





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	High/low res storage capacity	Dimensions (wxdxh) Weight	Software and extras
1		Olympus Camedia C-300 Luxury Pack 0800 072 0070 www.olympus.com LAST MONTH 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £248 • 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 rechargeable	30/663	118x50x66mm 240g	Camedia Master 4.0
The Best Buy Camedia combines good features and value for money with an impressive specification list. 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 digital camera.												
2		Fujifilm FinePix F401 Zoom 020 7586 1477 www.fujifilm.co.uk LAST MONTH 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £329 • 1-year warranty • First review Jan 03 	2.1Mp	2,304 x1,728	3x 3.6x	yes yes	JPG, AVI	16MB SmartMedia 1 x lithium rechargeable	9/122	85x28x69mm 185g	FinePix viewer, USB drivers
The F401 offers compact style, superb functionality and good picture quality for a reasonable price. It has an effective pixel range of 2.1Mp but the Super CCD extracts 4Mp from the sensor. This is without the aid of interpolation so photos retain a natural look, rather than being suffused with unnatural colours.												
3		Ricoh Caplio RR30 01782 753 300 www.ricoh-cameras.co.uk LAST MONTH 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £231 • 1-year warranty • First review Jan 03 	3.2Mp	2,048 x1,536	3x 3.4x	yes yes	JPG, TIF	8MB internal flash 2 x AA alkaline	5/52	114x55x33mm 150g	Ricoh Gate L
The RR30 gives you the most megapixels for minimum money – it has a 3.2Mp CCD with 3x optical zoom and a top resolution of 2,048x1,536. The detail on the shots is the best in the chart, but it's a shame that the TIF option only works in mono – it's set up to be used for photographing text only.												
4		Nikon Coolpix 2000 0800 230 220 www.nikon.co.uk LAST MONTH 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £165 • 1-year warranty • First review Nov 02 	2Mp	1,632 x1,224	3x 2.5x	yes yes	JPG	8MB CompactFlash 4 x AA alkaline	8/121	108x38x69mm 190g	Nikon View 5.0
The 2Mp Coolpix offers a maximum resolution of 1,632x1,224. Shot quality wasn't as sharp as the Camedia's, but images were detailed. There's no optical viewfinder, so shots are composed using the LCD which can drain the batteries. We'd therefore recommend investing in some rechargeable nickel cells.												
5		Kodak CX 4210 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	17/72	109x40x64mm 200g	Kodak EasyShare
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.												

			Intermediate digital cameras	Mega-pixel rating	Max resolution	Optical digital zoom	Max aperture	File format	Storage media type battery	High/low res storage capacity	Dimensions (wxdxh) Weight	Software and extras
1		Canon PowerShot S45 0800 616 417 www.canon.co.uk LAST MONTH 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £453 • 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 II 1 x lithium rechargeable	27/195	112x58x42mm 323g	Camedia Master 4.0
The feature-rich S45 offers good specifications but has a price tag to match. It may not have the style clout displayed by other contenders but the metal finish and svelte dimensions make it a sturdy compact model. Add Canon's generous software bundle and you get this month's Best Buy.												
2		Kodak LS443 Zoom 0870 243 0270 www.kodak.co.uk LAST MONTH 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £329 • 1-year warranty • First review Jan 03 	4Mp	2,448 x1,632	3x 3.3x	f/2.8 -f/9.6	JPG	16MB internal flash 1 x lithium rechargeable	12/48	109x38x62mm 260g	Kodak EasyShare
The LS443 can be used without having to refer to the manual and we can see Kodak's traditional user base enjoying the combination of simplicity, image quality and value for money. Indeed, the good-looking shots we took held the sharp detail better than more expensive models.												
3		Fujifilm FinePix S304 Zoom 020 7586 1477 www.fujifilm.co.uk LAST MONTH 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £354 • 1-year warranty • First review Jan 03 	3.2Mp	2,048 x1,536	6x 3.2x	f/2.8 -f/8.2	JPG, AVI	16MB xD-Picture Card 4 x AA alkaline	12/122	100x70x77mm 295g	FinePix viewer
Essentially the S304 Zoom is a high-end beginner camera for novices. True photographers may balk at its lack of options although its impressive image quality will appeal to everyone. The S304 has the best zoom at 6x optical and the 3.2Mp CCD is good but can't compete with the contenders.												
4		Nikon Coolpix 4500 0800 230 220 www.nikon.co.uk LAST MONTH 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £495 • 1-year warranty • First review Oct 02 	4Mp	2,272 x1,704	4x 4x	f/2.6 -f/5.1	JPG, TIF	16MB CompactFlash II 1 x lithium rechargeable	8/229	130x50x73mm 360g	Photoshop Elements
The pricey 4500 remains the camera for professional consumers. The unusual split-swivel chassis makes it easy to take shots from difficult angles and the magnesium alloy body is tougher than its predecessor. The 4Mp Coolpix offers a maximum resolution of 2,272x1,704 and a 4x optical zoom.												
5		Fujifilm FinePix F601 Zoom 020 7586 1477 www.fujifilm.co.uk LAST MONTH 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £510 • 1-year warranty • First review Jul 02 	3.1Mp	2,832 x2,128	3x 4.4x	f/2.8 -f/4.5	JPG, AVI	16MB SmartMedia 1 x lithium-ion	6/33	72x34x93mm 220g	Photo-Deluxe
The F601's well laid-out navigation and menu system on the 1.5in LCD means this camera is simple to use. It uses Super CCD technology to extract 6Mp resolution from the sensor and the 4.4x digital zoom displays little image degradation even at full stretch. A price cut would benefit the FinePix.												

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 under £150. If you're paying 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. That said,

you can track down a device that offers manual configurations, but it's more likely you'll get a model with presets 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 don't get a good peripherals bundle then pay out for the optional extras – rechargeable batteries are vital. Lithium ones are the best but most expensive, so you could settle for nickel. Shop around for a 4x optical zoom and consider any digital zoom capabilities a bonus.