











TOP 10 PRO DIGITAL CAMERAS & DIGITAL VIDEO CAMERAS

		Pro digital cameras	Actual sensor	Optical zoom Equivalent range	Max aperture	Viewfinder type LCD size	Shutter speeds	Storage media Supplied media	Closest focus distance (macro)	Accessories
1		Sony Cybershot DSC-F717 08705 111 999 www.sony.co.uk LAST MONTH 1	• £765 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • 659g inc battery • First review Dec 02	5Mp 5x 38-190mm	f2.0-2.4	electronic 1.8in	1/2,000 to 30 secs	Memory Stick 32MB	2cm	Hotshoe, sync plug
			The F717 remains an impressive Best Buy, producing the most detailed pictures we've seen from any professional 5Mp model. Its bright optical aperture means that faster shutter speeds can be used under dim conditions, while features like the autofocus illuminator and infrared night mode are excellent additions.							
2		Nikon Coolpix 5000 0800 230 220 www.nikon.co.uk LAST MONTH 2	• £680 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • 414g inc battery • First review Jul 02	5Mp 3x 28-85mm	f2.8-4.8	optical 1.8in	1/2,000 to 60 secs	CompactFlash 32MB	2cm	Hotshoe
			The compact 5Mp Nikon has plenty of features. It delivers 2,560x1,920 pixel images and the lens offers much wider angled shots than competitors'. Choose between manual settings or foolproof automatic modes – there's even a movie option that captures 60 seconds of basic video.							
3		Nikon Coolpix 5700 0800 230 220 www.nikon.co.uk LAST MONTH 3	• £850 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • 512g inc battery • First review Oct 02	5Mp 8x 35-280mm	f2.8-4.2	electronic 1.5in	1/4,000 to 8 secs	CompactFlash 32MB	3cm	Hotshoe
			Nikon's Coolpix 5700 boasts a 5Mp CCD, flip-out and twist LCD screen and a 32MB CompactFlash card which stores up to 20 best-quality Jpeg images (although we'd prefer slightly less compression on these). Its giant 8x optical zoom is equivalent in coverage to 35-280mm, which makes it top dog for focal length.							
4		Minolta Dimage 7Hi 01908 200 400 www.minolta.co.uk NEW	• £935 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • 639g inc battery • First review May 03	5Mp 7x 28-200mm	f2.8-3.5	electronic 1.8in	1/4,000 to 15 secs	CompactFlash 16MB	25cm	Hotshoe, sync plug
			The Minolta is one of the best-featured high-end digital cameras on the market. The Dimage's 7x optical zoom is operated by a mechanical ring, which makes for a more responsive experience. On the down side, the 7Hi is costlier than most of its rivals and you must purchase more memory from day one.							
5		Nikon D100 0800 230 220 www.nikon.co.uk LAST MONTH 5	• £1,617 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • 700g body only • First review Feb 03	6.1Mp any Nikon F-Mount lens	dependent on lens	SLR 1.8in	1/4,000 to 30 secs	CompactFlash none	dependent on lens	Hotshoe
			The D100 digital SLR uses most of Nikon's range of F-Mount 35mm lenses. Its 6.1Mp CCD is physically larger than other models' so it's quieter in use and it produces pictures that look great printed up to A3. Storage is on Type I or II CompactFlash cards but you must supply your own – £1,617 covers the cost of the body alone.							

			Digital video cameras	Image processor	CCD	Optical digital zoom	Max aperture	Horizontal DV resolution	FireWire in out	Focal distance	Multi-media card
1		JVC GR-DVL767EK 0870 330 5000 www.jvc.co.uk LAST MONTH 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £680 ex VAT• 1-year warranty• 567g• First review Jul 02	1/3.8in CCD	1.02Mp	10x 500x	1.8	530 lines	yes yes	3.8-38mm	8MB
The JVC is comfortable to use thanks to its easy-to-reach zoom and record controls. A side-loading tape mechanism is convenient when shooting on a tripod and the 10x optical zoom is smooth. Video quality is also excellent. What really tips the balance, though, is the comprehensive range of connectivity options.											
2		Sony DCR-TRV18E 0870 511 1999 www.sony.co.uk LAST MONTH 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £454 ex VAT• 1-year warranty• 705g• First review Jul 02	1/4in CCD	680,000 pixels	10x 120x	1.7	500 lines	no yes	3.3-33mm	8MB
The Sony DCR-TRV18E combines excellent performance with some great professional add-ons at a bargain price. It offers a 10x optical and 120x digital zoom, both of which provide sharp results. It's comfortable in use and can capture stills via the 680,000 pixel CCD and stores them on its 8MB proprietary Memory Stick.											
3		Samsung VPD77i 0800 521 652 www.samsungelectronics.co.uk LAST MONTH 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £495 ex VAT• 1-year warranty• 590g• First review Jul 02	1/4in CCD	800,000 pixels	22x 500x	1.6	500 lines	yes yes	3.6-79.2mm	8MB
Compact, ergonomic and affordable, the VPD77i offers a side-loading tape mechanism and easy-to-operate controls. The fold-out LCD lacks clarity and detail, but its image processor captures detailed footage. The 22x optical zoom is impressive, although when using the 500x digital zoom the picture becomes fuzzy.											
4		Canon MV550i 0870 514 3723 www.canon.co.uk LAST MONTH 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £680 ex VAT• 1-year warranty• 530g• First review Jul 02	1/6in CCD	540,000 pixels	22x 440x	1.8	500 lines	yes yes	2.8-61.6mm	8MB
Aimed at novices, the sleek and attractive MV550i has plenty of features but Canon has forgotten some key requirements: images lack detail and appear drained of colour. The auto-exposure also coped badly during transitions from low to bright light. Transferring footage via the DV port was very easy, however.											
5		Panasonic NV-DS29B 08705 357 357 www.panasonic.co.uk LAST MONTH 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £499 ex VAT• 1-year warranty• 510g• First review Jul 02	1/4in CCD	800,000 pixels	10x 500x	1.8	500 lines	no yes	3.6-36mm	n/a
The reasonably priced NV-DS29B offers excellent image quality with sharp detail and bright colours. The Panasonic has a smooth 10x optical and 500x digital zoom, too, although there is a serious lack of features. S-Video and serial connections are included, but there's only a DV-out option and no USB port.											

Buying advice: DV cameras

Image quality is not as easy to gauge with digital video as it is with stills. When a manufacturer slaps '800,000 pixel CCD' on the side of the box, this refers only to the resolution of the still pictures it produces, not video.

Furthermore, DV camera resolutions tend to be much lower than those of digital

cameras: camcorders offering 1Mp (megapixel) quality are still in the minority and only one of the models in our Beginner digital camera chart tops this.

Video resolution is given as a horizontal and vertical resolution for the number of lines of colour that go to make up the picture on your TV screen. But many cameras do not advertise this. The vertical resolution for DV camcorders is

usually 540 lines – the theoretical limit for PAL, the UK's video format. The horizontal resolution will vary between models, but the higher the number of lines the better the video quality is likely to be.

To edit your video footage on your PC you will need FireWire in and out so you can record the final version from the PC to a miniDV tape in your camcorder without any loss of picture or sound quality.