



# In the picture at Christmas

Our Best Buy small digital cameras can take great pictures, are easy to use – and will cost you less than £250

Small digital cameras have plenty to offer. They're lightweight and fit in your pocket making them perfect for taking around with you. They're easy to use and take much better quality pictures – sharper, with better colours – than most mobile phones. They also come with lots of settings that give you the chance to be a little more creative or get a good photo that inferior cameras would miss.

They can't do everything – they lack the bigger zooms you'll find on some bigger cameras, for instance, so are no good for taking close-ups of distant objects.

But our Best Buys (all priced at less than £250) feature enough extras to keep most amateur photographers happy.

The Canon Digital Ixus Wireless, for example, has Wi-Fi for wireless transfer of photos straight from your camera to a computer, and the Samsung Digimax i6 PMP can play music and videos downloaded from your computer.

All the small cameras on test can also record video and sound, like a camcorder, and all can be linked to a television, so you can show off your photos and video on a bigger screen.

It's worth knowing that Jessops is currently offering a price guarantee. If you see any product it sells at another online or UK high-street shop cheaper (in the same colour), it will give you 110 per cent of the difference if you buy it from a Jessops store.

**All the small cameras on test can record video and sound**



## 66% Samsung Digimax i6 PMP £160

The Samsung Digimax i6 PMP produced the highest-quality pictures of any Best Buy in our test. Colours were consistently accurate and images were nice and sharp throughout. However, with a minimum optical zoom setting of 39mm, this is not the camera to choose if you want to shoot panoramic views (the Canon Best Buys are better options for this). The i6 PMP (also available in black) doubles up as a music/video player and is supplied with earphones. Sound quality is good and video quality reasonable, but battery life is very limited for both music and video playing. The Digimax i6 PMP is available from Argos.

**WHICH? BEST BUY**

**WATCH OUT** The software to transfer video and music from camera to computer works with Windows XP but not Apple Macintosh computers.

**Cheapest stores** Argos **Megapixels** 5.9 **Optical zoom** 39-117mm **Size** 10x6x2.6cm **Weight** 151g

## What you should look for

### SCENE MODES

These pre-set modes are quick to select and help you take good pictures in various situations. Some models have over 20. 'Sports' mode, for example, makes it easier to take pictures of a moving ball; 'portrait' helps to create better people shots, perhaps by blurring the background



### SHUTTER DELAY

When you press the button, there is a brief 'shutter delay' before the camera takes the shot. To get round this, half-press the button, then, when the camera has focused, compose your picture and press fully



### OPTICAL ZOOM

Expressed as a range – for example, 35-105mm. The higher the second number, the further you can zoom in for shooting more distant objects. The lower the first number, the more you can zoom out – good for indoor shots in cramped conditions

## MEMBER BENEFIT

### FREE website access

#### More than 120 digital cameras tested

You will find reviews of more than 120 digital cameras – 41 of them Best Buys – on our website, including everything from more basic models to digital single lens reflex (DSLR) models. Visit [www.which.co.uk/digitalcameras](http://www.which.co.uk/digitalcameras)



## 65% Canon Digital Ixus 65 £210

The Canon Digital Ixus 65 can take two shots a second in 'burst mode', so is great for action photography. It also powers up in under two seconds, so you should never miss a photo opportunity. Picture quality is good, and movie quality is one of the best we've seen on a digital camera. Scene modes (pre-set options) include indoor, snow, beach and underwater conditions. For the underwater mode, you'll need an optional waterproof case. This allows you to take photos down to a depth of 40 metres, but it's expensive at £150. It is widely available. **WE FOUND** It has one of the biggest LCD screens (60x45mm) we've seen.



**Cheapest stores** Jessops and Woolworths  
**Megapixels** 5.9 **Optical zoom** 35-105mm  
**Size** 9.5x6x2.3cm **Weight** 165g



## 65% Canon Digital Ixus Wireless £175

If you have Wi-Fi on your computer, this camera is for you. As well as allowing you to transfer photos wirelessly and print wirelessly from up to a few metres away using the supplied adaptor, you can control the Ixus Wireless via computer. This remote control feature is potentially useful for taking shots of animals and birds where you can't get close without frightening them away. Movie quality is very good, but the LCD screen itself is the smallest on test. It is available from Comet, Jessops and Woolworths. **WORTH KNOWING** For wireless computer transfer, make sure your computer runs Windows XP SP2 or Mac OS X v10.4.



**Cheapest store** Jessops **Megapixels** 5.0 **Optical zoom** 35-105mm **Size** 10x6x2.3cm **Weight** 147g

The Canon Digital Ixus 65 is great for taking action shots

## Jargon buster

**All the models have a macro mode and PictBridge. Some have image stabilisation, too**

■ **IMAGE STABILISATION** Once the preserve of big cameras, this helps you achieve sharper pictures, especially in dim light.

■ **ISO** The higher the ISO number, the more sensitive the camera is to light, helping you achieve blur-free pictures without flash. You have the option to set ISO manually on all this month's cameras, but the higher you set it, the more 'noise' you get in your photos. This appears as small, coloured speckles, and it can detract from picture quality.

■ **MACRO MODE** Indicated by a little flower icon (below), macro mode lets you take detailed close-ups of flowers, insects and so on.

■ **MEGAPIXELS** Pixels are the tiny dots of colour that, when put



together, make up a digital image. For a top quality 7x5-inch print, you need a camera with at least 3.2 megapixels – that's 3.2 million pixels, expressed also as 3.2Mp. For a top-quality 10x8-inch print, aim for 7.2Mp.

■ **PICTBRIDGE** Connect your camera to a PictBridge printer and you can print your photos at home without using a computer at all. You can also print from your camera's memory card to a home printer without a computer if your printer has a memory card slot.

■ **VIEWFINDER** This is the little window you put your eye against to look through – only a few small cameras have one but it can be useful when composing an image if the LCD screen is hard to view – for example, in bright sun.

## Digital camera basics

When you take a photo with a digital camera, it is stored on the camera's internal memory or on a memory card. You can then review the photo you've just taken using the LCD screen, and delete it if you're not happy with it.

Another plus is that you can print as many or as few of your photos as you want. You can print them yourself using a home printer (either with or without a computer – for Best Buy printers see 'Small can be

beautiful', *Which?*, July 2006, p60) or take your memory card to a shop to have it done there. Sharing photos is also easier with digital cameras – after transferring them to



computer you can email them to friends or upload them to online photo-sharing sites. Many of these websites also offer photo-printing services. You choose which of your photos you want printed, pay online, and your prints arrive within a few days.

Computers also let you explore the versatility of digital photography – with image-editing software you can edit photos, fix red eye, crop, improve colours and more.



## 65% Sony Cyber-shot DSC-T9 £235

The sleek Sony Cyber-shot T9 is one of the few cameras on test with image stabilisation, which is a useful feature for helping to avoid blurry pictures. Image quality is good – it missed out on winning a four-star rating in our test by a narrow margin. Movie quality, on the other hand, isn't so great, and there's no movie zoom either. Its LCD screen, although not the biggest, is the best of all the Best Buys. The Cyber-shot DSC-T9 is available from Argos and Jessops.

**WORTH KNOWING** The T9 takes MS Duo memory cards. These are a little more expensive than SD cards.

**Cheapest store** Jessops **Megapixels** 5.9 **Optical zoom** 38-114mm **Size** 9.5x5.5x2.3cm **Weight** 157g

WHICH?  
BEST  
BUY



## 62% Sony Cyber-shot DSC-W50 £150

Fractionally larger than the T9, the Sony Cyber-shot DSC-W50 has more conventional looks. Like its brother, it lets you adjust the strength of its flash manually if you prefer – handy if you find your flash photos are coming out too bright, for example. As an alternative, try turning the flash off and setting the ISO to 1,000, the highest setting available on any of our Best Buys. The higher the ISO, the more chance your photo will be blur free in poor light. It is widely available.

**WE LIKE** As with the Canon Digital Ixus Wireless, there's a viewfinder as well as an LCD screen.

**Cheapest store** Jessops **Megapixels** 5.9 **Optical zoom** 38-114mm **Size** 9.5x6x2.5 **Weight** 155g

WHICH?  
BEST  
BUY

Most cameras come with a small internal memory, so buy a card with a larger capacity

## Accessories

Your digital camera's box will contain all you need to start taking photos. However, there are a few extras that you should consider buying

■ **MEMORY CARD** Most cameras come with a small internal memory for storing your pictures, or a small-capacity memory card, usually 16 megabytes (16MB). This has enough space for only a handful of pictures, so buy a large-capacity memory card allowing you to store more. A 256MB card, for example, holds around 85 6Mp photos, and costs from under £10. Make sure you buy the right type – most of the cameras here take SD cards.

■ **CASE** A case is a worthwhile investment. From around £10, it will help protect your camera and memory card from damage.

■ **SUPPORT** Putting your camera on a tripod helps you take sharper pictures. Full-sized tripods cost £15 upwards. You can also get mini-tripods for greater portability.



## Facts & scores

Extra information on the latest cameras from our testing team

### Two lenses

The Kodak EasyShare V570 has two lenses that you can switch between. One has a 39-117mm optical zoom range; the other is fixed at 23mm, which is great for distant, zoomed-out shots.

### Long shutter delay

The Pentax Optio T10 has the longest shutter delay – 1.4 seconds.

MODEL		SPECIFICATION								
		PRICE (£)	MEGAPIXELS (Mp)	OPTICAL ZOOM (mm)	SIZE (cm) (wxhxd)	WEIGHT (g)	MEMORY CARD TYPE	VIEWFINDER	LCD SCREEN (mm) (wxh)	SCENE MODES
1	SAMSUNG Digimax i6 PMP	160	5.9	39-117	10x6x2.6	151	SD Card		50x37	12
2	CANON Digital Ixus 65	210	5.9	35-105	9.5x6x2.3	165	SD Card		60x45	10
3	CANON Digital Ixus Wireless	175	5	35-105	10x6x2.3	147	SD Card	✓	39x30	9
4	SONY Cyber-shot DSC-T9	235	5.9	38-114	9.5x5.5x2.3	157	MS Duo		49x37	11
5	SONY Cyber-shot DSC-W50	150	5.9	38-114	9.5x6x2.5	155	MS Duo	✓	50x37	8
6	CASIO Exilim EX-Z1000	280	10	38-114	10x6x2.3	166	SD Card		59x38 <sup>a</sup>	36
7	OLYMPUS MJU 700	182	7.1	37-111	10x6x2.5	120	xD Card		49x37	24
8	PANASONIC Lumix DMC-FX01	200	5.9	28-102	9.5x5.5x3	160	SD Card		49x37	18
9	CASIO Exilim EX-Z60	180	5.9	38-114	10x6x2.2	135	SD Card		50x37	28
10	KODAK EasyShare V570	230	5	23-117 <sup>d</sup>	10.5x5x2.3	140	SD Card		50x38	21
11	PENTAX Optio A10	200	8	38-114	9.5x5.5x2.3	145	SD Card		50x37	11
12	KODAK EasyShare V603	180	6	36-108	9.5x5.5x2.2	138	SD Card		50x37	21
13	PENTAX Optio T10	150	5.9	37.5-112.5	10x6.5x2.2	154	SD Card		60x45	9

a When shooting in widescreen 16:9 mode only b In high-sensitivity mode only c In some shooting modes only d Has two lenses, one with a 39-117mm optical zoom



## End-of-line models

These two Best Buys are getting hard to find in many shops but are worth tracking down before they disappear



### 5.0Mp CANON DIGITAL IXUS 55 £260 (WITH 128MB MEMORY CARD) JOHN LEWIS

The Canon Digital Ixus 55 is similar to the more widely available Ixus 65 (2). It has a smaller LCD screen (49x37mm against 60x45mm), but has a viewfinder, too – and the same optical zoom range as the 55. The maximum ISO setting is lower at 400 and it has 5Mp instead of 5.9Mp, but this is still a top performer. Shutter delay is just 0.3 seconds – one of the shortest in this size category – so it is good for taking action shots.

**SCORE 65%**



### 5.0Mp SONY CYBER-SHOT DSC-T5 £200 ARGOS

Like the more expensive Best Buy Sony Cyber-shot DSC-T9 (4), this is a very slimline camera. It weighs a bit less than the T9 at just 135g but lacks the latter's image stabilisation. Its maximum ISO setting is lower at 400, and the megapixel count is lower, too, at 5.0Mp. It has the same optical zoom range as the T9, though, and the shutter delay is better. It also offers slightly better movie quality than the T9, but both cameras lack any kind of movie zoom.

**SCORE 64%**

### USING THE TABLE

We tested small 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. 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 the camera

accepts. **Scene modes** Presets to take popular types of pictures – see 'What you should look for', p66. **Burst mode** This lets you take several images in quick succession with a single press of the button.

A few cameras limit the number of shots you can

take in succession. **Max ISO** See 'Jargon buster', p67.

The maximum setting that you can manually set ISO to.

**Image stabilisation** See 'Jargon buster', p67.

### 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, for example, in tricky viewing conditions such as bright sunshine or very dim light.

### Score

This ignores price and is based on:

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

				WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE							SCORE %
BURST MODE: MAX NUMBER OF PHOTOS	MAX ISO	IMAGE STABILISATION	MOVIE ZOOM	SHUTTER DELAY	PICTURE QUALITY	MOVIE QUALITY	VIEWFINDER/ SCREEN	FLASH	BATTERY LIFE	EASE OF USE	
unlimited	400		Optical	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	66
unlimited	800		Digital	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	65
unlimited	400		Digital	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	65
unlimited	640	✓	None	★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	65
unlimited	1000		None	★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	62
unlimited	3200 <sup>b</sup>		Digital	★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	61
unlimited	1600		Digital	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	61
unlimited	400	✓	None	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	61
unlimited	800 <sup>c</sup>		Digital	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	60
4	800 <sup>e</sup>		Optical	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	53
unlimited	400	✓	Digital	★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	51
4	800 <sup>e</sup>		Optical	★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	50
unlimited	400		Digital	★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	49

range, the other one fixed at 23mm <sup>e</sup> When an ISO of 800 is set, the camera can take pictures only at 1.8Mp

## Taking pictures at Christmas parties

Some tips for great party snaps



■ **AVOID FLASH** Try not to use flash if possible – colours can look unnatural. It usually doesn't flatter people, and can even agitate some.

■ **USE ISO** Manually adjust your ISO to a higher setting instead. Be aware that this can introduce more 'noise' (see 'Jargon buster', p67).

■ **BREATHE OUT** Try to press the shutter button just as you've breathed out. Your body is at its most relaxed and still at this point, helping to keep the camera as still as possible for sharp, blur-free photos.

Try to pause for a moment after pressing the button: moving immediately can cause blurring.

■ **KEEP YOUR DISTANCE**

If flash is necessary, make sure your subject isn't too close, but within a maximum of a few metres of the camera. On some cameras, you can adjust the strength of the flash. Also, use red-eye reduction mode.

■ **CANDID CAMERA** If you think your subjects won't mind being photographed without them knowing, try taking a few unposed shots.

Try not to use flash if possible – it can make colours appear unnatural

### Contacts

<b>Canon</b> 0870 514 3723 www.canon.co.uk	0513; www.olympus.co.uk	www.pentax.co.uk
<b>Casio</b> 020 8452 7253 www.ricoh.co.uk	<b>Panasonic</b> 0870 535 7357 www.panasonic.co.uk	<b>Samsung</b> 0870 242 0303 www.samsung.com/uk
<b>Kodak</b> 0870 243 0270 www.kodak.co.uk	<b>Pentax</b> 0870 736 8299	<b>Sony</b> 0870 511 1999 www.sony.co.uk
<b>Olympus</b> 020 7253		

### MEMBER BENEFIT

## Free photography guide

Packed with top tips from our camera experts

Our *Digital Photography Made Easy* guide contains a host of tips from our camera testing team to help you take better pictures, print your favourite photos, and lots more. Visit [www.which.co.uk/onlineguides](http://www.which.co.uk/onlineguides) to download your own free copy of the guide.



## Bigger cameras

If you want a bigger camera with more features, here is what you can get for your money

If you have a larger budget, it is worth considering buying a bigger digital camera. These often have a higher specification, a more powerful zoom and more features, allowing you to take better quality photographs and to be a bit more creative. We'll take a closer look at these in our April 2007 report.

Digital SLR (DSLR) cameras, with interchangeable lenses, are the choice of professionals and keen amateurs. Sony has recently launched its first,

the Sony A100, commonly sold with an 18-70mm lens (£550 for both). This body-and-lens combination performs significantly better than the small cameras we've looked at this month – its total score is 72 per cent. However, it falls a little short of our DSLR Best Buys. Go to [www.which.co.uk/digitalcameras](http://www.which.co.uk/digitalcameras) to find out more about the Sony A100 and eight other DSLRs.



## Movie mode

All the cameras we tested can record movies and sound, turning your camera into a mini-camcorder. Although a decent dedicated camcorder beats even the best digital camera for movie quality, a good movie mode option on a digital camera can be a worthwhile alternative for taking the odd clip.

With most cameras you can zoom during filming, although usually with digital zoom rather than optical zoom. Using digital zoom, as when taking still photos, reduces image quality, especially when you zoom in a long way.

Footage is stored on the memory card or internal memory. Bear in mind that recording movies can take up a lot of memory space, especially

if you record using the highest quality setting. On the Canon Digital Ixus 65 (2), expect a 256MB memory



card to have space for just over two minutes of footage. On a few cameras some quality settings restrict the length of movie clip, even if there is memory space available.

To watch your video on a bigger screen, you can connect your camera to a TV with the supplied cable. Then, put the camera into playback mode (normally depicted by a little arrow). You might need to adjust your TV's settings at this point to be able to display the video from the camera. You can also view your video on a computer monitor (in fact, camera video often looks better on computer). Transfer your video to computer, as you would still photos, using the USB cable supplied or with a memory card reader.

