

HOW TO  
GET STARTED  
IN

PHOTO  
GRAPHY



# Introduction



If you want to join the 2.1 billion people who currently own a camera in the world, how would you go about getting started in photography? In fact, how did the successful photographers get started?

Bryan Petersen, of [Understanding Exposure](#) fame, got started at the end of his high school years when his brother introduced him to photography. At that time, Bryan was training to be a commercial artist and realised he could produce art in 1/250 second, instead of taking hours when drawing or painting art.

Ansel Adams, renowned world wide for his [black and white wildlife and scenery photography](#), got started when his parents gave him a Kodak Box Brownie when he was 14 years old. He continued with his passion for photography into an old age until he died in 1984.

Scott Kelby has written more than fifty books on photography subjects, which include [The Digital Photography Book series](#). His older brother was a photographer and got Scott hooked travelling around Europe for a couple of years taking travel photographs. His first camera was a Pentax SLR camera with one or two cheap lenses.

Jim Miotke, author of [The Better Photo guidebook series](#) and founder of BetterPhoto.com, started out as a writer. He got back into photography after a vacation to Europe when he realised that his photos were “awful”. He decided to learn all he could about photography, while working as a salesman in a camera store.

Their passion for their hobby became their profession to the point where they are now renowned for their photographic expertise.



# Choosing Your Camera Equipment

There are normally five stages to the camera buying process. First, you think you may need or want a camera for whatever reason. Stage 2 is where you do research on as many places that you could possibly refer to and see which is the best camera is for you. The next stage is where you do your evaluation and make comparisons so that you can make a shortlist of a few cameras. With your shortlist in hand, you now go and buy your camera. Lastly, you use your camera and after a while decide whether you have made the right choice, until a better model is produced!

## Setting Your Budget

The cost of the camera is usually top of most people's list of considerations when buying a camera. They often have a price in mind that they can afford easily and will generally look at items near to that price. The range of prices for a new camera can vary from as little as \$3 for a disposable point and shoot film type that is often used at weddings, to as much as \$7,000 for a digital SLR professional Canon EOS 1DX. There is definitely a camera to suit most people's budgets!

With the advent of digital photography, the most popular camera was what is commonly known as the point and shoot camera. This type of camera suits most beginners because it is fully automatic and users don't have to think about aperture settings, ISO settings, shutter speed, exposure settings in general, or flash use. They retail from anything between \$5 for a small compact camera that fits onto a key ring to over \$5,000 for a Fujifilm X20 compact camera. The average lower range price is about \$120 for a Nikon Coolpix S31 compact camera, for example.

However, the mobile phone and iPad with their built in cameras have now superseded the point and shoot compact camera as being the most popular camera used



*(Photograph by [www.nikon.com](http://www.nikon.com))*

today. In 2011 it was estimated that about 30 billion photographs were shot with a mobile phone in the US alone. You can buy a little known mobile phone brand from China on eBay from as low as \$25 or you can spend over a \$1,000 for a state of the art Apple iPhone 5 (until a newer more expensive version appears on the market). Many users generally pay about \$200 for their mobile phone.

For photographers who want to have more control of how they take photos, the digital single lens reflex (DSLR) is a popular choice. DSLR cameras have interchangeable lenses allowing you to have more choice and flexibility in your photography day to day needs.

While the DSLR camera has an automatic mode, this type of camera also offers a wide variety of programs to suit most occasions including a full manual control program. At the lower end of the market, you can purchase a Fujifilm Finepix S1800 DSLR camera for around \$140. A Canon EOS 1DX DSLR camera can set you back over \$7,000. For beginners or for what is termed entry level, the Nikon D3200 at \$530 or the Canon EOS 60D at \$599 are very popular purchases. There are intermediate DSLR cameras that cost on average \$900–\$1500 which have more controls and options than an entry level DSLR camera has.

Should you buy a cheaper camera just to save money, or an expensive one because you think it will make you a better photographer? With a cheaper camera, you will invariably get what you pay for regarding performance and quality. Cheaper cameras are not as robust and often made from plastic, whereas more expensive types are usually made of metal. Nikon, however, and other manufacturers make some high end cameras which are



*(Photograph by [www.samsung.com](http://www.samsung.com))*



*(Photograph by [www.canon.com](http://www.canon.com))*



all rigid plastic and are very sturdy indeed. You won't necessarily get quality photographs when you use a cheaper camera, especially if it has a poor quality lens. You may however get great photographs with a cheaper camera which has a good quality lens. Although it's also fair to say that expensive cameras don't necessarily produce good quality photos. That depends on your skill as a photographer rather than the camera you use.

## Conducting Your Research

If you don't undertake adequate research in buying your camera gear, you will probably end up with something that is unsuitable for you, or it is either too cheap or too expensive. To get the best camera that suits your needs, at the best price for that model, conduct as much research as necessary until you feel you have a handle on what the market is truly about.

### **Camera Makes or Brands**

Choosing a camera by make and model can have its own problems too. According to Wikipedia, there are 41 active manufacturers who produce consumer type cameras, with a further 22 manufacturers who now no longer make cameras. The more popular brands are made by Canon, Nikon, Pentax, Olympus, Sony, Fujifilm, Sigma and Samsung. Add the plethora of increasing number of camera models that each manufacturer has produced over the years, and this means there is an enormous number of new and used cameras to choose from.

Many photographers have their favourite brand and this is particularly the case with the Canon and Nikon brand users. Each camera brand has distinctive and often similar control option features, albeit with a different name or location on the camera. Each camera manufacturer





produces a lens compatible with their camera make. So, if some one wished to change their existing camera brand for another, they would need to purchase a different set of lenses, significantly adding to the cost. Some third party lens manufacturers do make lens that are compatible for each camera brand, although some functions such as auto focus may be lost.

### Camera Features

Gone are the days when you inserted a film (even that defeated some of us), pressed the button, wound it on and then took pictures. Yes, you had to wait a few days to get your photos back from the pharmacist or lab, and not all the photos developed properly, but it didn't always take an expert to get some usable prints.

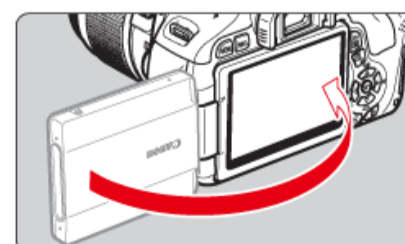
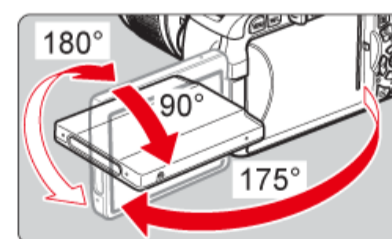
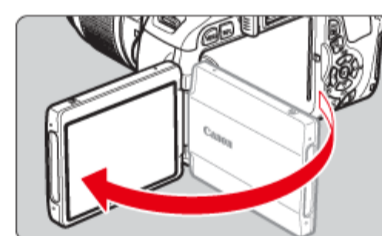
The digital camera age generally replaced film use because you can take as many photos as you want for no extra cost. You can also see the image immediately after you take the photo. There are a few drawbacks, however. There are so many features on digital cameras that it seems to take forever to master them all. There are also some features and controls which still continue to baffle and confuse the vast majority of us.

Despite the complexity of some digital cameras, there are sufficient features which still appeal to most of us. The camera facial recognition feature is a boon for the average happy snapper. Point the camera at your friends and the camera auto focuses on their faces to produce sharp images every time.

LCD screens help us to see the images clearly and that become even more pertinent when taking HD movies, which many digital cameras feature today. Many cameras now have vari-directional or articulated LCD screens to help view the image from a variety of directions and angles. It also helps protect the screen from scratches and dust when closed.



(Photograph by [www.nikon.com](http://www.nikon.com))



(Images from [www.canon.com](http://www.canon.com))

The preset program modes for landscapes, night time views, sports action, child portraits, pets, and macro mode all enable the average person to produce good quality photographs far better than when we all used film cameras.

There are some features on a digital camera which if understood more clearly, could help you better make your choice in purchasing a camera.

The first feature most would be purchasers consider is the camera's resolution, or how many megapixels it has. In the early days, 0.3 or 0.5 megapixels were considered to be state of the art for a digital camera.



*(Photograph by [www.nikon.com](http://www.nikon.com))*



*(Photograph by [http://www.123rf.com/photo\\_8644096](http://www.123rf.com/photo_8644096))*



These days, 20 megapixels is fast becoming the norm. In reality though, it is far better to have great lens quality to produce extra sharp images. Having more megapixels only gives you greater flexibility in printing larger images once you've taken the photograph. If you only want to print 5 x 7 inch photos, then a camera having 3.2 megapixels will suffice. Larger prints greater than 8 x 10 inches need larger than 7.2 megapixels resolution. Remember though that lots of megapixels with a poor quality lens produce poor quality images.

Some camera manufacturers tout their brand models as having a powerful digital zoom capability. This isn't as attractive as it first appears as digital zooming is the result of in-camera processing. Any photo can be enlarged to just about infinity using post processing editing software, such as Photoshop or GIMP. It is far better for a camera to have an exceptional optical zoom feature as it is optical quality of the lens that gives sharp images. Prime or fixed lenses give better quality images generally than zoom focal length lenses.

For the sports event photographer or those of us just wishing to freeze the action, the number of frames per second that the camera can take is important. Some cheap point and shoot cameras are only able to take one photograph every few seconds, while DSLRs on average take several photos or frames per second. The higher end professional DSLR is capable of shooting 10 frames per second!





# Best Lenses for Beginners



If a camera has live view, then many people think that this is a definite must have feature. Unfortunately, for many cheaper cameras, particularly those with shutter lags longer than 0.1 second, the live view just becomes a view that is delayed. The effect of this is that you may not be taking the photo that you want because the image is different when you press the shutter. It takes a little time for the sensor to process and produce the image. DSLR cameras invariably have better electronics and sensors and live view is much faster without any noticeable delay. Operating a camera in Live View on a DSLR camera discharges the camera battery very quickly so make sure you have one or even two spare batteries.

## Best Lenses for Beginners

Probably the best walking around lens for a beginner is the 55-200mm as it will allow you to capture images in most situations except for those wide angle shots. Depending on what you want to shoot, will depend on what lens you use.



### **Photography Style and Lens Type**

In the beginning, most amateur photographers will try and capture any and every image they see. Eventually, they realise they are particularly good at certain kinds of photography. They might prefer landscapes, portraits, wildlife, or sports events. They might excel in close up shots or night time photography. Whatever they decide to photograph in developing their photography style, can also determine what equipment to buy, especially in lens choice.

It should be noted that generally speaking only DSLR cameras allow lenses to be changed. There are now some exceptions for the point and shoot camera and even for the phone camera. Just remember that you cannot use Nikon lenses on a Canon camera body and vice versa. There are some third party lens manufacturers like Sigma and Tamron who make lens for different camera brands.

If you enjoy capturing landscapes, city views, street photography or home interiors, or any image where you need to photograph as wide as possible, then a wide angle lens might feature in your lens choice. Wide angle lenses have a focal length of less than 50mm.

They are classed as fixed or prime focal lengths such as 25mm or as zoom focal lengths such as 18 – 45mm.

If you wish to specialise in taking portraits and headshots then an 85mm lens is perfect. Fashion photography, on the other hand, could require a lens with a focal length greater than 105mm.



*(Photograph by [www.nikon.com](http://www.nikon.com))*



*([www.nikon.com](http://www.nikon.com))*

The telephoto lens allows you to get in close and personal without fear of being observed or by putting yourself in danger when photographing for example, wild life and sporting events.

Telephoto lenses are in the 100 mm and greater focal lengths. Super telephoto lenses in excess of 300mm focal length can be used in astronomy photography. Telephoto lenses can be either prime or zoom focal length lenses.

Literally at the other end of the scale, the macro lens allows you capture images very close up, which is great for shooting fine details of flowers and insects.

For everyday use, the 50 mm prime lens is ideal in that it can often be used at an aperture setting of f1.4 or f1.8, making it suitable for photography in low light conditions, without the use of flash sometimes. They are light and are usually, inexpensive to buy. Some of these lenses can be bought for around \$100. The 50 mm lens also helps in composing your photographs as you have to move closer to your subject and offers a lot more flexibility. It has an added bonus of producing very sharp images.

With the many and varied lenses available, just what is a good all round lens for the beginner? Many DSLR cameras come with a lens in a package for you to purchase. They usually come with an 18-55mm lens or a 55-200mm lens. These two lenses have enough versatility so that the beginner to photography will be generally satisfied. You could even go one stage further and buy an 18-200mm lens that you will maybe never have to change.



*(Photograph by [www.nikon.com](http://www.nikon.com))*



*(Photograph by [www.nikon.com](http://www.nikon.com))*

# Other Essential Gear



Besides a camera and lens, there are a few essentials you will need in order to help you pursue your interest in photography.

## Camera Bag

If you've opted for a compact or point and shoot camera, then you probably won't need one of these. However, if you purchased a DSLR camera with a couple of lenses then you will definitely need a camera bag or two. Holding a DSLR camera with a telephoto lens attached can get uncomfortably heavy after a while. Camera bags are also handy to protect your expensive equipment while travelling. They come in several forms, depending how much gear you have and how you want to carry it.

### *Shoulder Bags*

Shoulder bags can fit an amazing amount of camera equipment in them. They have separate compartments and side pouches. They often have zippered areas in the top. You can quite easily store your camera body, one or two lenses, spare batteries and SD cards as well as lens cleaning cloths.

(Photograph by <http://www.vanguardworld.com/index.php/en/pv/products/photo-video/detail-1-1-242-823.html>)



One of the best on the market today is the Xcenior Series shoulder bag from Vanguard, as shown in the image above. This comfortable, attractively designed shoulder bag with its sturdy semi-solid exterior provides satisfactory protection for your camera equipment and has a strengthened anti-shock base too. Its base is also made of scratch proof and waster resistant material which protects your gear from dust and water. Also included is a system for carrying a tripod which attaches to the handle and secured with two straps, which are adjustable.

With this shoulder bag, you can adjust the dimensions of the internal compartment to suit your individual equipment needs by moving the dividers, which are fastened with a hook and loop system. Another advantage of the Vanguard Xcenior shoulder bag is that it has a system on the side for hanging additional cases and pouches. It also includes a rain water cover to protect the bag and your gear in inclement weather. The anti-slip shoulder straps distribute the weight of the contents evenly and comfortably. Alternatively, you can safely carry this bag with the T-shaped padded handle provided.

### ***Roller or Trolley Bags***

If you are a regular air traveler, then a trolley or roller bag is the answer for you. These bags are easily portable, having wheels on the bottom and can be pulled along with an extendable/retractable handle. They are designed with air travel in mind in that the dimensions are such that they will fit inside most overhead lockers on the aircraft. They are secure and sturdily constructed and have an adjustable interior whereby you can move the well padded compartment walls to suit your camera body size and lens gear.



(Photograph by <http://www.vanguardworld.com/index.php/en/pv/products/photo-video/detail-1-1-Trolley+Bag-826.html>)

The Vanguard Xcenior 41T Trolley bag is a good example of this type of air travelling photographer's trolley bag. Its features include a mesh inner bag to keep equipment secure and able to be configured to fit your gear inside with movable compartment walls held in place with hook and loop fasteners. Should you wish to use this travel bag as luggage without the camera gear, then all you have to do is remove the padded compartment inside. It also includes an accessory pouch, a tripod attachment to the front or sides, and a padded area to safely store your laptop, up to 12 inches in width. There are also side straps to provide additional support and security.

The Xcenior 41T trolley bag comes with large wheels for a smooth ride. The molded feet provide extra stability when the trolley bag is standing upright. It has an extendable/retractable handle for ease of transportation. Additionally there are three sturdy handles located at the top and sides for ease of lifting into overhead lockers. All fastenings and straps are good quality and built to last providing assurance that your camera gear is safely protected.

### **Backpacks**

Backpacks are popular with photographers because it enables them to shoot images on the go while carrying their gear safely and securely on their back. Backpacks invariably have a multitude of internal compartments, side pockets, top pouches, and mesh pockets for carrying water bottles etc. The shoulder straps are adjustable to suit the photographer's frame and comfortably and evenly support the camera gear load.

A typical example of such a backpack is the 2GO 46 daypack made by Vanguard, as depicted in the image below. This cushioned back pack has easily accessible front and side compartments so that you can readily remove your camera and associated gear. Personal items, spare battery packs, cleaning cloths and memory cards can be



(Photograph by <http://www.vanguardworld.com/index.php/en/pv/products/photo-video/detail-1-1-Backpack-940.html>)

stored conveniently in the top pouch and side pockets store your extra lenses. The base is protected from shock further protecting your expensive camera equipment. Protection against the weather is provided by a cover stowed away in one of the side pockets. Its shoulder straps and additional chest strap make for a comfortable load.



## Camera Support

A camera support is invaluable if you want sharply focussed images, particularly in low light where longer exposure times are needed. Most photographers are incapable of holding a camera at shutter speeds below 1/60 of a second, without producing some camera shake and consequent image blurring.

### *Tripod*

Tripods are manufactured in a variety of designs and materials. A good reliable tripod is sturdily constructed so that it is able to easily bear the load of a camera body and lens. The lens may be a telephoto zoom lens which is often heavy and longer than normal. The legs should be able to be adjusted to a variety of lengths and secured quickly. Its adjustable in height central column should be stable, staying in position for all types of shots.



(Photograph by <http://www.vanguardworld.com/index.php/en/pv/products/photo-video/detail-1-4-Tripod+without+head-904.html>)



The Vanguard, Abeo series tripods are solidly constructed of premium die casted magnesium, are of sleek design and are reliably secure for both stills and video shoots. The tripods' legs adjust to 25, 50 and 80-degree angles using a quick release and secure button. The leg locks can be quickly setup and are tension adjustable. They also have an adaptor which allows for low angle shots. The rubber feet and foam on the legs ensure that the tripod is secure even in wet weather.

### **Monopod**

For greater convenience, try a monopod. These are able to be easily carried and can be set up quickly. They can even double up as a walking stick when out in the country side.

Vanguard produces Abeo lightweight, but strong, aluminum alloy monopods which have quick-flip leg locks so you can set up anywhere without delay. They have adaptable 1/4" to 1/8" top screws which are suitable for attaching most camera bodies.

(Photograph by <http://www.vanguardworld.com.au/index.php/pv/products/photo-video/detail-1-4-Monopod-889.html>)

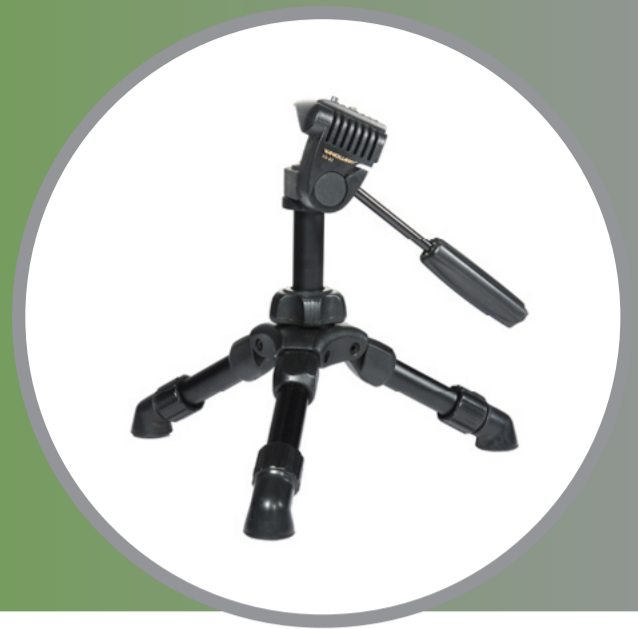
### **Table Top Tripods**

Occasionally, you will need to use a table top tripod for macro or commercial item shots, or when you want to take family shots, using the coffee table as a base. The table top tripod is convenient, small in size and easily stows away in a camera bag.



(Photograph by <http://www.vanguardworld.com.au/index.php/pv/products/photo-video/detail-1-4-Monopod-889.html>)





(Photograph by <http://www.vanguardworld.com/index.php/en/pv/products/photo-video/detail-1-4-Table+Pod-134.html>)

The VS-82 table top tripod, made by Vanguard, weighs in at only 0.86lbs or 390gm and can easily fit conveniently anywhere such as your pocket or camera bag. It has a 2-way pan head which swivels 360 degrees.

### **Window Mount Support**

The Vanguard PH-242 window mount offers stability when you don't have a tripod or when the location is unsuitable for a tripod. It can be attached to a car window for those external shots while the car is moving. For example, you can even attach it to tree branches, bridge for that different perspective shot, free of camera shake. This window mount includes a bubble level to guarantee straight and aligned images.



(Photograph by <http://www.vanguardworld.com/index.php/en/pv/products/photo-video/detail-1-4-Window+Mount-423.html>)

## **Ball Head**

Tripods come without heads or with ball heads or pan and tilt heads

The ball head fits onto your tripod and then the camera fits onto the ball head. The cupped ball allows for quick and smooth positioning of your camera with the ability to point it in any direction you wish. The cupped ball has a locking device to secure the camera. Some ball heads come with spirit or bubble levels to ensure your camera and the resulting image is straight.

Vanguard's BBH Series ball head has a Rapid Level System which lets you to rapidly set the camera level with the base. The ball head has two bubble levels to make sure the tripod is balanced evenly and accurately. These features allow for 360-degree panoramic photography. The ball



(Photograph by <http://www.vanguardworld.com/index.php/en/pv/products/photo-video/detail-1-4-Ball+and+Pan+head-804.html>)



(Photograph by <http://www.vanguardworld.com/index.php/en/pv/products/photo-video/detail-1-4-Ball+and+Pan+head-804.html>)

head supports up to 22 lbs in weight, suitable for most camera gear set ups.

Vanguard also manufactures a pistol grip ball head GH-300T pistol grip ball head with a shutter release trigger, enabling you release the shutter without taking your hand from the pistol grip. The pistol grip is innovative in that it lets you unlock, reposition and lock gear into place with ease. The GH-300T is coupled with a 72 clickpoint panning base for perfectly aligned panoramas and a 360 degree horizontal panning base that allows you to follow moving subjects effortlessly.



# Purchasing Your Camera Equipment

You should have a better idea now of what type of camera and lens you need in regards to brand, price range, colour etc. So where do you find the ideal camera that would suit you? The obvious choices for new cameras and lenses are the local camera shop, a department store or the Internet. If you want to buy a used camera and lens then you might consider newspaper classified advertisements, camera magazines, local camera markets, photo swap meets and even camera clubs. EBay and other online auction sites are the most popular sources for buying new or used equipment.

## Camera Shops

Don't forget to try and negotiate a price for your camera and lens with the store assistant. Research some prices for the models you might be interested in online before you go into the store, so that you can quote prices from elsewhere to them and try to bring the price down. If they don't reduce the price, they may throw in a camera bag or a storage card etc for free or at a reduced cost. Try visiting several stores so that you have a good feel for prices and you could try to play one store against another to obtain the best price.

Walking into a camera shop can be a bit daunting at times. There is so much camera equipment on display and you have no idea where to start. You could go up to an assistant and let them know what you would like to purchase, but sometimes they confuse you with technical terms, and nobody likes to show their ignorance of such matters. Often purchasers can be put off if approached by an assistant because they really want the time just to browse. Of course, some assistants can be very helpful to assist you to make the correct purchase for you, in your own time.

Browsing the store allows you time to look at all the different makes and models of cameras and check out the prices at the same time. Most of us select a few cameras in our minds that we would like to look more closely at before calling an assistant over to help. Ask the assistant to take the cameras out of their display cases so that you can examine them closer. The camera you might buy should be comfortable in relation to weight and be sturdily built, not flimsy in construction. The controls should be easy or intuitive to you so that there won't be a huge learning curve once you've taken the camera out of the shop. Ask if you can take a few photos with it inside the shop as well as outside the shop (the assistant will probably accompany you outside the shop unless they have a very good CCTV system!).



Look at the quality of the photo image to see if it's sharply in focus and the colours appear natural and the image is correctly exposed. If you are in any doubt about any feature of the camera you are inspecting, ask the assistant for clarity about this feature as they should know all about all of the items for sale in the store. Some stores allow you to rent the camera and lens to try them out before buying, particularly if the item is expensive. In fact renting camera equipment can be more cost effective if you are only going to putting the camera to use just for a special event.

Ask the assistant if any of there any special deals on cameras at the moment. Often cameras are about to be replaced with a different model and the previous model can be bought cheaper. Some times, the camera comes with a kit lens or two and this makes for a better bargain. In the image below, the Canon EOS 1000D twin lens kit currently retails at one store for \$494.

Be aware that the DSLR camera body is often sold without a lens and you will need to purchase a lens to fit the camera, which may double your initial purchase costs.

Before purchasing the camera, ask about what is packaged with the camera such as lenses, electrical leads, battery, battery charger or charging method, manual, type of storage card and of course, what kind of warranty it has. The store will probably have a return policy in case you are not completely happy with your purchase a few days after your purchase.



(Photograph by [www.canon.com](http://www.canon.com))



## Department Stores (in Store and Online)

Department stores often sell camera equipment at bargain prices but they won't necessarily have a large range like a specialist camera shop has. Occasionally, the department store may have a dedicated camera department with qualified staff. There may be one member of staff who is technically knowledgeable and who is available to inform you about the camera you wish to purchase. However, a bargain camera can be purchased in department stores from time to time and it's also worth looking at their web site online, the stores' ads on television and in their catalogues for such bargains. Make sure you know what's included in the price and check out the camera warranty and the store's returns policy before buying your item. Watch out for specials like Black Friday Deals Week.



(Photograph by  
[http://www.123rf.com/  
photo\\_23047938  
\\_black-friday-button-and-  
discounts-concept.html](http://www.123rf.com/photo_23047938_black-friday-button-and-discounts-concept.html))

## Internet

The Internet is the best way of conducting a search for any item you want to buy online or in a store. Not only can you see what cameras are on sale but you can also compare prices at stores locally and even world wide. You can also carry out research into the reviews that experts and purchasers have undertaken about your particular type of camera and lens.

A typical Internet search using your favourite web browser on digital camera reviews for the current year will usually yield more than enough information for you to be able to make a comparison of the best 10 camera makes and models. Some of the best reviews of cameras and lenses are conducted by Choice, PCMag, CNET, DPReview, Amazon and of course, Photography Talk. For example, Choice lists many of the new and used cameras for sale and with the price of a membership fee you can receive a report on any model previously reviewed.

Each camera review typically provides information on comparative makes and models; recommended retail price; lists the pros and cons; looks at design features; shows examples of the quality of photographs taken at different settings, and critiques the camera's performance overall.

If you want to be more specific you can tailor your search by adding details like price range, resolution, best dslr and best compact camera. This kind of search should give you all the details you will need to make an informed choice.

Once you have decided on the one perfect camera for you or on a short list of cameras that you would like to buy, you can check out the availability and compare prices in your area and elsewhere. Some stores and websites even

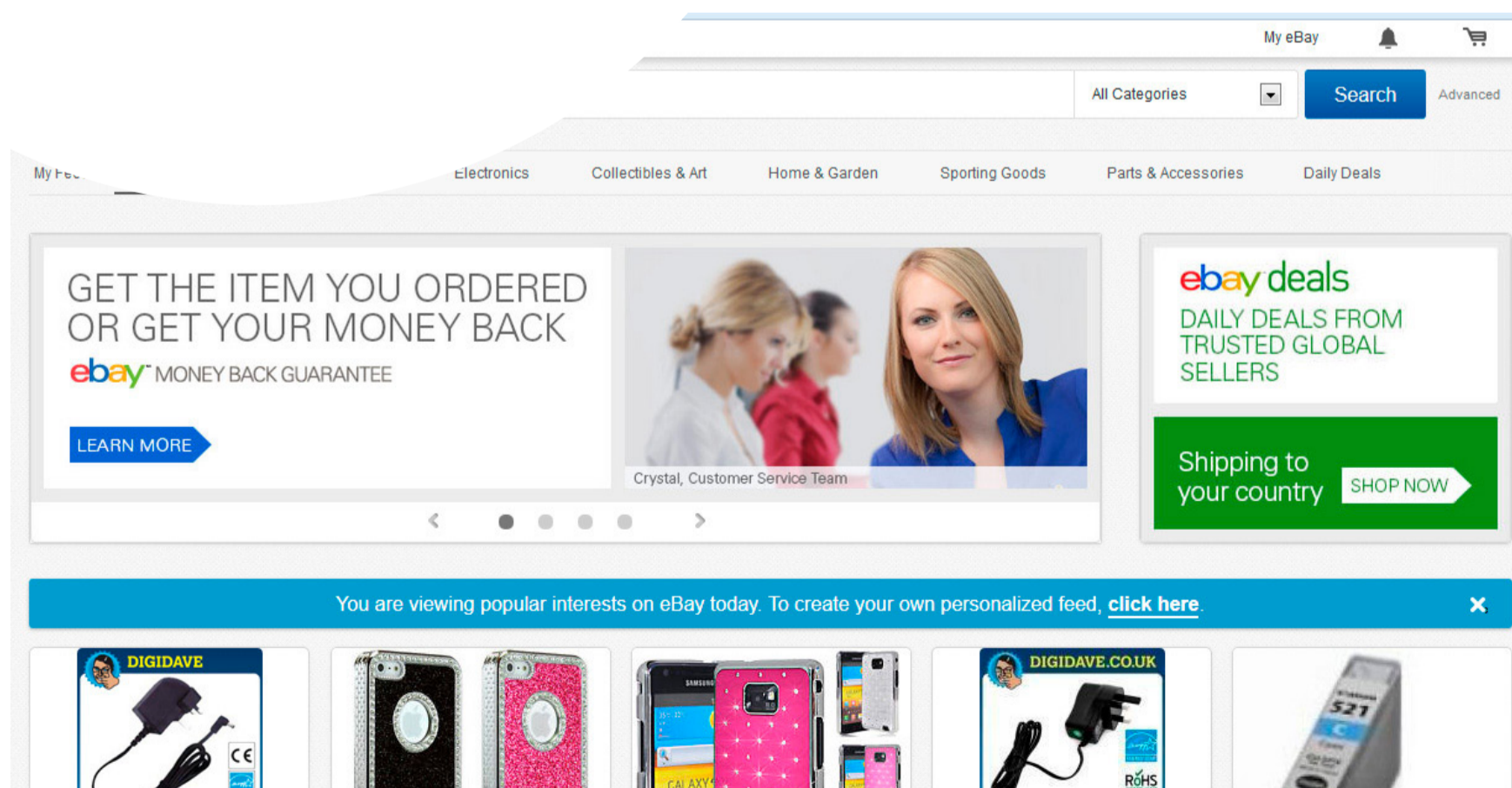


(Photograph by [http://www.123rf.com/photo\\_16595506\\_brunette-woman-making-shopping-on-line.html](http://www.123rf.com/photo_16595506_brunette-woman-making-shopping-on-line.html))

offer free postage if you order online. Many photographers buy their equipment from Adorama and B&H Photo Video because they have some of the lowest possible prices on the market. Ritz and Amazon are also recommended for places to buy camera equipment at a reasonable price and have good customer service.

### ***eBay and Other Online Auction Sites***

Online auction sites are very popular for purchasing a large variety of new and used items. eBay is the most popular with over 200 million members selling and buying items every minute of the day. You can buy your camera and lens at a fixed price or try your hand at an auction. Auctions give buyers the opportunity of bidding against each other for an item during the life of the auction, which lasts from 3 to 10 days, depending on the seller's listing of the item. Some real bargains can be bought this way. You are able to search for an item by description and then by checking boxes, you can refine your search further until you find what you want.





In relation to the description, the seller may list an item as excellent quality or as new and if you are unsure what this means, by all means send a message to the seller for clarification. Descriptions with refurbished or repaired in them need to be checked out fully with the seller to see what is meant by these terms. Watch out for cameras listed as "for repair" as they are worth very little, except for spares.

Attached to each seller's ID is their feedback status in which you can see at a glance how many transactions they have had as an eBay member. Clicking on this feedback status number will let you see how many successful transactions they have had and if there are any complaints from unhappy buyers. You don't have to buy from someone who has had no or little or poor feedback.

eBay has PayPal attached to its payment system, giving the buyer peace of mind if your camera or lens is faulty or it's not the item you paid for or it just didn't arrive. There are plenty of scammers on eBay too. There are other methods of payment but PayPal is the safest way to buy on eBay.

Postage prices can vary from being free to almost as much as an item has cost you, depending upon what the seller has decided on their listing. Check carefully to see what the postage prices are listed at before deciding to buy.

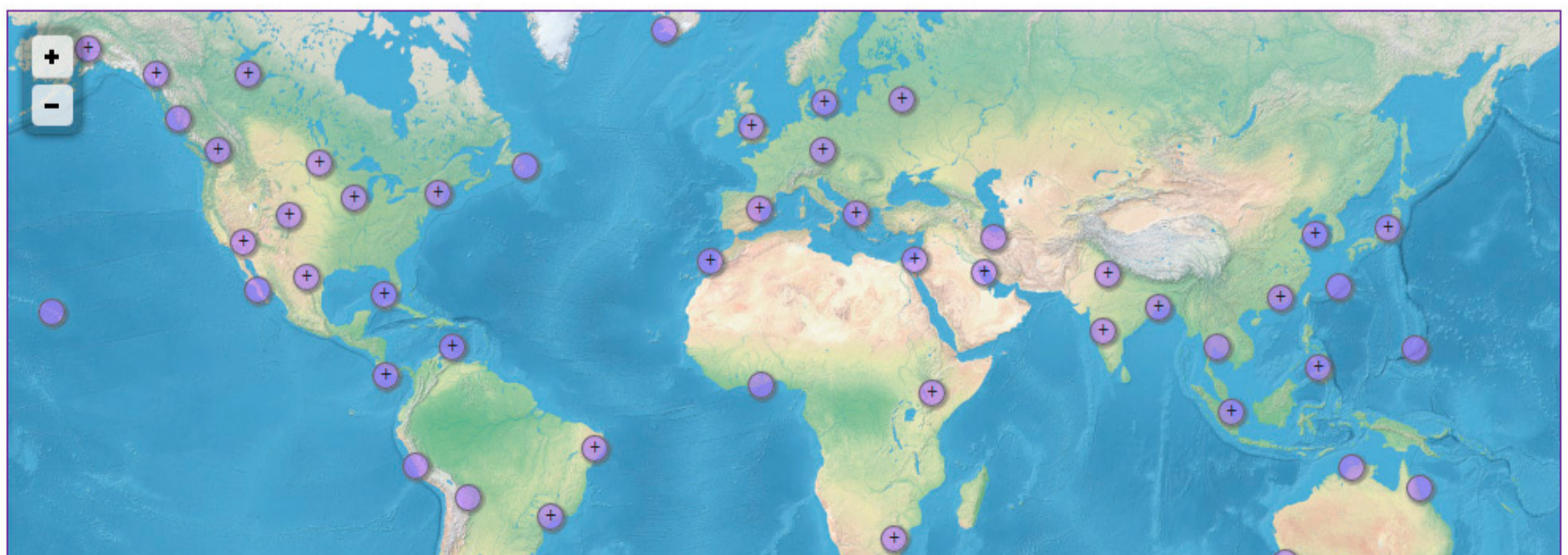
### **Used Camera Stores Online**

Used camera stores such as KEH Camera have been in business for a long time now and generally they are well respected. You can pick up a decent camera body and associated lens for a lot less than the original price and the quality is often still good.

---

# craigslist

[US](#) [Canada](#) [Europe](#) [Asia/Pacific/Middle East](#) [Oceania](#) [Latin America](#) [Africa](#)





### **Online Classifieds**

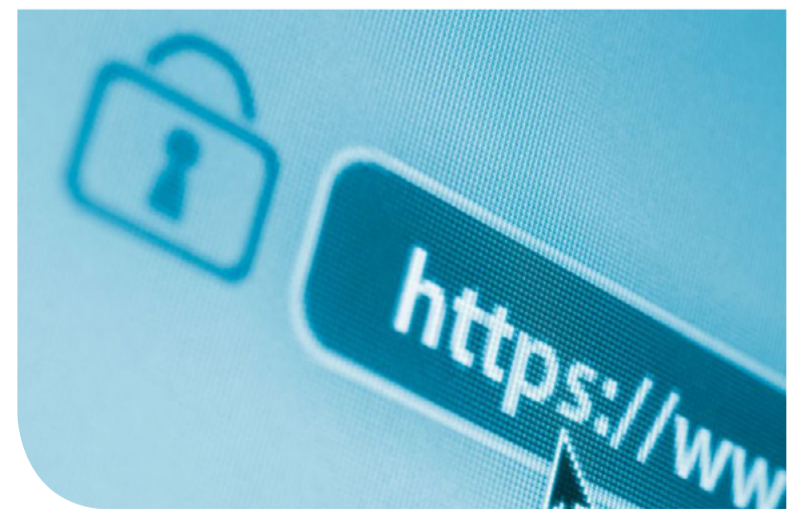
Craigslist is probably the most popular online classifieds in the world. It started in 1995 as an email distribution list in San Francisco before finally becoming a web based classified ads service in over 50 countries. You can access Craigslist in your local region and list items for sale without charge. According to Wikipedia, it records over 20 billion page views per month and is the 37<sup>th</sup> placed website in the world today. Many people buy and sell on Craigslist successfully and with few problems.

However, as with all online classifieds, it is important to realise that scammers abound on such sites. Scammers can advertise an item that doesn't exist or is of a cheaper quality than listed, or at too high a price for a similar item elsewhere. Do your research and if an item looks too cheap, then it is probably a scam. Others will list an item on an online classified site which may appear to be a bargain or reasonably priced, but scammers will load the price with excessive postage costs, sometimes costing twice as much as the listing price.

One criticism of such sites is that if you have a complaint about a seller, it is difficult to get anyone to respond to your problem or complaint. Finally, as with any online site, try and pay by credit card or by PayPal for example, to ensure that you have some recourse if your item is faulty or doesn't arrive at your address. You will be ill advised to pay directly into the seller's bank account or via agencies such as Western Union unless you receive your item first.

### **Risks of buying goods online**

There are a few things you need to watch out for when buying goods online. The description of the goods advertised may not match the item you receive. Pay by credit card or by methods such as PayPal to guarantee you against fraud and non-delivery. Direct payments



(Photograph by [http://www.123rf.com/photo\\_15554640\\_secure-encrypted-internet-concept-lcd-screen-shot-with-design-evoke-internet-browser.html](http://www.123rf.com/photo_15554640_secure-encrypted-internet-concept-lcd-screen-shot-with-design-evoke-internet-browser.html))

into a person's bank account offer no guarantees. The website offering goods for sale may not actually exist and you will never receive your goods. Research the site you are visiting and make sure that they provide contact details such as an address and telephone numbers. Be aware of making payments online to websites without security. Secured sites have a little pad lock icon in your browser window frame. If it doesn't have one, it is an unsecured payment site and you will be better off looking elsewhere. Be wary of sites which have the padlock symbol on the web site page itself, this is evidence of a fraudulent web site. Secured sites have a web address which starts with https:// and the s after the http means that the site is a secured site.



## Newspaper Classified Advertisements

Classified advertisements selling preloved or unwanted items, such as cameras and lenses, allow buyers and sellers to match their requirements without much effort. The seller provides a description of the item and state a price that they are asking for the item. Contact details are provided by the seller and it is up to the buyer to make contact to arrange to see the item or to discuss the purchase over the phone or by email, if they are not in the same area or even country. Classified adverts can appear in local or national newspapers, specialist magazines, and online sites.

The advantage of using local newspapers to search the classified ads for a camera to buy is that the buyer knows that seller will live near by and that the camera can be readily inspected before buying. All it takes is a quick phone call and usually a short drive to check the camera out.

Another advantage is that the camera is liable to much cheaper than it was when first bought. Its condition may vary enormously. The camera may even be new and an unwanted gift. It could be relatively new without having much use or it could also be well loved and in a poor condition, having being bought some time ago.

Similarly, with lenses, it pays to check out signs of damage to the exterior of the lens and indications of mould, condensation or dust specks inside the lens. There is nothing more irritating than having to remove spots from a photo image, caused by dust getting into a lens, with your favourite photo editing software program before printing. Don't forget to check out the glass itself for scratches and chips. Shine a light through the lens which will more easily pick out any defects and blemishes. Check out the movement of the barrel of the lens if it's a zoom focal length lens as they occasionally become loose or stiff with wear. A loose barrel makes it difficult to keep an object in focus.

One point to watch out for when buying a used camera is that while it may be fairly new in that it was only bought a couple of years ago, the camera shutter may have been operated many times, significantly reducing the life of the camera. It is estimated that an average DSLR camera has a life of about 100,000 shutter operations, which would last many photographers for a few years before they considered buying a replacement camera.

It's worth asking the buyer why they are selling it as they may have experienced problems using the camera because of damage or neglect. Also check whether all the leads, batteries and storage cards are present and if there is a manual and associated paperwork with the camera. Sometimes the seller has spare batteries and storage cards that they are willing to part with cheaply.

Usually, the buyer is honest and is happy to part with his camera for a reasonable price and everyone is happy with the transaction. Checking whether the seller is actually the owner of the camera is definitely worthwhile. Often the seller will have proof of purchase, and this is good evidence of a being a bona fide seller. Occasionally, the seller is a rogue selling stolen property and you may be left with being out of pocket. Buying a stolen camera from someone could result in the police arriving on your door step and questioning you in relation to receiving stolen goods and them leaving with the camera as evidence.



## Local Markets

Local markets can be a surprise source to find a camera you might like. The prices are usually a bargain and the stall holders take the time to give you any information you are after. Be aware that some stall holders are just off loading their trash and you will need to examine the items carefully before buying your camera. Also, while many stall holders return to the site regularly, there are some who you will never see again. If you have a problem with your camera, you may have no one to complain to in order to ask for a refund.



(Photograph by Brian Parkin)

## Camera Magazines

Many camera magazines have a section at the rear of the magazine where cameras and other equipment are advertised for sale. There are usually no bargains to be had from these advertisers, but they do allow you to compare prices of different brands.

## Camera Clubs

Your local camera club is a good source of knowledge about cameras and lenses. Here you will find photographers of all skill levels who are more than willing to pass on their knowledge to you. Camera clubs regularly go out on field trips to capture specific types of images and you could gain a great deal of experience this way. There may even be occasions when members will be selling some of their unused or replaced gear.

## Word of Mouth

There's nothing to beat a recommendation by word of mouth from a friend or member of your family. If someone has a camera that they rave about as being easy to use and produces great photographs, then you should listen to what they have to say. At least it's a starting point and you can probably have a try before you buy. If it's not the right model for you, but the brand is good, then look for a model that might suit you.

# After You've Purchased Your Camera Gear

## Check what's in the box

OK, you've bought your perfect camera and lens and the first thing you do is to take it out of the box, discard the very bulky manual and wonder about some of the electrical leads and CD-ROM and other bits and pieces that came with your camera. You remove your pristine, shiny camera and attach the lens. Looks great doesn't it? You try and turn it on and nothing happens. It could be that there isn't a battery in it, as there is one in the box. You check the manual for the battery details, find the right section and put the battery in. Still nothing happens! Wait a moment, there's a card thingy in the box as well. Check the manual and find where it goes and put the card in the camera and hey presto it works. You now photograph everything in your back garden for the next 2 or 3 days but you still haven't managed to get out of the Auto setting, as everything just looks too difficult. Your DSLR camera takes great photos but it was a bit expensive when it does the same as your much cheaper previous point and shoot camera. At this point, you think you might need more knowledge about how to use your new camera. So where do you get this information?

## Learn About Your New Camera

There's a variety of ways to learn about your new camera. You could do it yourself via the manual or get somebody else to teach you. Here's a few ways that people have accomplished changing their beginner to status to intermediate and beyond.

### ***Read the Manual***

The most obvious way is to use the manual whenever you want to do something new with the camera. The best way to do this is not to read it like a book but to experiment with different settings and program modes and take photographs whenever you can. Of course, the manual is usually very thick and not often written in a language style for the complete beginner like you. Sometimes it's not even written in good English!

### ***Buy a Book***

If you truly want to understand about photography, then there is no better source of information than [Bryan Petersen's Understanding Exposure 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition: How to Shoot Great Photos with Any Camera](#). This is an easy to understand book which explains the relationship between aperture and shutter speed to produce the perfect exposure in any situation.



The [Digital Photography Book series by Scott Kelby](#) tells you how to take that great shot without the technical jargon or hard to understand details. If you want to freeze action, he tells you to set your shutter speed to 1/1000. If you want everything in your landscape to be in focus, Scott says to set your aperture to f/16. It's as simple as that. He has updated his book several times so that new information and new chapters are added each time.

If you don't want to read pages and pages of detail but just want tips on how to be a better photographer, then Jim Miotke's book, [Better Photo Basics: The Absolute Beginner's Guide to Taking Photos Like a Pro](#), is the book for you.

Anne Mckinnel's Kindle book [8 Types Of Natural Light That Will Add Drama To Your Photographs](#) is a bargain as it retailing for free through Amazon Whispernet. Learn how to use front light, back light and side light for those dramatic lighting effects to improve the look of your photos.

If you want a self-paced short photography class course packed with information in an online video form, then [Tony Northrup's DSLR Book: How to Create Stunning Digital Photography](#) is the option for you. It has all the information you will ever need to master photography. This book became the top read eBook for 2012 and 2013 among 100,000 readers.

Robert Rodriguez Jr. has produced a book, [Insights From Beyond the Lens: Inside the Art & Craft of Landscape Photography](#), where he describes the passion, vision and motivation that is needed to be a great landscape photographer. He has written a series of essays linked with his own stunning landscape photographs describing how he has achieved these results.

To get an understanding of what makes a top photographer, read Chris Dickie's book entitled [Photography: The 50 Most Influential Photographers of All Time \(Icons of Culture\)](#). This book looks at the trends and developments of different genres of photography and provides profiles of the most influential photographers past and present in these fields.

Bruce Barnbaum's book [The Art of Photography: An Approach to Personal Expression](#) provides the reader with an understanding of how to express yourself in your photography, regardless of whether you are a beginner or an advanced photographer. It is packed with photographs in black and white as well as colour, and has various charts, graphs and tables that help explain both film and digital photography.



Photography Q&A: Real Questions. Real Answers. (Voices That Matter) written by Zack Arias, answers over 100 questions asked by the public on a variety of subjects, technical, “how to”, equipment, marketing, models, getting paid a proper fee for the project etc.

Lara White’s *Photography Business Secrets: The Savvy Photographer’s Guide to Sales, Marketing, and More* provides you with all the information you want and need to know about marketing your business so that you have a better chance of becoming successful.

Lost for creativity and need some ideas on what to photograph to produce stunning images? Read Brenda Tharp and Jed Manwaring’s book *Extraordinary Everyday Photography: Awaken Your Vision to Create Stunning Images Wherever You Are*. This book will help you develop your eye to capture extraordinary images.

On a similar note, George Lang and Scott Mowbray have put together hundreds of inspiring ideas that will get you to view everyday life in different ways. Their book, *The Unforgettable Photograph: 228 Ideas, Tips, and Secrets for Taking the Best Pictures of Your Life* will assist you to learn to see like a photographer.

One of the most regarded books of its kind since 1977, *On Photography* by Susan Sontag, looks at the meaning and the development of photographs through a series of essays that are thought provoking.

When taking portraits, particularly in a studio, C. Pazetti’s book *Photography Backdrops—Creative and Inexpensive Ideas For Beginners and / or amateur photographers* is a must for those photographers just starting out in this area.

An important component of taking a great photograph is learning how to compose your photograph properly and meaningfully. Stephen Hockman has produced a book entitled *Mastering the Art of Photography Composition: Learn Tips and Tricks for Better Creative Photos for Beginners and Intermediate Photographers* which is full of information so that you can produce photographs with that “WOW” factor.



### ***Take a Training Course***

There are many training courses on digital photography at your local college and on the Internet. Some of these courses that are on the Internet are free but many expect you to pay a course fee. A quick search with your browser will soon get you started.

### ***You Tube Videos***

Surprisingly, anyone who has ever owned a camera just like yours seems to have put training videos on a multitude of topics on You Tube. They are free and often very informative, especially for that one aspect of your camera that you are currently having trouble with! There are also some not so good ones, but usually you can find one to help you. This is far the cheapest and quickest way to learn about your camera and about digital photography in general.

### ***Sign on to Photography Forums***

There are literally hundreds if not thousands of online forums on photography, digital cameras and about your camera, in particular. Visit a few, sign on to the ones you like and participate in the discussions. They have a section where you can upload your photos for feedback from other members. It's a good way to learn about taking photos and improve your photographic skills at the same time.

Finally, take your camera and lens wherever you go and just take photos.





# Looking After Your Camera Gear

Cameras and lenses can pick up dust and other foreign matter quite easily, especially when you change a lens outside and it's windy. They are also affected by humidity which can cause mould to grow inside a lens. Once specks of dust or mould get inside your camera or lens, the image quality suffers. If it's not too bad, you could Photoshop the images to remove any spots and blemishes that appear on your image because of dust or mould. If it's outside of your capability to remove the mould or dust, take the camera or lens to a camera cleaning business. Generally, though, it's better if look after your camera equipment to prevent this from happening.

## ***Cleaning lenses***

If the dust is on the lens surface, then use lens cleaning solution and a lens cloth. Paper tissues will mark the lens surface.

## ***Checking gear***

Try and make it a habit to check your camera gear when you return home from a shoot. Check your camera and lenses for physical damage and dirt. Pay particular attention to the mounting areas of the camera and lenses. Never change a lens outside in windy conditions as dust may get into the camera. Replace the camera





body cap when there is no lens attached to the camera. Clean the outside of the camera with a soft dry cloth.

If it rains while you are out, protect your gear with a rain cover over your camera and camera bag or get under cover out of the rain. If you have been to the beach and there is sand or salt on the camera, wipe the camera with a soft cloth dampened with distilled water and then dry thoroughly. Never put a camera away when it's wet.

Check inside the camera with the lens off and see if there is any dust on the mirror, which you can remove with a blower. Don't use an aerosol blower as the propellant may enter the camera.

Store your camera and lenses in a bag containing silica gel to prevent moisture. If you want to go the whole hog, then invest in a small drying cabinet for about \$200, which will keep your gear at 35 – 45% humidity. It also has the added advantage of properly displaying your camera equipment.

Check tripods for damage, particularly the legs and locking mechanism. Check ball heads for ease of operation. Also check shoulder straps and handles on your camera bag for wear and tear.



# Image Protection and Security

Besides protecting your very expensive camera gear, you should also protect the many hundreds or maybe thousands of images you have taken over the years. While your camera gear can be replaced, your images once lost cannot be replaced easily.

## SD cards

Most cameras come with SD cards to store images on the camera. If you get into the habit of routinely transferring the images from your camera to a folder on your PC or laptop, you won't be disappointed if the SD card fails or becomes corrupted. This is a good reason not to use SD cards for permanent image storage. Once you've transferred the images, format the SD card in the camera using the Format menu option.

## Data Storage

There are several ways of protecting and securing your images but you should consider having more than one way to do so, in case of accidents such as fire. It certainly pays in the long run to have a backup or two in case your PC or laptop hard drive crashes. Remember to store these backups in a separate location to your computer.

You can buy auto backup software which will routinely save all new images on to a dedicated hard drive.



(Photograph by [http://www.123rf.com/photo\\_9631973\\_flash-card-in-hand-isolated-on-white-background.html](http://www.123rf.com/photo_9631973_flash-card-in-hand-isolated-on-white-background.html))

### **CD and DVDs**

Most PCs and laptops have either a CD or DVD burner installed. Try and have a schedule to copy images onto discs to store safely away in a separate location to your computer. Depending on the size of the images, you can easily store hundreds of images on a CD and several thousands of images on a DVD.



### **USB Flash Drive**

Flash drives are very popular because they are so small that they can fit onto a key ring and at the same time hold up to 64GB of data. They plug into a USB socket of your computer and are recognized as a drive letter on your computer, where you can copy or delete files as normal. This device is also useful for transferring files between computers and other devices.



### **External Hard Drive**

If you want to store your whole collection of images and document files, then an external hard drive is the option for you. For about \$100, you can purchase a TB of data storage which will hold about 700,000 images, depending on the image size.

(Photographs by <http://www.123rf.com>)



### ***Online Photo Storage***

You can have peace of mind by uploading and storing all of your images to online web sites. The most popular site is Flickr which has unlimited storage capability for \$25/year. Some other sites include SmugMug, Phanfare and Picasa.

The distinct advantages with this method of storage are that there are no physical devices that can get damaged, stolen or corrupted. These sites have the ability to share your photos with others or to keep your web albums strictly private.

