

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"> • £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 rechargeable	30/663	118x50x66mm 240g	Camedia Master 4.0
<p>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 snapper camera.</p>											
	2 Fujifilm FinePix F401 Zoom 020 7586 1477 www.fujifilm.co.uk LAST MONTH 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £323 • 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
<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. This is without the aid of interpolation so photos aren't suffused with unnatural colours.</p>											
	3 Ricoh Caplio RR30 020 8261 4031 www.ricohpmc.com 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 no	JPG, TIF, AVI	8MB internal flash 2 x AA alkaline	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 power the Caplio, but it does support rechargeable lithium ones.</p>											
	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
<p>The 2Mp Coolpix combines value for money with ease of use. Photos contain enough detail to satisfy novices, although quality isn't as sharp as that of other competitors. There's no optical viewfinder – shots are composed using the battery-draining LCD – so invest in some rechargeable nickel cells.</p>											
	5 Kodak CX4210 0870 243 0270 www.kodak.co.uk/go/easyshare 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
<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	High/low res storage capacity	Dimensions (wxdxh) Weight	Software and extras
	1 Olympus Camedia C-730 Ultra Zoom 0800 072 0070 www.olympus.com LAST MONTH 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £411 • 1-year warranty • First review Spr 03 	3.2Mp	2,048 x1,536	10x 3x	f/2.8- f/8	JPG/ TIF	16MB Smart Media & XD 2 x lithium/no	8/165	108x78x76mm 310g	Camedia Master 4.0, PhotoImpact
<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 extended bundle is also worth the extra cost.</p>											
	2 HP Photosmart 850 0870 747 4747 www.hp.com LAST MONTH 2	<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/no	5/71	120x120x85mm 388g	HP Photo & Imaging
<p>A great mid-range camera that takes both good-quality stills 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 appeal.</p>											
	3 Canon PowerShot S45 0800 616 417 www.canon.co.uk LAST MONTH 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £467 • 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 the metal finish and svelte dimensions make it a sturdy and compact model.</p>											
	4 Kodak LS443 Zoom 0870 243 0270 www.kodak.co.uk/go/easyshare LAST MONTH 4	<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/yes	12/48	109x38x62mm 260g	Kodak EasyShare
<p>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.</p>											
	5 Fujifilm FinePix S304 Zoom 020 7586 1477 www.fujifilm.co.uk LAST MONTH 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £323 • 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/no	12/122	100x69x77mm 295g	FinePix Viewer, USB drivers
<p>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 competition.</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 under £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 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.