

Digital cameras for \$200-\$300

10/1/2006

Camera technology has advanced rapidly in the last few years. Digital cameras have become advanced, compact, and affordable. There are many quality digital cameras for under \$300.

For this price you will be able to get a 6.0-7.1 megapixel camera. This is definitely a high enough resolution for the amateur photographer.

With photos at this resolution, you can print 8x10 prints in detail. You will also find it easy to crop photos if desired. Even most cropped images will still allow for quality 4x6 prints.

Cameras in this price range usually offer a 3x optical zoom. This is very standard in the digital photography world.

Cameras in this price range have digital zoom capabilities as well. I would usually stray from the digital zoom function though. Using it can increase camera's sensitivity to movement and make for blurry shots.

One benefit of cameras in this price range is their size. Most cameras in the \$200-\$300 price range are compact. They can easily fit in a pocket or purse. Cameras higher in price begin getting larger in size to accommodate added features.

One important thing to look for is the amount of scene modes offered. Scene or shooting modes allow the user to quickly switch to a scene. Examples of scene modes include Snow, Fireworks, Portrait or Action.

The camera automatically adjusts its settings to accommodate your selected scene. This is really helpful for amateur photographers. Most of us don't want to change settings, but still want great shots.

Others are interested in experimenting with various settings. For those who are, make sure the camera you select allows for this. Some digital cameras come with manual options, others don't. Some cameras even allow you to save custom settings as scene modes.

Another consideration is video recording features. Most cameras now come standard with this feature. Look for the highest possible resolution if this is a deal-breaker for you. The higher the resolution is, the better the video quality will be. High quality videos will play also play in a larger screen on your computer.

One thing to keep in mind as well is the memory card. Many cameras include small memory cards. You will most likely want to buy a higher capacity memory card.

High resolution photos and movies will utilize more memory space. You should purchase a larger memory card to hold your media. I recommend at least a 256 MB card if you plan to mostly take photos. If you plan to shoot video you will want a 512 MB card or higher.

There are many other features to look for. Low-light capabilities, flash options, accessory additions, and color controls are a few.

Some cameras in this price range even have photo-editing tools. You can change coloring, remove red-eye, and crop images right from the camera. This eliminates the need for photo editing software in some cases.

I've compared a few of my favorite cameras in this price range for you.

Canon PowerShot A620

This 7.1 megapixel camera is loaded with features. It includes a 4x optical zoom, 20 shooting modes, and 8 scene modes.

One mode is called Stitch Assist. It assists in taking panoramic images. You can then piece together your photos with the included PhotoStitch software.

The [Canon PowerShot A620](#) also has a My Colors mode for special effects and color balancing. You can now be more creative with your photos. You don't have to use a photo-editing program.

Possibly the best feature of this camera is its 2.0 inch Vari-Angle LCD screen. The screen swivels and rotates. This enables you to take photos from just about any position.

Set your camera on the floor or above your head in a crowd. Or turn the screen toward you when taking self portraits. Any position is viewable through the monitor with this feature.

The camera has a DIGIC II image processor. It is designed to enhance processing speed and image quality. This means the camera should startup, focus, and playback quickly.

Don't forget to take movie clips with the Canon PowerShot A620. It captures up to 60 frames per second at 320x240 resolution. You can record up to one minute of uninterrupted video.

It is easy to transfer your photos and video to your computer. You can do this using a USB cable or an SD memory card.

Sony Cyber-shot DSC-W50

The [Sony Cyber-shot DSC-W50](#) prides itself in taking high quality photos.

Sony claims that it eliminates the blurriness that results with most digital cameras.

This 6.0 megapixel camera has a Carl Zeiss lens with a 3X optical zoom. It includes a High Sensitivity Mode (ISO 1000) for quality low-light photos.

It contains a 32 MB internal memory. For removable media there is a built-in slot for Memory Stick Duo cards.

The 2.5 inch LCD screen has a play button for easy photo viewing. The camera includes a color mode that as well. Choose to snap photos with rich, intense colors or natural, subtle colors.

The Sony DSC-W50 was created with a lasting battery in mind. It runs on rechargeable lithium ion batteries. Capture up to 3,902 images before the batteries need to be recharged.

The Smart Zoom feature allows users to zoom in up to 13x. The digital zoom does not distort photos. Instead, Sony has an intelligent cropping feature. It crops the center of the scene for enlargement.

Kodak EasyShare Z760

The [Kodak EasyShare Z760](#) has 6.1 megapixels. It is equipped with a Schneider-Kreuznach Variogon 3X Optical Zoom Lens.

The camera shoots in 16 different scene modes and five color modes. The modes include Portrait, Sport, Beach, Fireworks, Snow, and many others. Color modes include a Black-and-White mode and Sepia mode for an antique appearance.

The EasyShare Z760 records video and audio without a time limit. It has a high-resolution 2.2 inch display monitor with picture-rotation. This means your pictures will always be displayed right-side up.

The camera's Kodak Color Science Image Processing Chip enhances photo quality. The chip actually analyses each photo taken. Then it adjusts picture quality based on the scene data collected.

The EasyShare Z760 is also outfitted with a high-speed, low-light auto focus. With this feature, you can take quality photos in low-light or bright-light environments.

Most people will only need to shoot in auto mode for quality shots. But for the more experienced photographer, the EasyShare Z670 offers manual controls.

A custom mode allows you to save your favorite settings. Or try the continuous shooting modes. These capturing multiple frames in succession.

Canon PowerShot SD500 Digital ELPH

The [PowerShot SD500 Digital ELPH](#) has 7.1 megapixels of resolution. It is compact and slim, but still maintains a large LCD screen.

In addition to the 2.0 inch screen, the PowerShot SD500 has a 3x optical zoom. It also comes equipped with a DIGIC II Image Processor.

This camera can shoot movies at 60 frames per second. It is equipped with a fast frame rate movie recording feature. This feature enhances the recording of moving subjects without blurring or distortion.

There is also a My Color customization feature. This feature is used to alter the colors in a scene before shooting.

Use it to enhance certain colors. Or emphasize a single color against a black-and-white background. You can even swap different colors or lighten or darken skin tones in your photos.

Comparing cameras

	Canon PowerShot A620	Sony DSC-W50	Kodak Z760	Canon PowerShot SD500
Price Estimate	\$220	\$250	\$250	\$280
Effective pixels	7.1	6.0	6.1	7.1
LCD	2.0"	2.5"	2.2"	2.0"
Battery	(4) AA batteries	Lithium-Ion rechargeable	Kodak Lithium-Ion	Lithium-Ion rechargeable
Weight	10.1 oz	5.5 oz	9.1 oz	7.1 oz
Dimensions	4.1 x 2.6 x 1.9 in	3.5 x 2.2 x 0.9 in	3.9 x 2.7 x 1.6 in	3.5 x 2.2 x 1.1 in