

TOP 10 BEGINNER & INTERMEDIATE DIGITAL CAMERAS

		Beginner digital cameras	Mega-pixel rating	Max resolution	Optical zoom	Movie	Sound	File format	Storage media type Battery/rechargeable	High/low res storage capacity	Dimensions (wx dxh) Weight	Software includes
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	yes	JPG, TIF	96MB SmartMedia 4 x NiMH/yes	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 snapper camera.												
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	yes	JPG, AVI	16MB SmartMedia 1 x NP-60 lithium/yes	9/122	85x28x69mm 185g	FinePix Viewer Video Impression
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.												
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	yes	JPG, TIF, AVI	8MB internal flash 2 x AA alkaline/no	5/52	114x55x33mm 160g	Ricoh Gate L
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.												
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	yes	JPG	8MB CompactFlash 4 x AA alkaline/no	8/121	108x38x69mm 190g	Nikon View 5.0
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 it's worth investing in some rechargeable nickel cells.												
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	no	JPG	16MB internal flash 2 x AA alkaline/no	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/rechargeable	Low/high res storage capacity	Dimensions (wx dxh) Weight	Software includes	
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	2,048x1,536	10x	f/2.8- f/8	JPG/ TIF	16MB SmartMedia & xD 2 x lithium/no	8/165	108x78x76mm 310g	Camedia Master 4.0, PhotolImpact
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.												
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	f/2.8- f/11	JPG/ MPG	16MB Secure Digital 4 x AA alkaline/yes	5/71	120x120x85mm 388g	HP Photo & Imaging
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.												
3		Canon PowerShot S45 0870 514 3723 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	f/2.8 -f/4.9	JPG, RAW	32MB CompactFlash Type II 1 x lithium/yes	27/195	112x58x42mm 260g	Zoom-Browser EX
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.												
4		Kodak LS443 Zoom 0870 243 0270 www.kodak.co.uk LAST MONTH 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £329• 1-year warranty• First review Jan 03	4Mp	2,448 x1,632	3x	f/2.8 -f/9.6	JPG	16MB internal flash 1 x lithium/yes	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.												
5		Toshiba PDR 3310 01932 828 828 www.toshiba.co.uk NEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £329• 1-year warranty• First review Jun 03	3.2Mp	2,048 x1,536	3x	f/2.8- f/4.6	JPG, AVI	16MB Secure Digital 1 x lithium/yes	6/64	91x57x32mm 275g	Image ex-QT
The 3310 is easy to use and ergonomically comfortable, although image quality could have been better and focusing wasn't that sharp. On the plus side, the Toshiba's overall response time is impressive, you can cycle through images quickly and the automatic focusing feature takes no time at all.												

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.