

TOP 10 BEGINNER & INTERMEDIATE DIGITAL CAMERAS

		Beginner digital cameras	Mega-pixel rating	Max resolution	Optical Digital zoom	Movie Sound	File format	Storage media type Battery/rechargeable	High/low res storage capacity	Dimensions (wxdxh) Weight	Software includes
	1 Olympus MJU 300 0800 072 0070 www.olympus.com LAST MONTH 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £288 • 1-year warranty • First review Jul 03 	3.2Mp	2,048 x1,536	3x 4x	yes no	JPG	16MB xD card 1 x lithium/yes	6/94	99x34x56mm 165g	Camedia Master 4.1
<p>The MJU 300 offers a great combination of style and substance at an attractive price and it couldn't be easier to get to grips with. Shot quality is impressive for such a compact model – especially outdoor pictures. If you want a sturdy digital camera to accompany you on your travels then this is ideal.</p>											
	2 Fujifilm FinePix F401 Zoom 020 7586 1477 www.fujifilm.co.uk LAST MONTH 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £255 • 1-year warranty • First review Jan 03 	2.1Mp	2,304 x1,728	3x 3.6x	yes yes	JPG, AVI	16MB SmartMedia 1 x NP-60 lithium/yes	9/122	85x28x69mm 185g	FinePix Viewer, Video Impression
<p>The compact, stylish F401 offers superb functionality and good picture quality, while the generous software bundle includes QuickTime and Video Impression. Its pixel range of 2.1Mp is upped to 4Mp thanks to Super CCD technology. This is without the aid of interpolation so photos aren't suffused with unnatural colours.</p>											
	3 Olympus Camedia C-300 Luxury Pack 0800 072 0070 www.olympus.com LAST MONTH 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £298 • 1-year warranty • First review Jan 03 	3Mp	1,984 x1,488	2.8x 3.6x	yes no	JPG, TIF	96MB SmartMedia 4 x NiMH/yes	30/663	118x50x66mm 240g	Camedia Master 4.0
<p>The Olympus Camedia offers good features and an impressive specification list, although its price could be lower. Designed with ease of use in mind, it is a responsive model that processes images quickly and has enough features to appease buyers looking for more than a point-and-shoot snapper.</p>											
	4 Ricoh Caplio RR30 020 8261 4031 www.ricohpmc.com LAST MONTH 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £231 • 1-year warranty • First review Jan 03 	3.2Mp	2,048 x1,536	3x 3.4x	yes no	JPG, TIF, AVI	8MB internal flash 2 x AA alkaline/no	5/52	114x55x33mm 160g	Ricoh Gate L
<p>The RR30 has a loud motor but the quick-access buttons and features make up for it. Offering plenty of megapixels for your money, shots are incredibly detailed. It's just a shame that the TIF option only works in mono. Two non-rechargeable AA cells come with the Caplio, but it does support rechargeable lithium ones.</p>											
	5 Kodak CX4210 0870 243 0270 www.kodak.co.uk LAST MONTH 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £123 • 1-year warranty • First review Jan 03 	2Mp	1,632 x1,232	0x 2x	no no	JPG	16MB internal flash 2 x AA alkaline/no	17/72	109x40x64mm 200g	Kodak EasyShare
<p>The cheap-and-cheerful CX can't match the other contenders for functionality but makes an excellent first-time buyers' model. The 2Mp CCD takes Jpeg-only shots, there's no optical zoom and only two AA batteries. However, Kodak hasn't scrimped on the most important feature – image quality.</p>											

		Intermediate digital cameras	Mega-pixel rating	Max resolution	Optical Digital zoom	Max aperture	File format	Storage media type Battery/rechargeable	Low/high res storage capacity	Dimensions (wxdxh) Weight	Software includes
	1 Samsung DigiMax V4 0845 922 3232 www.samsungcamera.co.uk LAST MONTH 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £330 • 1-year warranty • First review Jul 03 	4Mp	2,272x1,704	3x 4x	f/2.8- f/5	JPG, TIF	32MB Secure Digital 1 x lithium/no	12/675	106x38x55mm 210g	MGI PhotoSuite 3.0 SE
<p>The DigiMax excels in all the right places, offering great shots, ease of use, value for money and a host of features. It isn't hugely responsive and some of the colours are muted, but detail is extremely sharp. You can even tweak focusing with the best manual control option we've seen on a compact digicam.</p>											
	2 Olympus Camedia C-730 Ultra Zoom 0800 072 0070 www.olympus.com LAST MONTH 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £411 • 1-year warranty • First review Spr 03 	3.2Mp	2,048x1,536	10x 3x	f/2.8- f/8	JPG/ TIF	16MB SmartMedia & xD 2 x lithium/no	8/165	108x78x76mm 310g	Camedia Master 4.0, Photolmpact
<p>If you're after the best zoom capabilities then look no further – the compact Camedia C-730 offers a whopping 30x magnification. It might lack the image detail of other 4Mp contenders but it makes up for this with a great specification and features list. The accessories bundle is also worth the extra cost.</p>											
	3 HP Photosmart 850 0870 747 4747 www.hp.com LAST MONTH 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £399 • 1-year warranty • First review Spr 03 	4.1Mp	2,384 x1,734	8x 7x	f/2.8- f/11	JPG/MPG	16MB Secure Digital 4 x AA alkaline/yes	5/71	120x120x85mm 388g	HP Photo & Imaging
<p>A great mid-range camera that takes both good-quality still images and movie footage. The Photosmart has a nice balance of intelligent automatic controls and user-override features. HP hasn't tried to be flash with the functions or the number of controls it provides, ensuring the 850 has broad user appeal.</p>											
	4 Canon Digital Ixus 400 0870 514 3723 www.canon.co.uk NEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £425 • 1-year warranty • First review Aug 03 	4Mp	2,272 x1,704	3x 3.6x	f/2.8 -f/4.9	JPG, MPG	32MB CompactFlash Type II 1 x lithium/yes	14/338	87x57x27mm 227g	Zoom-Browser EX
<p>This sleek, efficient and easy-to-use pocket snapper takes sharp, colourful shots. You're paying over the odds for styling – it's no bigger than a packet of cigarettes – and the 400 lacks plenty of manual tweaks, but if you want one of the best automatic compact cameras around then the Ixus 400 is it.</p>											
	5 Canon PowerShot S45 0870 514 3723 www.canon.co.uk LAST MONTH 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £407 • 1-year warranty • First review Jan 03 	4Mp	2,272 x1,704	3x 3.6x	f/2.8 -f/4.9	JPG, RAW	32MB CompactFlash Type II 1 x lithium/yes	27/195	112x58x42mm 260g	Zoom-Browser EX
<p>The feature-rich S45 offers good specifications, an impressive array of manual configurations and a generous software bundle – but has a price tag to match. It may not have the style clout displayed by other contenders but its metal finish and svelte dimensions make it a sturdy and compact model.</p>											

Buying advice: digital cameras

The amount of megapixels on a Beginner digital camera varies. The lowest you should expect is 2Mp unless you're paying over £150. If you're spending between £300 and £700, expect a model with a minimum of 3Mp. Many Beginner digital cameras take care of all aspects of photography, so all you have to worry about is pointing and shooting. It's

possible to track down a device that offers manual configurations, but you're likely to get a model with settings for a range of photographic conditions. Intermediate cameras should at least offer you control over exposure, ISO sensitivity, white balance and metering options.

It doesn't really matter what type of storage you get as long as the camera is bundled with plenty of it. Sadly, though, this is rarely the case. Beginner digital

cameras come with 8MB to 16MB as standard and even most Intermediate models have 16MB, with 32MB at the top end of the market.

If you don't get a good peripherals bundle then pay out for the optional extras – rechargeable batteries are vital. Lithium-ion cells are the best but most expensive, so you could settle for nickel ones. Shop around for a 4x optical zoom and consider any digital zoom capabilities a bonus.