

Digital camera buying checklist

Key questions to ask before you buy. Print out and take along when shopping.

1. Return policies

What is your policy if I decide to return the camera? Is there a restocking fee?

2. Megapixels

How many megapixels does the camera have? Will it be enough for the maximum size photos I plan to print?

3. Features

Are there any features that set this camera apart from others? Does it have auto features for focus, exposure and white balance?

4. Shooting capabilities

Does the camera have both point-and-shoot and advanced shooting capabilities? Does it have manual controls?

5. Focal length

What is the focal length of the zoom lens? What is the 35mm equivalent?

6. Zoom

Is the zoom optical (a true zoom)? Does the camera have a digital zoom (a simulated zoom) and, if so, can it be turned off?

7. Modes

Does the camera have a macro mode for close-up photos? What are the other scene modes?

8. Memory

How does the camera store photos? Is the storage built-in, removable or both? What type of memory card is used? Does the manufacturer recommend using a high-speed memory card?

9. Image storage capabilities

Is a memory card included in the purchase? If so, what is the capacity? How many images can be stored on it at the highest resolution; at the lowest?

10. Battery type and cost

What types of batteries are used in the camera? Are they standard or proprietary? If proprietary, what is the cost to purchase an extra battery and where can I purchase it? Can the camera also use standard alkaline or lithium batteries?

11. Included accessories

What cables are included with the camera? What other accessories are included in the price?

12. Software

What software comes with the camera? Does it include an image editing program?

13. Gray market

Is the camera gray market? If so, does it have a warranty and is it eligible for authorized repair in my own country? Are camera drivers and video and electrical components compatible in my country?

14. Warranty

What type of warranty does the camera have? How long is it? Does it cover both parts and labor for the entire time?

15. Extended Warranty

Does the warranty cover both parts and labor? Does it cover anything beyond mechanical and electrical failures and defects in workmanship and/or materials? Can it be renewed or transferred to a new owner? Does it have a "no lemon" policy? Can it be cancelled and, if so, will I receive a pro-rated refund?

16. Service and Support

If the camera ever needs repair, can I have it done locally or must I mail it? Will service be done by an authorized repair service center? What is the typical turn-around time? Does the manufacturer offer phone or online technical support for the camera?