★★                     | ★★★★            | ★★            | ★★                | ★★★★  | ★★★★★        | ★★★         | 48      |
| SD               |            | 50x37                 | 20          | 1,600       |                     | Optical    |                | ★                       | ★★★★            | ★★            | ★★★★              | ★★★★  | ★★★★★        | ★★          | 47      |

**Movie zoom** When an optical zoom is used, image quality is maintained throughout the zoom. A digital zoom enlarges the central image – the further in you zoom, the more image quality suffers.

**Maximum ISO** The maximum setting that you can manually set the ISO to (see 'Jargon buster', p46, for more).

**Image stabilisation** Helps you achieve a sharper picture, especially in dim light.

**Face detection** Whether the camera comes with face-detection technology (see p46).

### Test performance

**Shutter delay** A rating of ★★★★★ means a delay of 0 to 0.3 seconds, and ★ is a delay of more than 1.2 seconds.

**Viewfinder/screen** The accuracy of the viewfinder, if the camera has one, and how easy it is to see the screen in tricky viewing conditions, such as bright sunshine or very dim light.

### Score

This ignores price and is based on:

|                    |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| Picture quality    | 30% |
| Ease of use        | 25% |
| Features           | 12% |
| Viewfinder/monitor | 12% |
| Battery life       | 10% |
| Flash              | 8%  |
| Movie quality      | 3%  |

### Contacts

**Canon** 0870 514 3723; [www.canon.co.uk](http://www.canon.co.uk)  
**Fujifilm** 0870 084 1310; [www.fujifilm.co.uk](http://www.fujifilm.co.uk)  
**Kodak** 0870 243 0270; [www.kodak.co.uk](http://www.kodak.co.uk)  
**Nikon** 0870 770 0233; [www.nikon.co.uk](http://www.nikon.co.uk)  
**Olympus** 020 7253 0513; [www.olympus.co.uk](http://www.olympus.co.uk)  
**Panasonic** 0870 535 7357; [www.panasonic.co.uk](http://www.panasonic.co.uk)  
**Pentax** 0870 736 8299; [www.pentax.co.uk](http://www.pentax.co.uk)  
**Praktica** 01727 732233; [www.praktica-uk.com](http://www.praktica-uk.com)  
**Sony** 0870 511 199; [www.sony.co.uk](http://www.sony.co.uk)

### FREE ACCESS TO MORE RESULTS

## More reviews

Visit [www.which.co.uk/digitalcameras](http://www.which.co.uk/digitalcameras) where you'll find the full test results of more than 150 digital cameras plus tips and advice on how to make the most of your snaps.

If you haven't logged on to our website before and would like some help doing so, go to [www.which.co.uk/loginhelp](http://www.which.co.uk/loginhelp) and follow our step-by-step guide.

