



Christmas cameras

A compact camera can make a great Christmas present. We pick out Best Buys from £80 to £650 and offer tips on taking better pictures

Stuck for what to buy your loved ones this year? A digital camera makes a great gift and needn't cost a fortune.

We have selected 11 of our Best Buys ranging from cheap, basic compacts to top-of-the-range premium models. We've chosen cameras to suit different budgets and different abilities.

A camera such as the Canon PowerShot A470 costs just £80 but won't leave you or the person receiving the gift feeling short-changed.

On the other hand, the GR Digital II was the best camera of the most recent batch we tested,

and is capable of taking stunning photos. For those with deeper pockets and stronger arms, the Casio Exilim EX-F1 at 817g is a heavyweight camera in every sense of the word.

Christmas is a fantastic time for taking pictures, so we've also put together some handy hints for capturing those special moments and how to avoid problems such as red eye and washed-out images.

Visit our website www.which.co.uk/advice/digital-camera-tips for more advice on how to take better pictures.

Taking better pictures at Christmas

How to capture those special moments

Speedy scenes

Special moments, such as children playing with new toys, happen quickly. Use a camera's sports or child mode to lessen blurring that can occur in pictures of fast-moving subjects.

You could also use a camera's continuous-shooting mode. Keep the button pressed and the camera takes shots in rapid succession, increasing the chance of capturing the special moment.

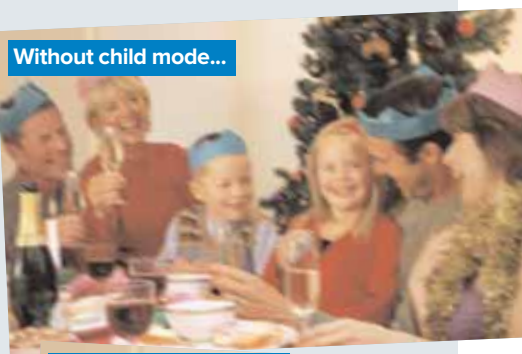
It's also wise to pre-focus. Half press the button to focus on the subject, hold, and when it's the right moment, press all the way down. This reduces shutter delay – the gap between pressing the button and the photo being taken – often the cause of a missed shot.

Perfect party pictures

If the room is dark and you're snapping people, you'll probably need to use the built-in flash to stop the picture being too dark. Your flash provides the best light between about 1-5 metres. Use the red-eye reduction mode to stop your pictures having that spooky effect.

Also, try taking photos without flash, especially non-people shots. Flash often washes out colours. To compensate for low light and reduce blurring, choose a higher ISO setting on your camera – 800 or more. Turn on image stabilisation or any anti-shake feature, or use a tripod or place the camera on a stable surface.

When taking a picture, press the button down smoothly and keep the camera stable. Keeping the lens zoomed out, if possible, will also help to avoid blur.



Up to £125



70% Fujifilm FinePix S5800 £92

Experienced photographers will like the range of manual controls that include shutter-speed and aperture priority modes. The 8Mp camera has a x10 optical zoom (38-380mm) and takes good shots, especially outdoors.

The camera switches on quickly and shutter delay is brief. However, it's slow taking single shots and shooting continuously. The optical zoom can be used while making a movie. Cheapest at Comet.

WE FOUND The LCD viewfinder is accurate, but could be better quality.

Available Argos, Comet, Currys Megapixels 8 Optical zoom 38-380mm Size 7.5x11x10cm Weight 470g



67% Canon PowerShot A470 £80

This is a decent choice as a first camera and gives options to be more creative, when you're ready. It has 7.1Mp, a 38-132mm zoom range and 10 scene modes with exposure settings you can alter to ensure you're set up for different types of conditions. However, it lacks a priority mode for the shutter or aperture settings. The A470 takes a photo every 1.5 seconds in regular mode, and every 0.6 seconds in burst mode. It's cheapest at Currys.

WORTH KNOWING In burst mode, it shoots until the memory is full.

Available Argos, Comet, Currys, Jessops Megapixels 7.1 Optical zoom 38-132mm Size 5.5x10.5x4cm Weight 240g



FIND OUT MORE

Best Buys for editing and printing your pictures, plus DSLRs and camcorders, see p74

£125-£250



72% Canon Digital Ixus 90 IS £161

A wealth of automatic and manual features are crammed into this small camera, which takes great pictures.

It lacks a priority mode for aperture and shutter-speed, but there are 12 scene modes to help find the exposure settings you're after. There's also an image stabiliser. The ISO can be set up to 1,600 to reduce blur in darker conditions. This should be sufficient for most uses. The camera is cheapest at Jessops.

WE LIKE It's ready to shoot in 1.5 seconds after switch-on.

Available Argos, Currys, Jessops Megapixels 10 Optical zoom 35-105mm Size 6x10x2cm Weight 181g



66% Panasonic Lumix DMC-FS3 £100

You can get great pictures indoors and outside with this Lumix. It has 8.1Mp, an image stabiliser, a 33-100mm zoom range and ISO settings up to 6400. There are 21 scene modes to give different exposure settings for creative photography. Video is good for the price, but you can't use zoom when filming. Cheapest at Comet.

WE FOUND There are no priority modes for aperture or shutter-speed.

Available Comet, Currys, Jessops, John Lewis Megapixels 8.1 Optical zoom 33-100mm Size 5.5x9.5x2.5cm Weight 146g



64% Nikon Coolpix S52 £125

If you're a beginner, this 9Mp camera could be for you. It takes good shots in different conditions, especially sunshine, and while there are few manual functions, an optical image stabiliser reduces blurring. The 38-114mm lens is restrictive – groups may have to huddle together – and the zoom isn't very powerful. The monitor is slow to refresh when panning. It's cheapest at Jessops.

WE LIKE It has 21 scene modes.

Available Comet, Jessops Megapixels 9 Optical zoom 38-114mm Size 6x10x2.5cm Weight 145g



66% Canon PowerShot A590 IS £130

Creative snappers will love the control this camera gives. You can manually set focus and flash and there are shutter-speed and aperture priority mode settings. There are 12 preset exposure programmes for when you don't want manual control. The 8Mp camera has image stabilisation and a lens with a 35-140mm zoom. Cheapest at Currys.

WORTH KNOWING You have to buy rechargeable batteries separately.

Available Currys Megapixels 8 Optical zoom 35-140mm Size 7x9.5x4cm Weight 250g



£125-£250



65% Fujifilm FinePix S1000fd £150

This camera has a powerful x12 optical zoom (it doesn't work for video). You can lock focus on a moving object, control priority exposure and flash strength, but not manual focus. It takes just 3.5 seconds from turning on to taking a picture, but a second between pressing the button and taking a picture is sluggish. Cheapest at Comet, Currys, Jessops and John Lewis.

WE FOUND You can reduce red-eye, but only using face detection.

Available Argos, Comet, Currys, Jessops, John Lewis
Megapixels 10.1 Optical zoom 33-396mm
Size 7.5x11.5x7.5cm Weight 445g



65% Sony Cyber-shot DSC-W300 £229

This model's 35-105mm lens has just a x3 zoom, but it takes good pictures in a variety of conditions. There's an optical image stabiliser and, while there isn't full manual focus, you can set it to 0.5 metre, 1 metre, 3 metres, 7 metres or infinite. You can manually control exposure, but there are no priority modes. The camera is quick in most respects. It's cheapest at John Lewis.

WE LIKE It has the highest number of megapixels on test, useful for large prints.

Available Argos, Comet, Currys, Jessops, John Lewis
Megapixels 13.6 Optical zoom 35-105mm Size 6x10x3cm
Weight 185g



A powerful x18 zoom is just one of the attractions of the Nikon Coolpix P80

Over £250



69% Ricoh GR Digital II £400

The 10Mp Ricoh can take stunning photos. Its fixed 28mm lens (no zoom) increases sensitivity to light, improving image quality. An electronic level function ensures images are aligned parallel to the horizon when shooting in landscape, or a building in portrait. There's no image stabiliser, but you can control flash and focus.

There are no priority modes for shutter speed or aperture. Cheapest at Jessops.
WE LIKE It's quick in burst and regular modes and shutter delay is short.

Available Jessops Megapixels 10 Optical zoom No
Size 6x11x3.5cm Weight 196g



USING THE TABLES

The more stars the better.

Specification

Price Full pricing details on p49.

Resolution The number of megapixels an image contains. This can differ from the claimed figure. **Weight** With lens cap, strap, battery and memory card.

Viewfinder type All cameras have an LCD screen. Some have a viewfinder. LCD viewfinders are more accurate than optical ones. **Image stabilisation** A ✓ shows the camera has image stabilisation.

Video zoom recording Whether zoom is available when shooting video and whether it's optical (better) or digital.

Score

Ignores price and is based on

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

MODEL	SPECIFICATION								
	PRICE (£)	RESOLUTION (MP)	OPTICAL ZOOM RANGE	SIZE (cm) (hwxwd)	WEIGHT (g)	LCD SCREEN width (mm)	LCD SCREEN height (mm)	VIEWFINDER TYPE	MEMORY CARD
UP TO £125									
1 FUJIFILM FinePix S5800	92	8	38-380	7.5x11x10	470	51	38	LCD	SD or xD
2 CANON PowerShot A470	80	7.1	38-132	5.5x10.5x4	240	50	37		SD or xD
3 PANASONIC Lumix DMC-FS3	100	8	33-100	5.5x9.5x2.5	146	49	37		SD or xD
4 NIKON Coolpix S52	125	9	38-114	6x10x2.5	145	60	45		SD
£126-£250									
5 CANON Digital Ixus 90 IS	161	10	35-105	6x10x2	181	60	45		SD
6 CANON PowerShot A590 IS	130	8	35-140	7x9.5x4	250	50	37	Optical	SD
7 FUJIFILM FinePix S1000fd	150	10	33-396	7.5x11.5x7.5	445	53	40	LCD	SD or xD
8 SONY Cyber-shot DSC-W300	229	13.6	35-105	6x10x3	185	54	41	Optical	MS Duo
MORE THAN £250									
9 RICOH GR Digital II	400	10	28-28	6x11x3.5	196	54	40	Optical	SD
10 NIKON Coolpix P80	270	10.1	27-486	8x11x9.5	422	54	41	LCD	SD
11 CASIO Exilim EX-F1	650	6	36-432	8.5x13.5x15	817	50	38	LCD	SD



68% Nikon Coolpix P80 £270

A powerful x18 zoom is just one attraction of this 10.1Mp model, which takes good photos in a variety of conditions. It gives near-perfect colour and performs excellently close up. The host of manual functions give a lot of control. Flash and focus can be manually adjusted and there are priority modes for aperture and shutter speed. You can lock focus on a moving object. Cheapest at Argos, Currys and Jessops.

WE FOUND The 27mm lens is good for tight indoor shots.

Available Argos, Currys, Jessops **Megapixels** 10.1 **Optical zoom** 33-396mm **Size** 7.5x11.5x7.5cm **Weight** 445g



65% Casio Exilim EX-F1 £650

Taking good pictures is about more than just counting megapixels, as this 6Mp camera proves. It snaps great shots indoors and outside and reproduces colours accurately. The price tag is heavy, but this is a DSLR-like camera that is super fast and packed with functions including an image stabiliser, priority modes for aperture and shutter-speed, manual focus and an adjustable flash. Cheapest at Currys and Jessops.

WE LIKE It's a very fast camera.

Available Currys, Jessops **Megapixels** 6 **Optical zoom** 36-432mm **Size** 8.5x13.5x15cm **Weight** 817g



Jargon buster

Explaining technical terms you'll come across

■ APERTURE

This controls how much of a scene is in focus. Adjusting this lets you focus primarily on objects in the foreground, or on a broader shot including background objects.

■ IMAGE STABILISATION

A way to correct camera shake. With optical image stabilisation, a mechanical stabiliser is in the lens. Alternatively, a stabilising

mechanism may be built into a camera, moving the sensor to compensate for shaky hands. Digital image stabilisation, or 'anti-blur', attempts to prevent blur by increasing the ISO and shutter speed in low light but isn't as good.

■ **ISO** The ISO setting controls how sensitive a camera is to light. Higher ISOs let you shoot in low light without flash.

MEMBER BENEFIT

Technology guide

The Which? Complete Guide to HDTV, Audio and Photography offers expert advice on creating the ideal digital home, whatever your budget. We've tested more than 1,200 products and give you Best Buys to make the right choice and save money. We also offer buying advice and ideal kit setup. On sale at £7.99 on 6 November in Asda, Borders, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Tesco and WH Smith. To buy your copy at £6.99, call 01992 822800 and quote DIGHOM 1SH. You can also fax us on 0207 770 7485 or email which@which.co.uk

						TEST PERFORMANCE								SCORE %
VIDEO ZOOM RECORDING	BURST MODE SHOTS IN A ROW	SCENE MODES	IMAGE STABILISATION	FACE DETECTION	SHUTTER DELAY	FLASH	VIEWFINDER/MONITOR	IMAGE QUALITY	MOVIE	BATTERY LIFE	EASE OF USE	FEATURES		
Optical	Unlimited	12			★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★		70
Digital	Unlimited	10		✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★		67
n/a	Unlimited	21	✓	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★		66
Digital	10	14	✓	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★		64
Digital	Unlimited	12	✓	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★		72
Digital	Unlimited	12	✓	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★		66
n/a	Unlimited	13		✓	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★		65
n/a	100	8	✓	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★		65
Digital	Unlimited	2			★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★		69
Digital	Unlimited	14	✓	✓	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★		68
Optical	Unlimited	21	✓	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★		65