








BEGINNER AND INTERMEDIATE DIGITAL CAMERAS

Beginner digital cameras			Last month's position	First reviewed	Price (ex VAT)	Warranty	Megapixel rating	Optical/digital zoom	Storage media type/capacity	Optical viewfinder/size of LCD	Movie/sound	Dimensions (width x depth x height)	Weight
Details													
 1 Olympus Camedia C-220 Zoom 0800 072 0070 www.olympus.co.uk			1	Jul 02	£164	1-year	2Mp	3x/2.5x	SmartMedia/8MB	yes/1.5in	yes/no	112x35x62mm	174g
 2 Sony CyberShot DSC-P71 0870 511 1999 www.sony.co.uk			2	Jul 02	£288	1-year	3.2Mp	3x/6x	Memory Stick/16MB	yes/1.5in	yes/no	125x44x58mm	284g
3 Canon PowerShot A40 0870 514 3723 www.canon.co.uk			3	Jul 02	£254	1-year	2Mp	3x/2.5x	CompactFlash Type I/8MB	yes/1.5in	yes/yes	110x38x71mm	250g
4 Kodak DX 3215 0870 243 0270 www.kodak.co.uk			4	Jul 02	£156	1-year	1.3Mp	2x/2x	internal memory/8MB	yes/1.6in	no/no	121x46x70mm	230g
5 Ricoh Caplio RR120 01782 753 330 www.ricoh-cameras.co.uk			5	Aug 02	£205	1-year	2.2Mp	3x/2x	SmartMedia/8MB	yes/1.5in	no/no	105x55x68mm	230g
Intermediate digital cameras			Last month's position	First reviewed	Price (ex VAT)	Warranty	Megapixel rating	Optical/digital zoom	Storage media type/capacity	Shutter speeds (in 1/3 stop increments)	Max aperture	Dimensions (width x depth x height)	Weight
 1 Nikon Coolpix 4500 0800 230 220 www.nikon.co.uk			1	Oct 02	£495	1-year	4Mp	4x/4x	CompactFlash Type II/16MB	0.1/2,300	f/2.6-f/5.1	130x50x73mm	360g
 2 FujiFilm FinePix F601 Zoom 020 7586 1477 www.fujifilm.co.uk			2	Jul 02	£510	1-year	6Mp (3.1Mp true)	3x/4.4x	SmartMedia/16MB	0.1/2,000	f/2.8-f/4.0	72x34x93mm	220g
3 Olympus Camedia C-40 Zoom 0800 072 0070 www.olympus.co.uk			3	May 02	£425	1-year	4Mp	2.8x/2.5x	SmartMedia/16MB	0.1/1,000	f/2.8-f/4.8	87x69x43mm	190g
4 Canon PowerShot G2 0800 514 3723 www.canon.co.uk			4	Jan 02	£637	1-year	4Mp	3.6x/3.1x	CompactFlash Type II/32MB	0.1/1,000	f/2.0-f/2.5	121x77x64mm	425g
5 Canon PowerShot S30 0800 514 3723 www.canon.co.uk			5	Jul 02	£468	1-year	3.2Mp	3x/3.2x	CompactFlash Type I/16MB	0.1/1,500	f/2.8-f/4.9	112x42x58mm	260g



BEGINNER DIGITAL CAMERAS

1 Olympus Camedia C-220 Zoom

 When it comes to value for money and ease of use, the Best Buy Olympus Camedia stands head and shoulders above the competition. While other cameras may come with more extras or higher specifications, none can offer 2Mp (megapixel) resolution for under £200.

This 2Mp CCD (charge-coupled device) translates into a maximum resolution of 1,600x1,200 and the C-220 Zoom is bundled with an 8MB SmartMedia storage card. This can capture five high-resolution images or, if you drop the quality, it will stretch to holding 49 shots. There's no TIF option or audio, but you can catch up to 60 seconds of movie footage and there's an impressive 3x optical zoom. The Camedia is easy to use thanks to a well laid-out menu system on the clear 1.5in LCD (liquid crystal display). Most of the photography settings are taken care of automatically, with preset options for white balance and exposure, but there's no jogdial to confuse the novice user – instead there's a four-way navigation pad.

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INTERMEDIATE DIGITAL CAMERAS

1 Nikon Coolpix 4500

 Remaining our Best Buy for another month is the Coolpix 4500, which takes the split swivel chassis from the 995 (reviewed Dec 01) but adds a host of design, feature and specification improvements that will please advanced and novice users alike. The design still makes it easy to take shots from difficult angles, but this version's compact magnesium alloy body is much tougher. The flash is also better positioned to reduce red-eye. The 4Mp (megapixel) Coolpix offers a maximum resolution of 2,272x1,704 and a 4x optical zoom. Manufacturers rarely bundle enough memory so we weren't surprised to see that Nikon has opted for just a 16MB CompactFlash card. This is fine for low-resolution shots but it only provides storage for eight high-resolution Jpegs or one TIF shot. On the plus side Nikon now officially supports the use of IBM's Microdrive so you can pack in up to 1GB of storage. Advanced users can also delve into an excellent array of manual configurations, which are easy to use due to its well-designed button layout.

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BEGINNER DIGITAL CAMERAS

[2] Sony Cybershot DSC-P71



Claiming the title of most expensive digital camera in the Beginners chart, the Cybershot DSC-P71 offers plenty of features to justify its higher price tag and the images we took with it were the best of the bunch. Sony has used the familiar compact Cybershot chassis and it serves this 3.2Mp (megapixel) device well. As this is a low-end model there's little manual control – the camera takes care of everything. The Sony Cybershot was pipped to the post by the sheer value for money offered by our Best Buy, but if you can afford it then this is our recommendation.



[3] Canon PowerShot A40

The PowerShot A40 is an all-round model, but its lower resolution CCD (charge-coupled device) stops it from moving further up the chart. Given the Canon is a 2Mp (megapixel) model, it just can't compete on value for money. Even so, we still don't think you'd regret opting for this camera. It's ideal for novices and is one of the few devices in this price range that offer a RAW format for the highest-quality images.



[4] Kodak DX 3215

The DX 3215 comes with a docking cradle, which makes charging batteries and downloading photos easy. It also has a wealth of software to help you view and share images. Unfortunately, though, the Kodak can't match the image results achieved by its rivals. It is also a very slow camera – hence its position at number four.



[5] Ricoh Caplio RR120

While the Caplio is good value for money, its features are too limited to see it climb higher up our chart. The 2.2Mp (megapixel) device offers a maximum resolution of 1,792x1,200 and the 8MB SmartMedia card can hold up to seven high-resolution Jpeg images. The camera offers basic automatic photography, although there's scope for a few user-defined settings. Quality is reliable at the maximum resolution and colours look good, but cut the resolution and your photos will only be suitable for use online.



INTERMEDIATE DIGITAL CAMERAS

[2] FujiFilm FinePix F601 Zoom



The stylish and compact F601 Zoom remains our Recommended device for another month. A well laid-out navigation and menu system on the clear 1.5in LCD (liquid crystal display) mean it's simple to use and, although the F601 has a 3.1Mp (megapixel) CCD (charge-coupled device), it uses Fuji's Super CCD technology to extract 6Mp resolution from the sensor. Its 4.4x digital zoom displays little image degradation even at full stretch, while wider ISO settings, higher shutter speeds and a better flash distance help this model cope with a diverse range of photographic conditions.



[3] Olympus Camedia C-40 Zoom

The Camedia's main claims to fame are its size and low price. At £425, the C-40 Zoom is one of the cheapest top-end models we've reviewed and, measuring just 87x69x43mm, it is also extremely compact. The CCD (charge-coupled device) offers 4Mp (megapixel) resolution and image quality is impressive. You're also given lots of control over your pictures thanks to the manual shutter speed priority and aperture priority automatic modes.



[4] Canon PowerShot G2

The PowerShot G2 is higher up the price bracket than the rest of the competition, but if you want a serious camera then Canon is well worth saving your pennies for. This 4Mp (megapixel) device captures images up to a maximum resolution of 2,272x1,704dpi (dots per inch), while the 3.6x optical zoom lens is of a high quality. If you aspire to more than snapshot photography, but don't want to carry an SLR (single lens reflex) camera around, the G2 is a worthy consideration.



[5] Canon PowerShot S30

The Canon PowerShot claims a place in the chart by virtue of its low price and good features. The 3.2Mp (megapixel) CCD (charge-coupled device) is more than respectable and the photos we took looked better than some cameras with a higher specification. Responsive yet easy to use, this is perfect for point-and-click consumers as well as keen photographers. Canon has also been generous with the software bundle.

