


BEGINNER AND INTERMEDIATE DIGITAL CAMERAS

Beginner digital cameras												Storage media/ supplied memory	Optical viewfinder	Battery/ recharger supplied	Low/high resolution capacity	LCD size (inches)	Lens protection	Dimensions (width x depth x height)	Weight	Software
Details	Last month's position	First reviewed	Price (ex VAT)	Warranty	Megapixel rating	Maximum resolution	Optical zoom	Digital zoom	Movie/sound	File format										
 1 Olympus Camedia C-220 Zoom 0800 072 0070 www.olympus.com	NEW	Jul 02	£164	1-year	2Mp	1,600x1,200	3x	2.5x	Y/N	Jpeg	SmartMedia/ 8MB	Y	2 x AA Alkaline/ N	49/5 images	1.5in	Slide cover	112x35x62mm	174g	Camedia Master 4.0, QT	
 2 Sony Cybershot DSC-P71 0990 111 999 www.sony.co.uk	NEW	Jul 02	£288	1-year	3.2Mp	2,048x1,536	3x	2x	Y/N	Jpeg	Memory Stick/ 16MB	Y	2 x AA NiMH/ Y	240/10 images	1.5in	Built-in auto	125x44x58mm	230g	Pixela Image Mixer	
3 Canon PowerShot A40 0800 616 417 www.canon.co.uk	NEW	Jul 02	£254	1-year	2Mp	1,600x1,200	3x	2.5x	Y/Y	Jpeg/RAW	CompactFlash Type 1/8MB	Y	4 x AA Alkaline/ N	87/7 images	1.5in	Built-in auto	110x38x71mm	250g	Canon utilities, QT	
4 Kodak DX 3215 0870 243 0270 www.kodak.co.uk	NEW	Jul 02	£156	1-year	1.3Mp	1,280x960	2x	2x	N/N	Jpeg	Internal memory/ 8MB	Y	Proprietary 1 x NiMH/Y	80/20 images	1.6in	None	121x46x70mm	230g	Kodak Picture	
5 HP PhotoSmart 715 0870 547 4747 www.hp.com	NEW	Jul 02	£288	1-year	3.3Mp	2,048x1,536	3x	2x	N/N	Jpeg	CompactFlash Type 1/16MB	Y	4 x AA Alkaline/ N	162/10 images	1.8in	Plastic cap	128x74x61mm	310g	HP Photo Imaging	

Intermediate digital cameras												Sensitivity equivalent	Storage media/ supplied memory	Optical viewfinder	Battery/ recharger supplied	Low/high resolution capacity	LCD size (inches)	Lens protection	Dimensions (width x depth x height)	Weight	Software
Details	Last month's position	First reviewed	Price (ex VAT)	Warranty	Megapixel rating	Maximum resolution	Optical/digital zoom	Maximum aperture	File format	Shutter speeds											
 1 Fuji FinePix F601 Zoom 020 7586 1477 www.fujifilm.co.uk	NEW	Jul 02	£495	1-year	6Mp (3.1Mp true)	2,832x 2,128	3x/4.4x	f/2.8-f/4.0	Jpeg	1/2,000	ISO-1,600	SmartMedia/16MB	Y	Proprietary 1xLith/Y	122/6 images	1.5in	Built-in auto	72x34x93mm	220g	PhotoDeluxe HE, Active Share, FinePix Viewer	
 2 Olympus Camedia C-40 Zoom 0800 072 0070 www.olympus.com	NEW	May 02	£511	1-year	3.9Mp	2,272x 1,704	2.8x/2.5x	f/2.8-f/4.8	Jpeg/ TIF	1/1,000	ISO-400	SmartMedia/16MB	Y	Proprietary 1xLith/N	165/5 images	1.8in	Slide cover	87x69x43mm	190g	Camedia Master 4.0, QT	
3 Canon PowerShot G2 0800 616 417 www.canon.co.uk	NEW	Jan 02	£637	1-year	4Mp	3,200x 2,400	3.6x/3.1x	f/2.0-f/2.5	Jpeg/ RAW	1/1,000	ISO-400	CompactFlash Type 2/32MB	Y	Proprietary 1xLith/Y	337/10 images	1.8in	Built-in auto	121x77x64mm	425g	Photoshop LE, Canon utilities, QT	
4 Canon PowerShot S30 0800 616 417 www.canon.co.uk	NEW	Jul 02	£380	1-year	3.2Mp	2,048x 1,536	3x/3.2x	f/2.8-f/4.9	Jpeg/ RAW	1/1,500	ISO-800	CompactFlash Type 1/16MB	Y	Proprietary 1xLith/Y	165/5 images	1.8in	Slide cover	112x42x58mm	260g	ArcSoft PhotoImpression, Video Impression, Canon utilities	
5 Pentax Optio 330 01753 792 731 www.pentax.co.uk	NEW	Jan 02	£412	1-year	3.34Mp	2,048x 1,536	3x/2x	f/2.8-f/4.8	Jpeg	1/2,000	ISO-200	CompactFlash Type 1/16MB	Y	Proprietary 1xLith/Y	228/10 images	1.6in	Built-in auto	92x31x59mm	205g	ACDSEE	


BEGINNER DIGITAL CAMERAS
1 Olympus Camedia C-220 Zoom

Olympus' more expensive cameras have never fared too well in our charts, so we weren't expecting that much from this more modestly priced low-end offering, the C-220 Zoom. However, this digital device made us think again – so much so that we've awarded it our Best Buy. When it comes to value for money and ease of use, the 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 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. You'll also get an impressive 3x optical zoom on the Camedia that can be enhanced using the 2.5x digital zoom. We took a series of shots in different settings and the resulting images had good colour reproduction and adequate detail.

**NEW**

The Olympus has a compact silver chassis with a slide cover that protects the lens. Though its plastic body makes it lightweight, the small frame means it still has a robust feel. Pull the cover open and the lens and flash extend.

The Camedia C-220 Zoom is easy to install and even easier to use thanks to a well laid-out menu system on the clear 1.5in LCD (liquid crystal display). Granted, 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.

This Best Buy Olympus isn't perfect – it can be unresponsive, and it is also powered by standard AA batteries, so we'd recommend swapping these for some rechargeable ones. However, given its price these are minor niggles. Above all, this is a robust camera that provides reliable image quality.

2 Sony Cybershot DSC-P71

One of the more expensive Beginner cameras, the Cybershot DSC-P71 offers plenty of features to justify its higher price tag. Consequently, we've awarded it a Recommended award. Sony has used the familiar compact

Cybershot chassis and it serves this 3.2Mp (megapixel) camera well. Although the case is plastic it's sturdy enough, however we did notice one design flaw in the positioning of the navigation pad. It sits on the bottom lefthand side of the 1.5in LCD (liquid crystal display), so you need a dextrous left hand to use it comfortably – ideal for those who are lefthanded, but for everyone else it is a bit tricky to use.

Sony has introduced some new technology into the P71 to ensure that you get the best shots whatever the conditions. These include different focus points, preflash exposure metering for calculating the best possible exposure, and slow shutter noise reduction to eliminate grain on long-exposure shots. There's also a selection of preprogrammed configurations for white balance and some image effects if you're feeling a bit arty.

As the Sony is a low-end model there's little manual control – the camera takes care of everything. Clearly leaving it up to the camera is safe, though, as the images we took were the best of the bunch. The Cybershot comes with two NiMH (nickel

**NEW**

metal hydride) rechargeable batteries and a charger, which will offer better life than the AA batteries used by some of its rivals.

Overall, this is the best camera, though it was pipped to the post by the sheer value for money offered by our Best Buy. If you can afford it then this is our recommendation.

3 Canon PowerShot A40

The PowerShot A40 is good all-round model that failed to grab a higher place due to a lower-resolution CCD (charge-coupled device). 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 the Canon.

Like the Recommended Sony, the PowerShot A40 offers plenty of features normally found

on more expensive cameras, such as different focus locks and high shutter speeds. It also offers user-selectable ISO settings, which you can tweak to ensure that you get the best pictures for different lighting conditions.

**NEW**

At this price full autoshooting is the name of the game, and this is a point-and-click model which is ideal for novices. Image quality is as good as you can expect from a 2Mp camera, and this is one of the few devices in this price range that offer a RAW format for the highest-quality images. There is a generous software bundle offering a whole host of Canon utilities. Unfortunately, there are very few extras with just an 8MB CompactFlash Type I card included for storage, and the power coming from four AA batteries.

4 Kodak DX 3215

The DX 3215 is a good choice if you are new to digital photography. It comes with a docking cradle, which makes charging the 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 results achieved by its rivals at the top of the chart.



The DX 3215 is simplicity itself to use, just sit it in the dock to charge the NiMH (nickel metal hydride) battery or load images from the camera on to your PC. However, it's not perfect and we

did have some complaints; there is no cap to protect the lens while not in use, nor is there a separate connection for an AC adapter. It is also very slow, hence its position at number four.

5 HP PhotoSmart 715

At 3.3Mp (megapixels) the PhotoSmart 715 had the highest resolution CCD (charge-coupled device) in our Beginner chart but it couldn't get beyond fifth place. For photography alone the quality is excellent – you won't be disappointed – however, as an overall package we felt the HP wasn't that well put together.

The PhotoSmart is bulky and, even though its weight of 310g doesn't sound that heavy, it doesn't include the power source. Add in the four AA batteries and you are lugging almost 500g around in your bag. There is no video-out port, so you can't view images through a TV, and the LCD (liquid crystal display) is disappointingly murky. These crucial factors have let the HP down and mean that it can do no better than fifth place.



INTERMEDIATE DIGITAL CAMERAS

1 Fuji FinePix F601 Zoom

The new FinePix F601 Zoom is the successor to one of our ex-Best Buys – the FinePix 6800 Zoom. The F601 uses the same chassis, albeit slightly more compact, and offers the same resolution CCD (charge-coupled device), but it has been updated with some innovative new features.

The 601F Zoom is a compact camera with a metal alloy finish and is one of the most stylish models we've seen in our Test Centre. The Porsche design is tall rather than wide and has a lens cover that slides over a 3x optical zoom. Usage, despite a vast array of manual configurations, is simplicity itself thanks to a well laid out navigation and menu system on the clear 1.5in LCD (liquid crystal display).

Though the F601 has a 3.1Mp (megapixel) CCD it utilises Fuji's own Super CCD technology, so it manages to extract 6Mp resolution from the sensor. The Super CCD in the F601 is a third-generation version so it has some added benefits. It has a higher sensitivity to aid overall image quality and offers better photography in low light conditions.

All the photographs we took displayed faithful colour reproduction and accurate detail. We were also impressed with the 4.4x digital zoom. Image quality usually degrades quickly with digital zooms but, on full



zoom, there was little loss of detail. There's a movie mode option and you can annotate each image with a small sound file. Wider ISO settings, higher shutter speeds, and a better flash distance, all help this model cope with a diverse range photographic conditions – we'd love to have seen a TIF option, though.

Overall the F601 is a worthy successor to the 6800 Zoom, and its excellent combination of style and substance, make it an equally deserving winner of our Best Buy award.

2 Olympus Camedia C-40 Zoom

Changes in our digital camera charts allow us to score cameras more stringently than before, and enable us to cover a wider range of models. But despite all the upheaval, last month's Best Buy from our old Professional camera chart still holds on to an award, although this month it is our Recommended choice in the Intermediate chart.

The Camedia's main claims to fame are its size and low price. At £511, it is the one of the cheapest top-end models we've reviewed and, measuring just 87x69x43mm,

it is one of the most compact devices we've seen. But the small size doesn't mean this isn't a good quality camera – the CCD (charge-coupled device) offers 3.95Mp (megapixel) resolution and image quality is impressive. Furthermore, you're given lots of control over your pictures thanks to the manual shutter speed priority and aperture priority automatic modes.



Image storage solutions

Storage has always been an issue for digital photography enthusiasts. With higher resolutions continuously pushing up the amount of memory required to contain data, photographers are looking for better storage solutions. There's a plethora of memory cards on the market but even the largest, IBM's Microdrive, only offers 1GB. Compared to the competition this is a huge amount of room to store images and it will cope with over 1,000 Jpeg images generated by a 1Mp (megapixel) camera.

However, the average user wants the best possible quality from their camera and low resolution photographs don't fit the bill. For example, an image taken on a 4Mp camera with a TIF format option

will be about 11MB in size. A Microdrive will be able to store around 90 images of this size, but the majority of digital cameras have much less storage bundled.

Crown Photo Systems believes it has the answer to this problem. It has developed a portable storage solution called the Image Tank. Effectively a portable hard drive, the Image Tank is available with a 20GB or 40GB capacity. It is small enough to fit into the palm of your hand and enables photographers to copy images from CompactFlash and SmartMedia cards. Secure Digital and Memory Stick users are left out in the cold, unfortunately, but it's a good start and a lot cheaper than high-capacity storage cards.



Needless to say, there have to be some compromises made as it's unrealistic to expect to have every feature in such a compact and reasonably priced digital camera. The 2.8x optical lens can't quite compete with those of the more expensive cameras and the Camedia is supplied with a one-use lithium-ion battery rather than the more common rechargeable. There's also a distinct lack of bundled third-party software applications, so you have to use the limited Olympus option.

But in all other respects the C-40 Zoom is a serious digital camera. You can carry it with you all day long without noticing it, yet it is able to take superb-quality photographs at a modest price.



3 Canon PowerShot G2

The PowerShot G2 has been around for a while now but we just can't seem to shake this brilliant camera from our charts. It is a former Best Buy and somewhat higher up the price bracket than most of the other entries this month, but if you want a serious camera then the Canon is well worth saving your pennies for.

In addition to the automatic exposure mode, there's a choice of aperture, shutter speed priority or full manual exposure. The 4Mp (megapixel) CCD (charge-coupled 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. It has a separate optical viewfinder, although if you're worried about framing errors with macro photography you can use the LCD (liquid crystal display) instead. If you aspire to more than snapshot photography, but don't want to carry an SLR (single lens reflex) type camera around, the G2 is well worth consideration.

4 Canon PowerShot S30

The fourth of our other new entrants this month, the PowerShot S30 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

photographs we took looked better than some digital cameras with a higher specification. The Canon is compact but the metal alloy finish makes it a hardy model that will stand up to wear and tear. It has a first-rate array of options, is extremely responsive and yet remains easy to use so it will appease point-and-click consumers as well as keen photographers. Canon has also been generous with the software bundle.



5 Pentax Optio 330

The Pentax has been in the charts since January 02, though in our new line-up it has fallen to fifth place. The Optio 330 is an excellent camera with a robust metal body and offers a 3x optical zoom. It has three main shooting settings on the jog dial and a simple menu system that includes configurations for various photographic conditions. It even has manual focus and night shooting, to add variation and control. Its fast reactions, from picture playback to image capture, make it a joy to use.

