



Camera Buying Guide

FOCUSED CAMERA™

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Introduction

Welcome to our Camera Buying Guide, where we will help you confidently choose the perfect camera while saving money at the same time!

In today's visually-driven world, owning a camera has become more than a luxury; it's a means to capture precious moments, unleash your creativity, and share your unique perspective with the world.

Whether you're an aspiring photographer, a hobbyist, or simply someone looking to upgrade their photography gear, this e-book is your essential companion to navigating the intricate world of camera buying.



Types of Cameras

In this section, we'll delve into the fundamental differences between camera types, including DSLRs, mirrorless cameras, point-and-shoots, and bridge cameras. We'll explore their features, strengths, and weaknesses, allowing you to make an informed decision based on your specific needs and goals. By understanding the nuances of each camera type, you'll be equipped with the knowledge to find the perfect camera to bring your vision to life.

Far too often, I get inquiries asking if “XYZ” camera is a good camera. The issue with this question is that it usually comes after the person has already bought said “XYZ” camera or was given the camera as a gift and now s/he is unsure if the camera is the right fit or wants reassurances they haven't wasted their money. There are a lot of vocabulary terms that surround photography and some of those terms are important to know and understand before selecting a camera. Those terms are related to camera types – point and shoot, DSLR, SLR, bridge camera, etc. Then within each camera type are more terms related to the features of said camera – interchangeable lens, sensor size, etc.

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Before you go shopping, or let someone shop for you, it is a good idea to know the divisions or types of cameras to consider. I am going to present five broad, generalized categories in this section – from simple to more complex camera types. It is important to understand that the dividing lines between these camera types continue to be “blurred” as technology improves. So if I say a bridge camera has a smaller sensor, more often than not, that statement is true. However, there may be exceptions! For example, the Sony 1” sensor used in the Sony Cyber-shot RX10 bridge camera (and other camera models as well) has had so many technical improvements that it begins to rival the lower-end APS-C Sony mirrorless cameras even though they have larger sensors. More on sensor sizes later.

For now, let’s tackle some photography jargon by discussing the broad divisions of cameras.

1. Point-and-Shoot Cameras
2. Bridge Cameras
3. DSLR or mirrorless Interchangeable Lens Cameras
4. SLR / Film Cameras
5. Specialty Cameras & Toy Cameras

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Point-and-shoot cameras are also known as compact cameras (or sometimes P&S). They are designed for ease of use and have simple operations – typically just point the camera at your subject and click – thus the name point and shoot. Most have autofocus lenses and automatic settings for exposure with a built-in flash. Their small, lightweight design fits easily into a pocket and makes them a good size for smaller hands, for young children, and for teens. The controls are limited, but with plenty of automatic shooting functions, a photographer of any age can capture some great images and begin to learn about lighting and composition. While these cameras are perfect for everyday snapshots, the small image sensor (usually 1/2.3" in size) can cause weaker image quality and an inability to capture good shots in low-light conditions. They are relatively inexpensive and their main draw is they are so simple to use. None of these cameras will have interchangeable lenses, but the built-in lens often has a digital zoom and/or optical zoom (optical zoom will result in better image quality).



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Bridge cameras are a step up in size and weight, and even though they look more like a DSLR, the lens is still built-in much like a point-and-shoot. They “bridge” the gap between a point-and-shoot and a DSLR. Depending on the camera model there are often more advanced manual photographic controls like changing the aperture, shutter speed, and ISO. These features are similar to a DSLR, but the ISO range may be limited because of smaller sensor sizes. Most bridge cameras lack an optical viewfinder. The built-in lens will have more range of focal lengths and a longer zoom (sometimes called a superzoom or ultrazoom) than a point-and-shoot, often starting with a super wide 20mm or 24mm on up to 400mm, 600mm, 2000mm, or more. The zoom is the most beneficial feature of a bridge camera. To get a zoom of 600mm and more on a DSLR you will spend thousands of dollars. However, the drawback is the lens is not interchangeable so you cannot experiment with specialty lenses like macro, tilt-shift, or fisheye.

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Mirrorless and **DSLR cameras** are very similar in that they are both interchangeable lens systems (the lens can be removed and switched out). The difference between a DSLR and a mirrorless camera is mainly a mechanical one and not one of image quality. Theoretically, a DSLR and mirrorless with equivalent sensors will give you the same image. We will cover more about the differences between DSLR and mirrorless in an upcoming section of this e-book.

Mirrorless cameras are still a smaller size, but not as small as a point-and-shoot. The camera bodies resemble a point-and-shoot, but with interchangeable lenses. If you purchase additional lenses, the cost can also increase dramatically. Even though the camera body is compact, the lenses are often the same size and weight as DSLR lenses so keep that in mind. Full adjustment of every aspect of photography is available making this type of camera more complex. These cameras offer two different sensor sizes, APS-C and full-frame. A full-frame sensor is larger therefore the overall camera will also be slightly larger.

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Inside a mirrorless camera, the image from the lens is always projected onto the sensor. This allows for features like focus-peaking (the camera shows you what areas are in focus) or autofocus eye tracking, as well as better depth of field preview (which areas are in focus from front to back). Mirrorless is the newest tech so expect to pay more for all those fancy bells and whistles.

DSLR cameras also come in two sensor types – APS-C and Full-frame. A full-frame sensor is larger therefore the overall camera will also be slightly larger. Full-frame DSLRs are much heavier and bulkier than any other camera type on this list. Like the mirrorless cameras, you can purchase and change out different lenses and have full manual control over every aspect of a photograph. These cameras can cost anywhere from a relatively inexpensive \$500 APS-C size to an \$8000 full-frame size (depending on brand and model). The sensors in DSLR (and mirrorless) cameras are larger and will give the best image quality, especially in low light.

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Film cameras, or SLRs, are the cameras used before the invention of digital cameras. Some photographers still prefer to use film cameras today. Today's DSLR cameras are the digital equivalent and replacement for the SLR camera. Depending on the age/era and type of film camera, there may be many features that require manual control by the photographer, such as knowing how to set the aperture on a lens to manually focusing said lens. A typical film camera will use 35mm film, which is the equivalent of a full-frame camera sensor in terms of size. There are other sizes of film such as medium format (120 professional film), instamatic film, APS film, large format (sheet film), and more. The sizes outside of 35mm might be considered specialty cameras as well.

Film cameras can be a lot of fun to experiment with, but keep in mind the cost of film and developing those rolls of film. It can be difficult to source 35mm film consistently and the processing may require you to mail off each roll to a lab if you don't have one still in business locally. These are added expenses to ownership of a film camera.

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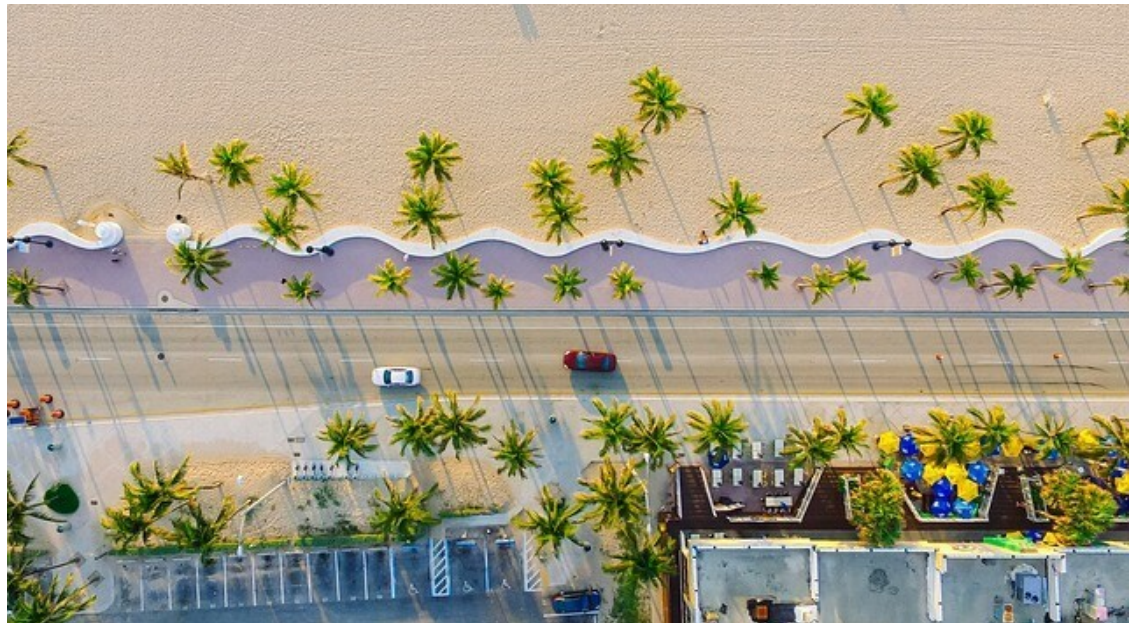


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Specialty cameras come in many different types. There are cameras and lenses specifically designed for cinema. There are cameras built into drones that you can fly (see sample image on this page).

There are sport/action cameras, like the GoPro. There are underwater cameras for scuba diving. There are rangefinders, instant cameras, stereo cameras, panoramic cameras, medium and large format cameras, twin lens reflex cameras, pinhole cameras, and more – far too many for us to cover in this article.

For more information on specialty cameras, give us a call for a consultation or search for the camera type at a reputable dealer, preferably one that will consult with you over the phone.



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One type of specialty camera that does merit some discussion is toy cameras. **Toy cameras** can be classified into two subcategories. The first is toy cameras that are meant for toddlers and designed with their safety in mind including waterproof, shockproof covers and no small parts that could be a choking hazard. The second type is “toy cameras” that were originally made in the last century (many for children), but would not necessarily be considered safe for children today. Newer versions of these “toy cameras” are modeled after the originals and are often made of hard plastic and breakable or small parts. See the images to clarify the differences (modern, safer kid's digital on the left; 1960s Diana camera on the right).



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Current, made-for-kids toy cameras are inexpensive, have easy-to-grip colorful designs that young kids love, and very simple controls. Most of them are digital. Many also offer the ability to add stickers or effects to an image, or even have built-in games. They are not going to have image resolution over approximately 5MP. The cameras are often durable “softer” plastics that are shock and waterproof. Kids can toss the camera from the top of the slide or chew on them and the child and the camera both will survive.

Old-style “toy cameras” are also inexpensive, and although maybe originally designed for kids (like the Diana camera), are used today for their artistic effects. Later models, like the Holga, were designed for mass marketing to consumers or used as giveaways to entice shoppers to spend a certain amount of money or open a bank account. Hobby photographers treasure these cameras (mostly film) because they can inexpensively play around with odd effects (vignettes, distortions), light leaks, blur, and other unpredictable optical effects that manifest from the combination of cheap plastic and film. These types of cameras are sometimes called LOMO cameras and the photographers who use them as lomographers.

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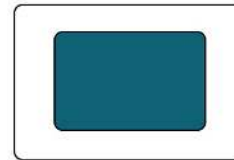
So you probably noticed that one of the main differences among all these camera types is the sensor size. The sensor is the part of the camera that records the image and its size dictates the quality of images a camera is capable of producing.

If you want higher image quality then a larger sensor becomes important. A larger sensor has larger pixels which are capable of gathering more light. This means a larger sensor will perform better in low light and will have less grain or digital noise in the image. Most professional photographers prefer full-frame cameras for this reason. Some common sensor sizes (like APS-C and full-frame) are shown here.

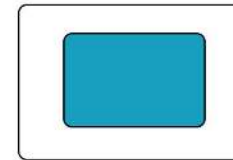
Common Sensor Sizes Compared to 35 mm Full Frame Sensor



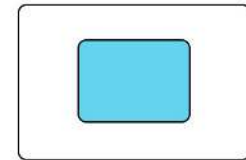
35mm / Full-frame
36 x 24 mm
864 mm²



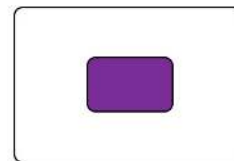
APS-C
Nikon, Sony, Fuji, etc.
23.6 x 15.7 mm
380 mm²



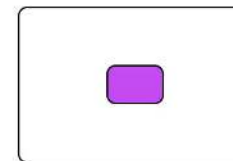
APS-C
Canon
22.2 x 14.8 mm
329 mm²



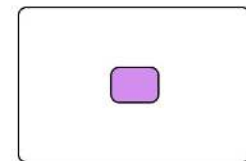
Micro / Four Thirds
Olympus, Panasonic
17.3 x 13 mm
225 mm²



1 inch
Bridge / P&S
13.2 x 8.8 mm
116 mm²



2/3"
Point-n-Shoots
8.8 x 6.6 mm
58 mm²



1/1.7"
Point-n-Shoots
7.6 x 5.7 mm
43 mm²

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Camera sensors come in many other sizes. These are generalizations.

The second biggest difference among the camera types is whether the lens is built-in (a closed system where the lens cannot be changed like the bridge and point-n-shoot cameras) or whether it has interchangeable lenses (lenses can be removed and swapped like the DSLR, mirrorless, and film cameras). There are trade-offs to both.

The built-in lenses offer more zoom range at a considerably lower cost; however, the cameras offer fewer controls, are unable to offer experimentation with genres like macro, and have smaller sensors (the limitations already outlined above). Some of the zooms on the built-in lens systems are digital zoom instead of optical zoom. Optical zoom means the lens physically moves or changes and will result in better quality images than digital zoom (uses magnification to enlarge an area, but reduces the megapixels and image resolution). All zoom lenses on film, DSLR, and mirrorless cameras are optical zoom lenses.

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With these differences in mind, you can select a camera based on what you need or see your needs might be into the future. If you are still unsure, contact us for a consultation. We are happy to help you get started successfully! In the upcoming sections, we will go into more detail about which camera is "best" and expand upon the main differences between DSLR and mirrorless cameras. If you are buying a camera for a child or teen, be sure to read our [e-book on photography with kids](#) for more on selecting a camera for their age group.

What Camera is "Best?"

I cannot even begin to tell you how many times I have been asked this question or seen this question posted online. This question cannot be answered without knowing more about the person who is asking. What do you photograph? Is your subject indoors or outside? Is your subject fast or slow? Do you also plan to do video? All of these factors play a part in deciding which camera would be "best" for a certain individual. My answer to this question would most likely not be the same for any two people.

I also can't keep count of the number of blog posts that purport to answer the above question (without knowing anything about you!). I have seen blogs and articles provide lists of the "best" cameras for [insert year] or the "best" lenses for [landscapes or insert other photography type here]. While some of these articles may have research to back them up, most of the time they are just arbitrary lists of the top sellers on Amazon and the writer is just hoping to cash in on your clicks.

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The truth is the question of which camera is "best" requires you to know the answer to many other questions first, such as:

1. What is your budget?
 2. What camera or lenses do you already own?
 3. What country do you live in?
 4. How much do you already know about photography?
 5. Do you plan to make any type of business from your photography?
 6. Have you picked up and held different cameras yet (DSLR, mirrorless, etc)?
 7. What will be the subject matter of at least 50% of your photos?
 8. What will the subject matter be the remaining % of the time?
 9. Do you have any speedlights, strobes, or light modifiers?
 10. If you don't have these, will you need them? (The answer to this depends on a whole other list of questions)
 11. Do you plan to travel with this camera (overseas, on rugged terrain, hiking long distances, or in extreme weather)?
- ... and more.

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There are many factors that would need to be incorporated to decide what is the "best" camera to buy for any one person. Each genre of photography utilizes different aspects of a camera and each photographer appreciates certain aspects more than others. Hypothetically, if we discuss just one aspect of a camera, such as camera sensors, then it becomes a little easier to make a list of what camera is "best." Most camera brands submit their cameras, lenses, and sensors to rigorous testing by several different outlets which then give those items scores and ranks, much like wines are given scores.

One resource for this information is <https://dxomark.com> which, at the time of publication, ranked a Hasselblad medium format camera as having the best sensor with a score of 102. Given that the price range of this camera is almost \$6000 and it is a medium format, it is likely that only a serious professional with specialized needs and a large budget will buy this camera. So even though this might be the "best" camera based on its sensor, that factor isn't everything you need to make a good decision. The scores and rankings change with every new batch of tests as well, so the "best" sensor this month may not be the same 6 months or a year from now.

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What Camera is "Best?"

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Most consumers are buying either full-frame or APS-C cameras. The highest-scoring full-frame camera sensors, at the time of publication, was a three-way tie at 100. While all three have similar sensors and sensor sizes, there are major differences between them.

This is where the “best” camera becomes much more subjective. Some of the top sensors are in DSLR (mirrored) cameras and some are in mirrorless cameras. The difference between mirrored and mirrorless, all else being equal, is just a mechanical one that has no effect on image quality, but many people prefer mirrorless because of its smaller overall size and lighter weight. We will discuss more about the differences between DSLR and mirrorless in the next section.

Some photographers might prefer a camera with a larger megapixel count, or they might prefer a specific camera because of its autofocus capabilities. A photographer might even disregard certain "low scoring" aspects of a camera if the camera scored as the "best" for low-light capability because they often find themselves shooting indoors or in darker situations like concerts.

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As you can begin to see, there is much more to choosing a camera than just one component and unfortunately, no one camera features the "best" of every component. No matter what camera you choose that is the "best" in one area, there will be trade-offs with other functions that maybe are not as good as another manufacturer. The only way to know which functions or aspects are most important for you is to question your needs and analyze the types of situations you find yourself in and the genres of photography that interest you.



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The cameras in the full-frame category are all higher in price range, often several thousand dollars not including a lens. Many consumers cannot afford a full frame so they will want an APS-C (or crop sensor) camera instead. Your budget is a very important factor in determining what camera is "best" for you!

The top or "best" sensors in this APS-C category are often lower in score (below 90) in testing. However, you can usually pick up a new one including one or two lenses for under \$2000, and keep in mind that a score of 85-90 is still extremely good and will provide excellent quality images in the majority of common shooting scenarios.



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If you simply want to judge the “best” camera as the most popular camera, then you would need to buy a Canon. Canon has the most market share and is the top-selling camera brand in the world year after year. By the numbers, Canon sold a total of 2.76 million cameras the year this was published, Sony sold 1.15 million, and Nikon sold 900,000.

Digging a little deeper we might also determine the “best” camera as the camera that has the staying power to still be bought and used long after its release date. One such camera is the Canon 5D (Mark II, III, IV). The Canon 5D Mark III was released in March of 2012. Basically, over a decade later, it is still the number one camera being bought and sold in the resale market among DSLR and mirrorless combined (at the time this was published). That means this camera is a workhorse and a quality product that produces amazing images. Otherwise, it wouldn't still be in such high demand. The prior model, the Canon 5D Mark II, also kept a top #1 slot for about 12 years after its release. Even 16 ½ years after it was released, the Canon 5D Mark II was still in the #4 slot for used camera sales. The Canon 5D Mark II is one of the best of the cameras I own and use.

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Looking solely at mirrorless cameras, the “best” is unarguably Sony. Sony sold about as many mirrorless cameras last year as Canon and Nikon combined. You can’t go wrong with any of the Sony cameras. At the time of publication, the Sony a6000 was the #1 mirrorless camera in the resale market, while the a7 cameras were their most popular new sellers.



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The main point I try to get across to my clients is that almost any current camera (last 5-6 years and in many cases even older) is capable of producing high-quality, professional images. Your skill as a photographer and the lenses you use are at least of equal, if not more importance than the camera. The old saying “the best camera is the one you have in your hands” really does hold true. There are people who are making art and phenomenal images with their smartphones.

The best smartphone on DXO Mark at the time of publication was an Apple iPhone with a score of 137. However, this score is in comparison to other smartphones NOT compared to a DSLR. The score of 137 does not mean an iPhone takes better photos than the Hasselblad mentioned at the beginning of this section.



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So how do you decide which camera is "best" for you? With some help! This section may have made you feel even more confused and undecided than you were before you read it. It may leave you questioning if the camera you picked out is right for you. This is good! It means you are ready to analyze the decision before you buy (hopefully you are reading this before you buy) and increasing the chances of getting a camera that will really fit your needs and suit your photography style.

Here are some online places to research cameras before you buy:

[DXO Mark](#)

[Camera Decision](#)

[Adorama](#) or [B&H Photo](#)

[Ken Rockwell](#) (real reviews, not just after Amazon clicks)

[AmateurPhotographer Magazine](#)

[Digital Photographer](#)

[YouTube channels of the major brands and their Pro Ambassadors](#)

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Next, you need to refer back to the questions at the start of this section and answer as many of them as you can. The answer to these questions will guide you even further in your research for the "best" camera. Of course, you can always give us a call! We offer consultations for all our students.

If you call us or any other seller or retailer (new or used), be prepared to answer questions like those at the beginning of this section. Whatever you do, do not just take a Facebook group opinion poll or click an Amazon link from a blog post with no research behind it, otherwise you will likely be very disappointed.



DSLR vs. Mirrorless

Are mirrorless cameras the way of the future? Are DSLRs going the way of the Dodo bird? Which is better?

The question of which is better, like so many other questions in photography, does not have a “right” answer and is subject to much debate. Similar to the debates of Canon vs. Nikon or film vs digital... there are merits on both sides.

Those that are pro-mirrorless will focus on the simple mechanics, fast and quiet shutter speeds, and slim lightweight design. DSLR fans will claim, that the larger camera body is more functional to grip and that optical viewfinders are better than their electronic counterparts.

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One thing I have learned over the years is that much of photography is about compromise. We compromise the depth of field for lower ISO, or we sacrifice the crisp images of multiple prime lenses to be able to carry just one lightweight zoom in our camera bag. The choice between DSLR and mirrorless is no different.

Camera manufacturers are well aware of the pros and cons of both traditional SLR/DSLR and mirrorless cameras and are working to make adjustments to their new cameras so the gap between the two technologies is constantly narrowing. For example, Canon's newest mirrorless cameras offer one of the best autofocus systems, which traditionally was a DSLR advantage.

This section will discuss some of the pros and cons of each camera type. First, let's start off with defining the difference mechanically.

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An SLR or DSLR uses a system that includes a mirror and a penta mirror (or pentaprism) which allows the photographer to see what is coming through the lens. The mirror reflects the view through the lens up and into the prism which then projects the image into the viewfinder. The mirror flips up and the shutter unit opens and closes when you take an image so the film (SLR) or sensor (DSLR) can be exposed. See the diagrams on the next page.

A mirrorless camera does not have a mirror and a penta mirror. Instead, the light that is hitting the sensor is sent to an electronic viewfinder as a digital rendering of the image. The “live view” exposes the sensor when you take an image and there is no mirror in the way (so only the shutter must open and close).

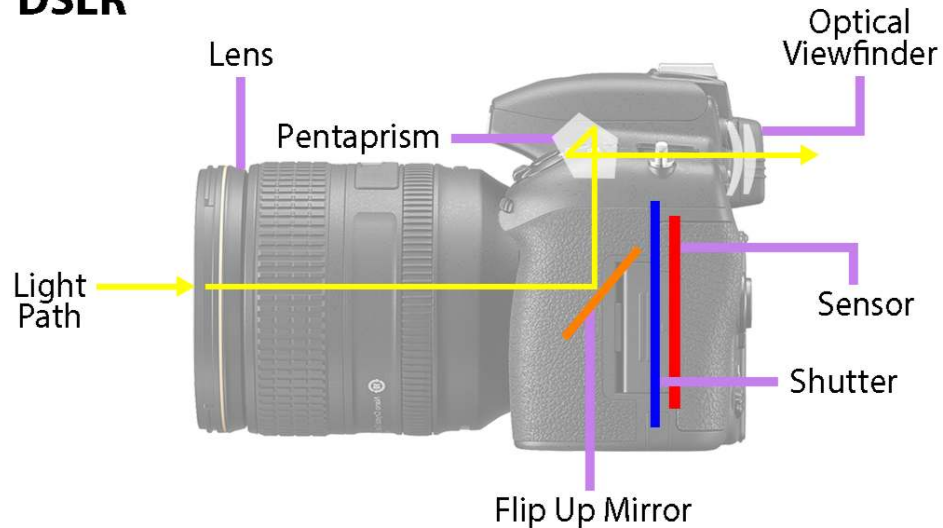
The way the sensors work in both systems is the same, so the actual image quality between a DSLR and a mirrorless is theoretically identical (assuming the two cameras are using the same sensor type/size and all other factors are equal).

The type of viewfinder is thus the first area where we see the pros and cons of each system.

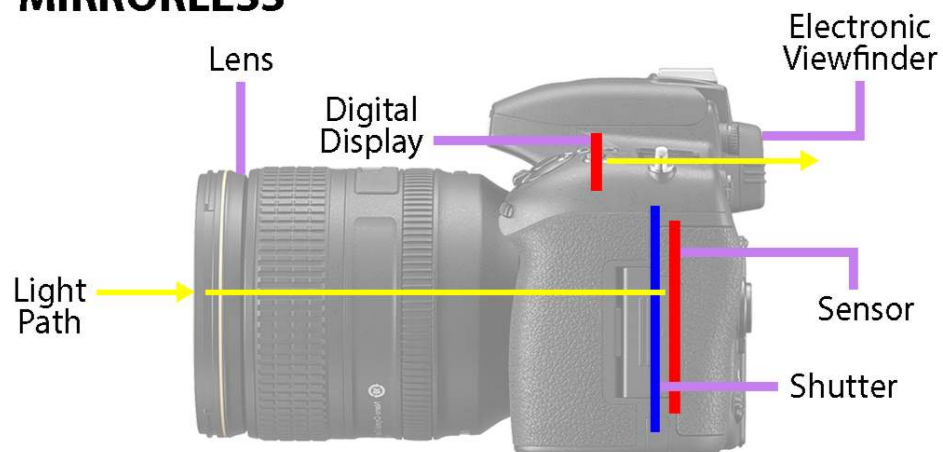
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Mirrorless cameras offer a simplified design by removing the mirror and pentaprism and using a digital/electronic display instead of optical. The image quality of both would be equal if the sensors were the same.

DSLR



MIRRORLESS



Viewfinders

DSLRs use an optical viewfinder to preview an image. This combined with the mirror and penta mirror gives an exact view of what the camera will capture in the scene when the photo is snapped. Most DSLRs today also feature an LCD or Live View to preview images.

Mirrorless cameras use an electronic viewfinder or EVF to preview images. The EVF creates an electronic rendering of the scene.

Many photographers prefer the “real” view of the optical viewfinder versus the electronic or digital rendition. The rendering from an EVF is not as accurate as an optical viewfinder because the rendered image depends on the quality of the viewfinder panel. For example, the EVF may present an image with more or less contrast than the actual captured image. In the past, the resolution of EVFs was much lower, but the latest iterations of EVFs are much improved and almost match the quality of optical viewfinders.

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EVFs may also lag, especially in low-lighting situations. Following a fast-moving subject is much easier with a high-speed DSLR with an optical viewfinder than with a mirrorless EVF. This may be especially important to wildlife, action, or sports photographers.

An advantage of an EVF is that you can view the image with changes to color settings and white balance, or exposure, instantly which you cannot do with an optical viewfinder (but you can snap a photo and view it or use Live Mode on the LCD). If you are learning manual mode this “what you see is what you get” feature of a mirrorless may be an advantage.

The technology of EVFs is continuously improving, but for now, DSLR cameras have a slight winning advantage when it comes to viewfinders.

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Shutter Speed

DSLR and mirrorless camera types can shoot at fast shutter speeds to capture many images in rapid succession. With the exception of high-end DSLRs, mirrorless cameras have an advantage in speed. There is no mirror that needs to flip out of the way so the simple mechanics of mirrorless cameras allows them to shoot at higher shutter speeds.



Serge Melki from Indianapolis, USA, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons

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Unfortunately, the optical viewfinder creates a “blackout effect” when shooting continuous bursts of images. This makes it harder to track moving subjects. With an optical viewfinder you can continuously track your subject during a burst of images. Some mirrorless camera manufacturers have been working on this issue in their higher-end models, and claim to have solved it.

Image Quality

The first mirrorless cameras did not include full-frame sensors, therefore at that time, DSLRs were superior in image quality. Now manufacturers use the same sensors (APS-C and full-frame) in both their mirrorless models and their DSLRs, so based solely on technology neither system has an advantage when it comes to image quality.

The selling point for mirrorless is that you can get that same image quality in an overall smaller-size camera. However, just as bigger is not always better, smaller is not always better either.

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Size & Weight

Because a mirrorless camera does not have a mirror and a pentamirror, the construction includes fewer parts and therefore they are lighter in weight and less bulky than DSLR cameras. However, the bulkier DSLR often feels better in the grip of one's hands and has ergonomic advantages.

On the left is a DSLR and on the right is a mirrorless camera body



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By making a mirrorless camera so compact, the controls must fit onto smaller rectangular shapes. Larger hands may not be comfortable with the smaller-size controls. The touchscreens are also often smaller in size. The compact size of mirrorless includes a smaller battery which affects battery life (we will cover this aspect later).

The DSLR's larger size makes the controls easier to read and see and makes changing camera settings easier (especially for those who are used to the DSLR shape and design).

One big disadvantage to mirrorless is that while the camera may be smaller, the lenses are not. Balancing a large lens on a small camera body – especially one with a very compact rangefinder-style shape – is awkward and uncomfortable over longer periods of time. Manufacturers can keep making camera bodies smaller, but lens size is determined by the sensor size. This means that to make lenses that match the quality and performance of DSLR lenses, the mirrorless lenses will end up almost identical in size (and weight). You can buy additional grips to make it easier to hold a mirrorless camera, but that defeats the “mirrorless is smaller” advantage.

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So in this aspect, the advantage lies wherever your personal preferences lie. If you prefer lightweight or are upgrading from using your phone for photography, then maybe the smaller mirrorless is the way to go. If you prefer a sturdier heft and grip, or use larger and heavier lenses, then a traditional DSLR should be in your camera bag.

Focusing

In the past, the winner for autofocus speed was the DSLR. For now, higher-end DSLRs still have an advantage, but newer mirrorless cameras have made great strides in this area and are quickly diminishing this difference.

Mirrorless cameras mainly use contrast-detect AF. While this type of AF is precise and accurate, it is also slow and inefficient. The camera focuses through a trial-and-error to-and-fro process that is time-consuming (comparatively speaking) versus the DSLR's phase-detection AF method.

Phase-detection AF compares two versions of the scene from two angles and quickly decides which way to focus and how far. This happens very quickly.

But just as quickly as that camera can focus, mirrorless camera manufacturers recognized and tackled this issue to try and find a solution. Now some mirrorless cameras use a hybrid AF with phase-detection built into the camera sensor and contrast-detect AF for precision. This makes the AF accurate and fast. This on-sensor phase-detection is now also being added to traditional DSLRs as well.

If you need the fastest autofocus speeds (wildlife, race cars, sports) and your budget allows you to buy the very highest-end cameras, then you should get a DSLR, otherwise, this category is a tie.

Lens Availability

Since DSLR cameras have been around so long, there is a plethora of lenses available for them. Including the third-party manufacturer lenses available, the selection is comprehensive. By comparison, the selection of lenses for newer mirrorless cameras is small.

Camera Buying Guide

Of course, the availability of lenses is growing as these cameras gain popularity. In the micro-four-thirds mirrorless, such as those from Olympus, there is more lens selection. Additionally, third-party manufacturers are also making lenses for mirrorless cameras now and there are several new adapters on the market that allow photographers to use DSLR lenses, as well as legacy lenses, on their mirrorless camera bodies.

At this point, the DSLR cameras probably still have the advantage for lens selection, but not for long.



Camera Buying Guide

At the time this article was written there were 80+ lenses made by Canon for DSLRs versus only 19 made for mirrorless.

Video

DSLRs and mirrorless cameras both shoot video. Mirrorless cameras, because of their design, are intrinsically better for the constant “live view” mode for video recording.

Mirrorless cameras typically have better and more accurate focusing for video. This is because very few DSLRs have on-sensor phase detection points (as previously discussed). Currently, both mirrorless and DSLR can film in HD, but if you want to shoot in 4K, or even 8K, you will more likely find it in a mirrorless camera.

Professional filmmakers will probably elect to purchase cinema cameras instead of mirrorless or DSLR cameras, but for bloggers or vloggers, a mirrorless camera is a clear winner. Additionally, the R&D into video is focused mainly on the mirrorless market, so the technology will only improve from where we are today.

Camera Buying Guide

Many of the newest lenses for mirrorless also include silent autofocus motors, a technology designed for filming. These quiet technologies can be an advantage for wildlife photographers.

If you are mainly a photographer (other than perhaps wildlife), who only needs video on occasion, then a DSLR may still be the way to go.



Stealth & Quiet

You can never get rid of sound completely because when you take a photo the shutter curtains will open and close regardless of whether you are using a DSLR or mirrorless. The mirrorless camera will be quieter because it does not have a mirror. On a DSLR, when the mirror moves out of the way and then returns to its starting position it makes two “clapping” noises in quick succession.

If you shoot where quiet is key, such as around skittish wildlife or in public libraries, then you will appreciate that mirrorless technology eliminates some of the sounds. Some DSLRs dampen the sound, and some offer silent live view modes, but if you want to be assured that your photo-taking will be as quiet as possible, then mirrorless is the way to go. (Side note: some mirrorless cameras have a mirror “clapping” sound effect that you can turn off in your settings.)

Camera Buying Guide

Battery

Mirrorless cameras drain your battery faster because they require the electronic viewfinder (EVF) or LCD to take photos. Therefore a DSLR battery can easily last twice as long or for twice as many shots. The smaller design of mirrorless cameras also means smaller batteries. This creates an even further limit on their capacity. If you don't mind carrying an extra battery or two, this might not be a deal breaker.

There is no debate when it comes to battery life. DSLRs win hands down.



Cost / Investment

Mirrorless probably is the way of the future, but that is still a long way off. It will be a long time still before only mirrorless cameras will come up on my most recommended list that I provide my students. Mirrorless cameras are still catching up in some areas and while they can compete with DSLRs on almost every level, a DSLR is still the cheapest way to get into serious photography.

Finding a mirrorless APS-C with a viewfinder for the same price as a new beginner DSLR like a Canon Rebel or Nikon D3XXX series is almost impossible. Unless you are willing to compromise and buy a used mirrorless that is more than 5 years old, a DSLR is the best option when you need something budget-friendly.

The Final Tally

As with all debates in photography, sometimes there are no real winners and it comes down to personal preference and your shooting style. Which is “better” will really be determined by where you are willing to make compromises, not because one technology is actually intrinsically better than the other, but because each has its own distinct advantages and disadvantages. There may be one or two aspects to a camera system that are crucial to your photography that make the difference in your decision.

When should you choose one camera type over the other? In my experience, the foremost consideration for most buyers is going to be the cost. If you can get a DSLR for half the price of a mirrorless one and all other aspects of the camera are basically equivalent, then most people tend to go with the DSLR. However, since no two cameras are ever exact equivalents, there are the other factors we discussed to consider. We are going to summarize our recommendations on the next two pages.

So When Should You Choose a DSLR?

- When you want better grip and a better balance for large lenses
- When you need a large lens selection
- When you want more external controls and don't want to navigate digital controls (such as when you are out in the fog or cold or wearing gloves).
- When you need batteries to last all day
- When video is not your main purpose
- When you like the “real” view of the optical viewfinder (many mirrorless cameras don't have viewfinders at all)
- When you need something budget-friendly



So When Should You Choose a Mirrorless?

- When you want smaller or don't need large lenses
- When you don't need a large selection of lenses
- When you want more digital controls
- When video is crucial
- When you need quieter operation or very fast shutter speeds

Hopefully this section has clarified the differences between DSLR and mirrorless and will help you decide which camera system is right for you. In the next two sections, we will cover some buying tips for saving money and avoiding scams.



Safe Camera Buying

Whether you buy new or used, our camera buying tips can help you navigate the camera market safely. Cameras and lenses are expensive electronics and the last thing you want to do is lose money or get scammed. Understanding a few key terms and some issues to look out for can help you save money and have peace of mind when you make your next purchase.

New Gear

Let's start with new camera gear. You would think this is self-explanatory and that new gear is new and therefore always safe to buy, but it is not.

You go to Amazon. There is the camera you've been dreaming of and it is \$400 cheaper than at Best Buy. It says it's new. Wow, what a deal, right?

Have you heard the phrase, "If it seems too good to be true, it probably is" given as buying advice? It would be wise to heed this advice. "Deals" online often come with a catch.

Camera Buying Guide

The most important aspect to check is the seller's name. Make sure the seller is an authorized seller for that brand. Amazon is usually an authorized seller, but you have to go look at the "sold by" and "ship by" information on the product page. If these don't both say Amazon, then it is possible this is a third-party seller who is not authorized. This could void any warranty.

Sometimes "new" cameras and lenses are repackaged items. For example, the seller buys a camera and lens as a kit, then they sell the camera body and lens separately for more money. These items are technically new, but those types of sellers are not going to be authorized sellers.

You may find a package deal or kit that includes a bunch of accessories like the one shown on the next page. Most of the accessories in these kits are cheap junk that will end up in a landfill. These sellers may or may not be authorized sellers, but either way, you are not investing in quality accessories. For example, the tripods are usually flimsy and won't hold up over time, they usually cannot be fixed if they break, and may not be rated to support the weight of heavier cameras and lenses. The filters will not be good quality glass and might even be Plexiglas or plastic.

Camera Buying Guide

There are also kits sold that bundle a camera with one or two lenses without all the accessories. These can be good deals at times (when they are authorized sellers, of course). These lenses are often the cheaper versions of lenses made by these manufacturers and are what the industry calls “kit” lenses. Take into consideration the quality of the lens and check prices. You might be better off buying the camera body alone and then adding the higher-quality lenses that you want individually. For example, Canon offers an EF 50mm f/1.8 lens (the “nifty fifty”) for about \$125. This is a much better lens than the typical EF-S 18-55mm lens that usually comes in a bundle.

Prices from authorized retailers are going to be dictated at the MSRP level, which means that a deal you find at one seller should be exactly the same as a deal you find at another seller. If you find a good price and then check elsewhere and don't see the same offer, that is a red flag. In some cases, a seller might offer other incentives like free shipping or a gift card off a future purchase, but the camera or lens price remains unchanged.

Camera Buying Guide

Prices are basically standardized in each country or region. You will see differences in prices from one country to another – sometimes as much as \$700 to \$1000 or more. This is usually related to import taxes and distribution costs, as well as labor costs and the size of the market in that country. For example, a camera priced at about \$3000 in the United States might cost almost \$4000 in Australia.

If you see a cheaper price on Amazon Canada, can you buy it there and send it to your house? Yes, you can, but again, it might not be covered under warranty even if the seller in Canada is authorized. Confusing, right? The seller must be authorized in your country and the product must be purchased in your country (in most cases) to be covered.

One final tip when buying new gear. Consider buying the previous year's model of the same camera or lens. Often the new version has a few upgrades, most of which will not make that much of a dramatic difference in your image quality, but the cost savings of buying the older model can be very appealing and quite dramatic.

Camera Buying Guide

For example, below are the specs of the Nikon Z7 II when it came out compared to the original Nikon Z7. These specs came from the Camera Decision website which is a great resource. Notice that the only big difference between the two cameras was one additional frame per second when shooting high-speed bursts. At the time these two cameras were compared the Z7 original would have been a \$500 savings for a buyer.

Nikon Z7 II Key Specs

- Announcement Date: 2020-10-14
- 46MP - Full frame BSI-CMOS Sensor
- No Anti-aliasing (AA) filter
- ISO 64 - 25600 (expands to 32 - 102400)
- Nikon Z Mount
- Sensor-shift Image Stabilization
- 3.2 Tilting Screen
- 3690k dot Electronic viewfinder
- 10.0fps continuous shooting
- 4K (UHD) - 3840 x 2160 video resolution
- Built-in Wireless
- 705g. 134 x 101 x 70 mm
- Weather Sealed Body

Nikon Z7 Key Specs

- Announcement Date: 2018-08-23
- 46MP - Full frame BSI-CMOS Sensor
- No Anti-aliasing (AA) filter
- ISO 64 - 25600 (expands to 32 - 102400)
- Nikon Z Mount
- Sensor-shift Image Stabilization
- 3.2 Tilting Screen
- 3690k dot Electronic viewfinder
- 9.0fps continuous shooting
- 4K (UHD) - 3840 x 2160 video resolution
- Built-in Wireless
- 675g. 134 x 101 x 68 mm
- Weather Sealed Body

Refurbished & Reconditioned

Refurbished or reconditioned equipment mostly comes from retail purchases that are returned. Someone gets a fancy camera as a gift and then they discover it's too complicated for them or they don't have time to figure it out. So it gets returned. Any returned camera is no longer "new." To recoup money that would otherwise be lost from such equipment, the cameras (or lenses) are inspected and repacked for a lower price. You, as the buyer, can benefit from this pricing discount.

Refurbished cameras can also be open boxes or demo units from a camera store. The equipment might be perfectly good and in excellent shape (possible slight surface issues from demo use and such), but again they are not "new" anymore.

Refurbished cameras are actually tested in a more stringent manner than a new product straight from the factory. Each camera (or lens) is inspected by hand and must pass strict Quality Control standards. The only word of warning is that the warranty may be different, so carefully check the fine print to make sure you will be covered. Then decide if the difference in warranty is worth the discounted price.

Camera Buying Guide

The best place to buy a refurbished or reconditioned product is directly from the manufacturer. Well-known and established camera stores like Adorama and B&H Photo also sell refurbished equipment. Be careful when purchasing from other electronics retailers. Make sure they are authorized sellers and make sure it is really a refurbished piece and not just an open box item they marked down locally without any inspection process.

Gray Market & International

Gray market cameras and lenses are products that are imported and then sold by someone other than the manufacturer. They are usually genuine products of that manufacturer, but they were initially distributed in another country or market. A third party, typically in Asia where cameras are priced lower (due to lower distribution costs), buys the cameras and then exports them to another country.

Camera Buying Guide

This means that your camera purchase may have accessories for other countries. Chargers may be modified or adapted to be compatible in your country. Instruction manuals might be in another language.

Most importantly it means the gear will not be covered under any warranty. In fact, if it breaks and you want to send it in for repair, the manufacturer might not offer service, even when you are willing to pay for it!



Camera Buying Guide

There are also cases where gray market or "international" versions of cameras are knock-offs or fakes. It is also possible that the gear is a refurbished or open box item that has been repacked for sale as new. Below is a sample of Canon counterfeit items.

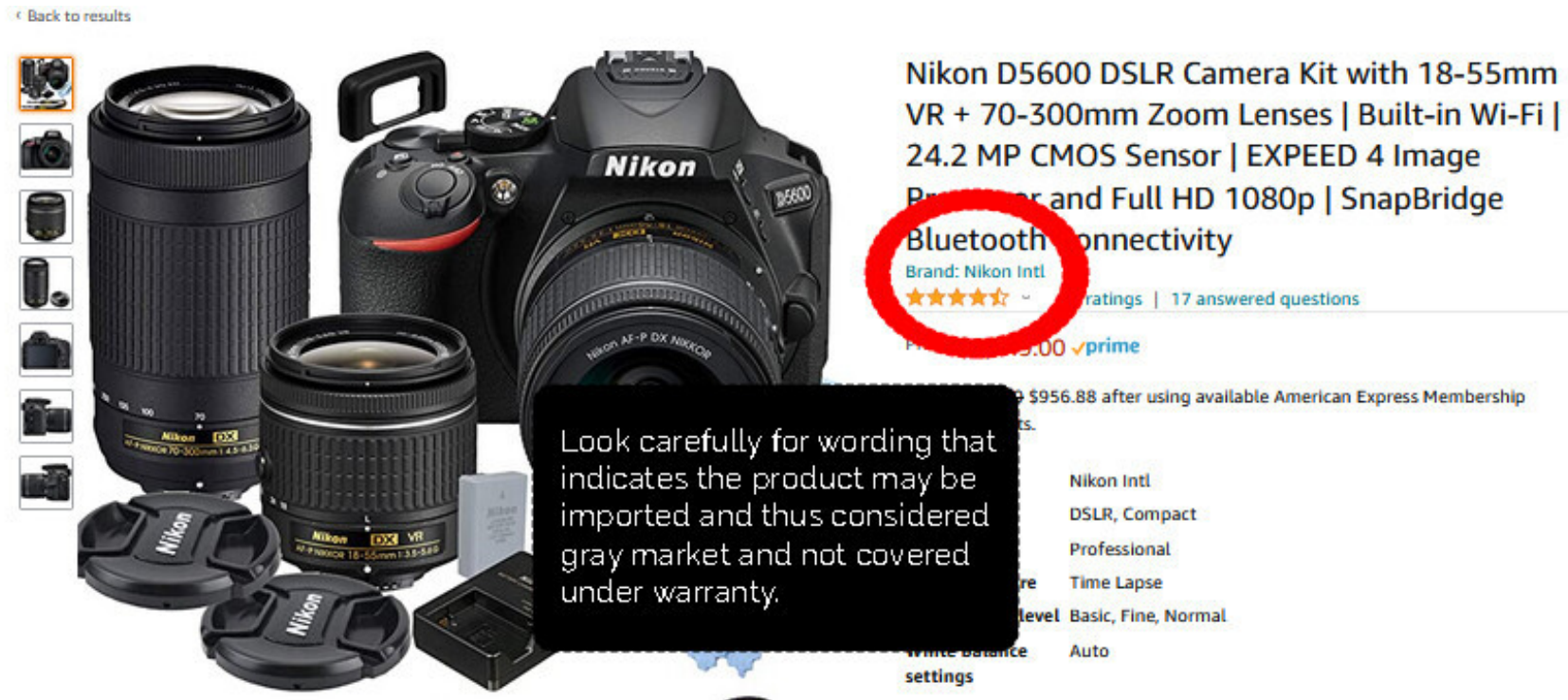
Therefore, there are risks to buying a gray market or international camera or lens.

Sometimes the price is so good though it may be enticing. A gray market camera might sell for \$400 to \$600 less than those sold at authorized retailers.



Camera Buying Guide

When shopping, watch out for terms or phrases like import model, seller warranty, gray/grey market, warranty via seller, Canon import, Nikon import, Sony import, USA seller warranty, off market, direct import, or USA coverage by seller. Check the fine print to see what kind of warranty you will get and check the seller's name on the manufacturer's website to see if they are an authorized retailer.



← Back to results

Nikon D5600 DSLR Camera Kit with 18-55mm VR + 70-300mm Zoom Lenses | Built-in Wi-Fi | 24.2 MP CMOS Sensor | EXPEED 4 Image Processor and Full HD 1080p | SnapBridge Bluetooth connectivity

Brand: Nikon Intl
★★★★★ ratings | 17 answered questions

Price: \$956.88 after using available American Express Membership

Look carefully for wording that indicates the product may be imported and thus considered gray market and not covered under warranty.

Nikon Intl
DSLR, Compact
Professional
Time Lapse
Level Basic, Fine, Normal
White balance settings Auto

Camera Buying Guide

Item specifics			
Condition:	New: A brand-new, unused, unopened, undamaged item in its original packaging (where packaging is applicable). Packaging should be the same as what is found in a retail store, unless the item is handmade or was packaged by the manufacturer in non-retail packaging, such as an unprinted box or plastic bag. See the seller's listing for full details. See all condition definitions	Manufacturer Warranty:	None
Media/Memory Card Slot 1:	CFexpress Type B / XQD	Media/Memory Card Slot 2:	SD/SDHC/SDXC (UHS-II)
Camera Format:	Full-Frame	Sensor Type:	CMOS
Lens Mount:	Nikon Z	Seller Warranty:	30 Days
Version:	Import		0018208016594
Brand:	Nikon		Nikon Z
Type:	Mirrorless Interchangeable Lens		3.2 in
Maximum Resolution:	24.5 MP		Black
Model:	Nikon Z 6II		mini-HDMI, USB-C
MPN:	1659		Red-Eye Reduction, CMOS Sensor, Bluetooth, Body Only, Wi-Fi, 4K Video Recording, Touch Screen, Tilttable Screen, Time Lapse
Battery Type:	Lithium-Ion		

Look carefully at the fine print.

This camera is a gray market camera with no warranty offered even though it is new.

In the end, you might decide the price difference is worth the risk. If that is the case, then know that there is no difference between a manufacturer import and a gray market import (as long as it isn't a fake) in terms of the camera body itself. Both will have been made in the same factory with the same specs. The differences are only in the accessories, packaging, and warranty/service.

Most manufacturers strongly recommend against buying gray market.

[Nikon Warning](#)

[Canon Warning](#)

Used Gear

There are many places to buy used gear. Facebook Marketplace, OfferUp, Nextdoor, eBay, Craigslist, and online photography groups are all places where you can find cameras, lenses, bags, and accessories. It is in these places that scammers flourish, so buyer beware!

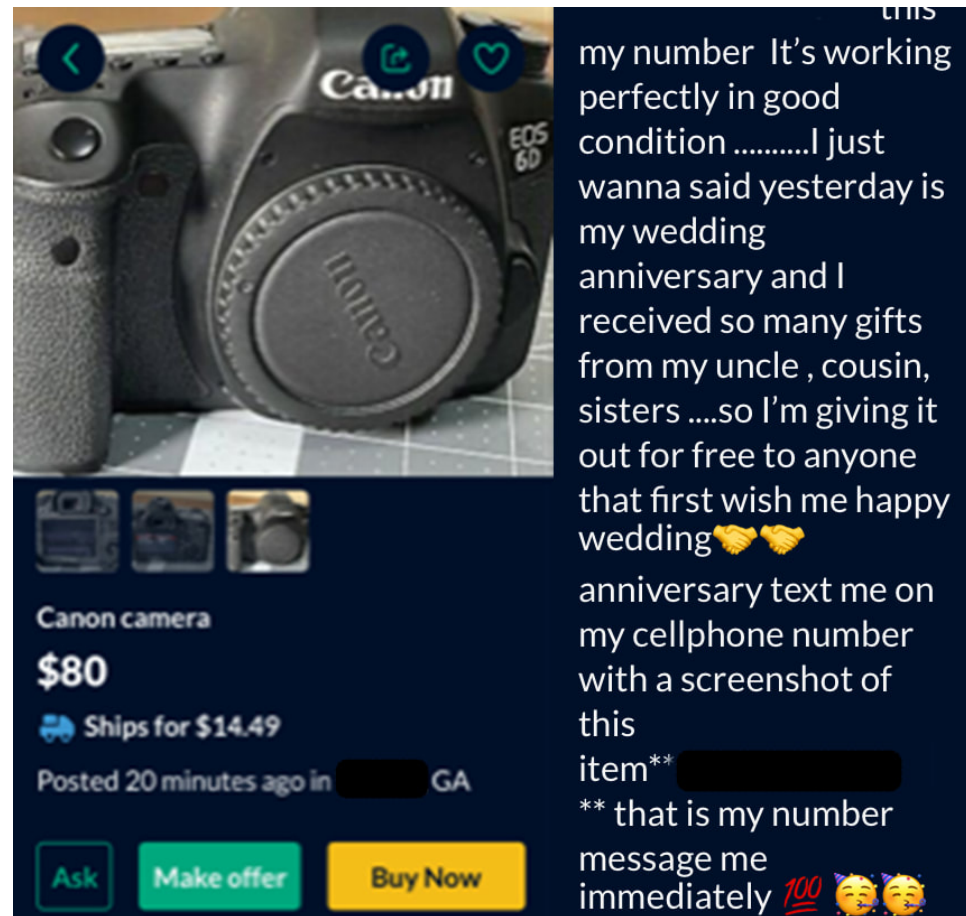
It is hard to keep up with scammers. Each time people catch on to the current scam, they switch to something else. Recent scams have included selling the box for the camera only without the camera, swapping out what you saw in the ad for other items or broken items, never sending the item after payment is received, specifying in the description that the equipment is “untested” (which probably means it doesn’t work), and I am sure there are more that I am forgetting as I write this.

A common scam, shown on the next page, offers a too-good-to-be-true price. At the time of the ad, the 6D sold for \$1399 for body only when new and anywhere from \$470 (as is for parts/untested) to \$700 (good condition) when used, never for \$80 just because you wish someone a happy anniversary!

Camera Buying Guide

If you are going to buy from a seller on one of these platforms, check their profile, their ratings and reviews, and use the platform's recommendations for safe buying and selling.

For example, when buying on Facebook Marketplace your purchases can be covered (check terms for the specific item) under their seller protections, but only if you make the purchase through their platform. If you send the money by Venmo or CashApp, it might be bye-bye hard-earned cash.



The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook Marketplace listing for a Canon camera. The listing includes a photo of the camera, a price of \$80, and shipping information. To the right of the listing, there is a comment from a user who is offering the camera for free and asking for a Venmo payment.

Canon camera
\$80
Ships for \$14.49
Posted 20 minutes ago in GA

my number It's working perfectly in good conditionI just wanna said yesterday is my wedding anniversary and I received so many gifts from my uncle , cousin, sistersso I'm giving it out for free to anyone that first wish me happy wedding anniversary text me on my cellphone number with a screenshot of this item** that is my number message me immediately

Camera Buying Guide

My recommendation is that you NEVER buy used gear on a platform like these unless it is a local seller whom you can meet (in a safe place, like the police station parking lot) and you can test the equipment before you buy. Bring a lens to test on a camera body, or bring a camera body to test a lens. Make sure the seller has the camera charged, so you can check it out.

My even better recommendation is that you buy used from a reputable reseller like KEH Camera, B&H Photo, MPB, or Adorama. These legitimate sellers buy used gear (a great way to get rid of stuff you don't use and get some cash) and they also offer trades. They then take the used gear, check it and grade it (bargain, like new, excellent), and then list it for sale on their sites. The greatest part of buying from these sellers is that you also get a warranty on most purchases. For example, KEH offers a warranty of at least 180 days for any equipment (unless it is as-is, for parts, or not working to begin with). Sometimes when they run sales or holiday specials they will even offer a full-year warranty. This is a great way to buy used gear. If one reseller doesn't have what you are looking for, try another. In addition to checking stock, it is a good idea to compare prices and the grade of gear from one supplier to another.

Camera Buying Guide

One final tip about used resellers... you can use their sites to check prices before you buy anywhere else. For example, if I were going to buy a used Canon T7i from a local person on Facebook Marketplace, I would first go to one of these online resellers and get a price for that same camera. If they are selling it with a warranty for about the same price, why would I buy from the local person? Or if the local person's price is way higher I now have some bargaining I can do. If their price is lower, then I know I am probably getting a good deal (as long as it checks out when we meet up in person).

The Takeaway...

Buying cameras and lenses can be a frustrating process when there are so many places to look and you see so many appealing prices. The key things to remember...

New – buy from authorized sellers in your country, check the manufacturer's website for a list to make sure, and don't buy the accessory kits.

Camera Buying Guide

Refurbished – buy from an established and authorized seller and check the difference in the warranty offered.

Gray Market – do not buy gray market if you want warranty service (or service at all), but if the warranty/service issue doesn't bother you, then just be aware your product's accessories may be different and there is the possibility of getting a fake or knock-off product.

Used – buy only after being hyper-vigilant against scammers, it is better if you buy from local individuals so you can test the equipment before you hand over the cash, and if possible the best option is to buy from a recognized and reliable reseller that might offer at least some warranty on your purchase.

Now that you know some of the common pitfalls of buying camera gear, whether new or used, you are ready to go do some shopping! Oh, happy day, I love new (or new to me) gear, don't you?! :)

Save Money on Camera Gear

Do you have GAS? GAS is the acronym for Gear Acquisition Syndrome. The name is a joke, but the reality of it is not. It is the trap many photographers fall into, feeling the need to constantly upgrade or purchase more lenses and equipment. New equipment is always a lot of fun and often sparks some creativity at the outset, but it can get expensive and there is no reason to “break the bank.” In this section, we will discuss how to save some of your hard-earned money.



Rent Cameras & Lenses

There are many online rental centers for camera equipment and they feature a huge variety to choose from. You can rent for a day or for months. It does cost money to rent, but it lets you get to know the equipment and test it out. This way you can discover whether the lens or camera meets your expectations before you pay the full amount to buy it. Many local camera shops have rental centers or you can go with a national rental center.

You can also rent directly from some of the manufacturers. When a new camera model comes out, manufacturers like Canon and Nikon will sometimes offer 3-day trial rentals of the camera. They often call these “test drives” instead of rentals. If you decide to buy, the cost of the rental is deducted from the cost of the product.

Renting is also a great option when you have a photo shoot where you need a piece of equipment you might not ever use again. If you would rarely use a piece of gear, renting can be more cost-effective than buying.

Camera Buying Guide



Save Money on Camera Gear

Borrow From a Friend

If you have friends who are photographers (either as hobbyists or as professionals), you might be able to test out a camera or lens they already bought before you buy it also. Join photography hobby groups and professional organizations, or photography sharing groups online or on social media, like Facebook. Once you get to know other group members or attend some events, they might agree to let you use a lens for a few days, or at least while you are at the event to test it out.

You may find the equipment doesn't impress you as much as you thought it would, or that it's not that much better than the lens or camera you already own. Either way, you can discover whether that piece of gear is the right fit for you.

Used Gear

Buying used gear can save you hundreds, if not thousands, over time. However, used gear comes with its drawbacks. It is used, so unless you know the seller there is a risk that the equipment will have undisclosed flaws, or worse, arrive broken when sent by shipment. There are no warranties with used gear from private sellers. Facebook Marketplace, Craigslist, and eBay all have used camera gear sales. We only buy used if we can personally examine and test the equipment face-to-face, but this also has inherent safety risks.

Our recommendation, when buying used, is to buy from a reputable used retailer, like KEH in Atlanta. Their equipment is inspected and rated for its level of wear and tear. You get a clear description of what you are purchasing and they offer a warranty. You can have more confidence in your purchase this way.

Camera Buying Guide

You can also purchase used gear in thrift shops where you can examine the item before you lay out the cash. Additionally, yard sales and estate sales are great places to pick up used lenses, camera bags, accessories, or even cameras. With the many adapters available in today's market you can also get inexpensive vintage lenses to add to your gear without breaking the bank.



Sell Older Gear

Perhaps you have a lens you rarely use, or you upgraded lenses and still have the old gear. Take an inventory of your gear and see if you are truly using it. There is a chance you will find gear that you have stopped using. If you have gear that is otherwise just collecting dust, consider selling it.

Most camera gear loses value over time, but really good quality lenses can keep their value for a longer time. However, don't wait too long. The longer those lenses or old cameras sit around the more money value you may lose.

You can sell your gear to resellers like KEH, Adorama, MPB, or B&H Photo. Most provide a quote by email, and at KEH they provide an easy look-up tool where you can select the items you have to sell and get a preliminary estimate of your earnings without having to ship the equipment to them right off the bat.

Camera Buying Guide

Additionally, you can sell used gear on Craigslist, eBay, and other online sites, as well as on Facebook groups or other social media sites dedicated to photography.

Personally, I prefer selling to a reputable company, versus meeting up with individuals that I don't know or shipping items to people who have bought online.

If you are lucky, you can sell enough old gear to buy that new lens you've had your eye on.

Trade Gear

Through various online photography groups, you may find folks that would be willing to trade gear, either temporarily or permanently. For example, Facebook has multiple buy/sell/trade groups for photography equipment. Joining a local photography group that has monthly meet-ups is another place to possibly find a willing trading partner.

You can also trade in your gear for new gear with online sellers. The number of online places where you can trade gear is a little more limited. KEH Camera and MPB both have options for this. Sometimes you get a bonus or discount code with your trade.

Buy Third Party or Off-Brand Lenses

While Sony, Canon, and Nikon have lots of fantastic lenses, they are often expensive. Buying a third-party or off-brand lens can provide significant savings.

One of my favorite lenses is the Tamron 18-400mm because of its great price and the large zoom range means I can carry one lens instead of two or three. Tamron, Sigma, and Tokina all make lenses for lower price points than the name brands and many of them are top-quality lenses. Some Sigma lenses actually perform better than their name-brand equivalents.



Camera Buying Guide

A website like DXO Mark, which was mentioned earlier, that conducts testing of lenses is a great place to compare lenses to see which will have the better quality. You may find a non-name brand lens that could save you some dollars.

You can also buy non-name brand filters, tripods, batteries, accessories, and memory cards. Personally, we would not suggest third-party batteries or memory cards although there are many available. Some cameras won't function properly with non-name brand batteries and memory cards. And even more importantly, off-brand cards are more likely to corrupt, have failures, or create errors. Check your camera manual for recommended cards and stick to cards that match your camera (like Sony, Fuji, or Nikon cards) or other name brands like Lexar, PNY, or SanDisk.

Watch for Sales & Rebates

There are several times a year when you can expect sales. Typically, camera gear discounts are at their greatest at the end of summer, and after Christmas. However, you can find pre-summer and holiday deals, and sometimes there are discounts at other times of year. If you have social media, like Twitter or Facebook, follow the manufacturers that you usually purchase gear from and you will see their posts when they have sales items or rebates.

Some selling sites also feature alerts, so when certain products go on sale or a rebate is offered you will be notified, or they have pages dedicated to their current sale items. Rebates can sometimes save you a few hundred dollars. In addition, you can sign up for newsletters and marketing materials from sellers and manufacturers to make sure you don't miss out.

Buy the Older Model

Over the course of a year, there are several conferences and events during which camera gear manufacturers will announce their new products. As soon as those models start to appear, or a little bit before, the older models they replace will start going on sale. One such conference is CP+ which is usually in late winter or early spring (Feb/Mar).

You don't need the brand new, most shiny model. None of the improvements in the new model make your current camera or an older model obsolete. Any model of DSLR from the last 5-6 years is perfectly capable of excellent photography in the right hands (a new camera will not help if you don't know the basics like composition and lighting). Therefore, if you need a new camera, last year's model will be more than adequate and save you a bunch of money, too.

Camera Buying Guide

In fact, as already briefly mentioned, you can get very old models or lenses or even vintage lenses that will still perform well. Just be sure to thoroughly examine the lens for scratches and mold or fungus on the glass and test it on your camera before buying it. Some vintage lenses will require the use of an adapter on newer cameras.



Don't Overbuy & Upgrade Slowly

There are so many beginner photographers who suffer from GAS. They have their base camera and kit lens and feel the need to start purchasing other lenses.

Having a plethora of lenses can be a lot of fun and so can all those cool accessories, but they aren't needed to get great photographs. You do not need all of that gear to get started and to learn photography. It is detrimental to your photography learning to think you need a specific camera body or lens to get a great shot. Think of it this way, if you have your hands on the most expensive camera ever made will your shots be any better if you don't understand lighting or exposure? If you gave Ansel Adams a \$100 point-and-shoot would he still take amazing images? 99% of good photography is the photographer, not the gear.

Having limited gear actually enhances your creativity. It will force you to move around, focus on composition and lighting, and help you learn. Don't even think about buying new glass or a new camera body until you have stretched the capabilities of your current gear as far as it can go.

Camera Buying Guide

If you feel the need to buy an additional lens, consider starting with something inexpensive like a “nifty fifty” 50mm prime lens. After you truly get to know the pieces of equipment you have and have mastered those lenses, then consider adding more. The same rule applies to camera bodies. If you upgrade slowly over time you will save money. And as you upgrade, consider all of the previous ways to save we’ve already mentioned. Additionally, we would recommend adding a tripod for steady shooting, a flash for lighting, and upgrading lenses before we would recommend upgrading camera bodies.

Camera Buying Guide



Save Money on Camera Gear

Don't Buy Bundles

When you buy a camera, purchase a camera body and a quality lens separately, or a camera lens combo (although the kit lenses are usually lower quality lenses they are definitely adequate for starting out). Do not buy the kits or bundles that come with a bazillion accessories like cleaning cloths, filter sets, and a cheap plastic tripod. They will claim that you are getting a great deal and loads of savings versus buying all of those items separately, but the selection of equipment in those kits is terrible, cheap quality. Most of them are also things you don't need, but they "fill" the package to make it look like a good deal. Buy these pieces of equipment as you need them instead, and choose good quality items that you will only need to buy once.

The Takeaway

When the time is right, there is nothing wrong with buying a fancy new camera body or a shiny new lens. New gear is always a lot of fun and can spark your creativity. But it isn't the magic that will make you a great photographer. YOU make the photos. Spending money left and right without understanding the basics will only lead to disappointment because your images won't get any better despite the potential debt you created.

So have a healthy relationship with your gear-buying impulses and don't let them guide your photographic journey.

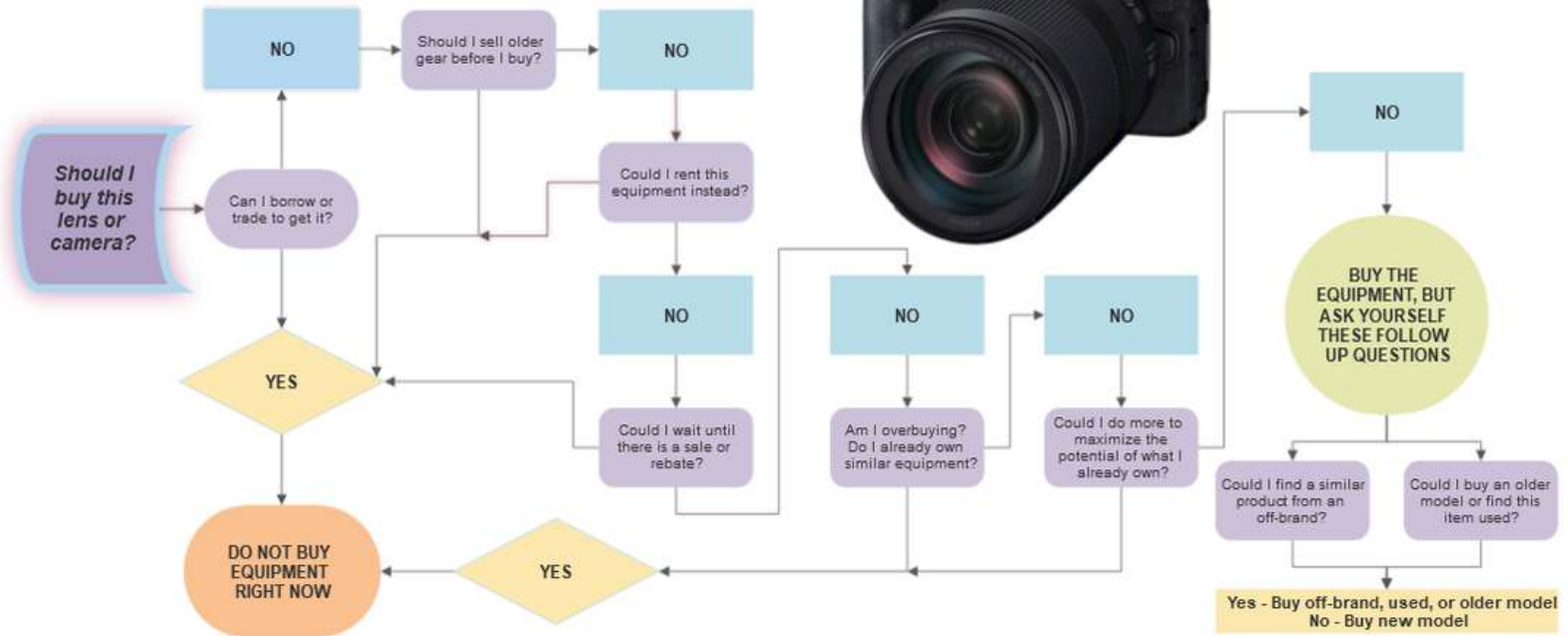
Need More Help?

Need a handy reminder card to stop your impulse buying? Print the handout below.

Or when it is time to buy, do you need help figuring out what kind of camera to buy, which accessories are right for you, or what lens might be best for your photography needs? We provide consultation for all of our students, so give us a call.

Camera Buying Guide

Do I Need This Lens (or Camera)?

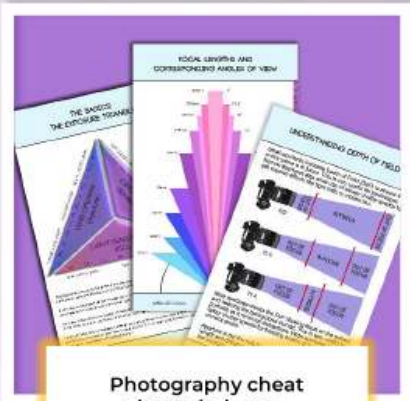




Mega Pixel our Superhero Mascot!

You finished this guide! You're awesome!

You know what else is awesome? These additional photography resources to help you along your photography journey!



Photography cheat sheets help you understand the basics



Guides and tutorials covering many popular photography topics



Photography courses and workshops for many genres and all skill levels



Want even more? Follow us on Twitter and YouTube @focusedcamera and subscribe to our Newsletter!

About the Author

Cheryl Ritzel, founder of FocusEd Camera, is an esteemed instructional coach. Her exceptional talents have garnered recognition and accolades throughout her career. Cheryl's company and her remarkable work have been featured in prestigious publications such as ICM Magazine, Business Insider, Dogster, Spectrum News, and Yahoo News, and on the social media channels of Lensbaby, Canon, and Adaptalux.



A close-up, black and white photograph of a camera lens and its controls. The lens is the central focus, with various buttons and dials visible around it. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures and metallic surfaces of the camera. The background is dark, making the camera stand out.

Camera Buying Shouldn't Be Confusing...

In this Camera Buying Guide, we will help you confidently choose the perfect camera while saving money at the same time! In today's visually-driven world, owning a camera has become more than a luxury; it's a means to capture precious memories, unleash your creativity, and share your unique perspective with the world. Whether you are an aspiring photographer, a hobbyist, or simply someone looking to upgrade their photography gear, this e-book is your essential companion to navigating the intricate world of camera buying.

FOCUSED CAMERA™