I’m having a tough time deciding between cameras. The advantages of digital are great (i.e. instant eval. of picture quality, Powerpoint) but it’s hard to find one with an adequate flash, macro quality and optical zoom all in one camera. Any suggestions? Past experiences?

BC, Official Townie

There are two categories of digitals—over a thousand and under a thousand. Those over a thousand, Nikon D1, Canon D30, etc., will run you about 3 to 5K and are very similar in picture quality and features to a conventional 35mm. Those under a thousand Nikon Coolpix, Olympus 2500, etc., will give you good picture quality but you have to adapt them and fine tune their settings. FWIW, I have both a digital, Nikon coolpix 880 and a Yashica Dental Eye III (the best 35mm camera in my opinion.)

Socalsam, Official Townie

If you don’t mind laying out 4-5K for the Nikon D-1 system, you can have it all and in digital! Cheaper cameras will have some compromises but as long as you don’t need the pics for publication in a journal, there are many that can meet minimum requirements. For me, nothing beats the convenience of a digital camera. I use the Sony MacaviCD1000. It’s not perfect, (its a little on the larger side and close up lighting can be tricky) but does a very good all around job. I would never go back to 35mm for my needs although I do use an I-Zone Polaroid camera for tiny pics we put on patients charts for identification. Many others on this board have been happy with one of several Olympus models.

mike_esposito_dds, Official Townie

What you want to do with your images will help you in your decision. If image editing, presentation and acceptable quality are important to you, then go digital. If you really need the highest image quality, 35mm is still the only way. However the image quality of digital is for most of us sufficient. There are a few really good 35 mm camera setups with prices ranging from $1000-$3000. The Nikon setup is really good, but pricey. If you are looking for an easy to use dental camera, the Yashica Dental Eye 3 is a good choice. You can find a good selection of 35mm cameras on the Internet at www.dinecorp.com and photomed.net.

These companies also have a whole set of digital setups. I am on my fifth digital camera. I started with the Nikon Coolpix 900—too slow for me and not user-friendly. Then I tried the Olympus 600dl and Olympus 620dl, both are ttl cameras, but too cumbersome and use too much batteries. Then I switched to the Olympus 2500. It was clearly a huge improvement, but I had to put a closeup lens on for intraoral shots and screw it off and remove the ringflash for portrait images. Now I have a Sony dsc-d770 with ringflash. So far, this is my best system, because I can take intraoral images— including occlusals, full face portraits and full body pictures and don’t have to change the camera. The downside of the Sony dsc-d770 is that is only has 1.5 megapixels, but for me that is good enough for printing and Powerpoint presentations. The images are well lit with the ringflash. If you would like to have a ready-made setup, the Kodak Digital camera set (www.kodak.com/go/dental) is really good but a bit pricey but they have taken care of all the fiddling, so it is ready for use. If you choose digital, please accept the fact that this new technology is improving so fast it is hard to keep pace with it. I still have my own 35mm Minolta setup in my office for those cases that require the highest image quality. I am using both for their own purposes.

Edmund L, Official Townie

I’d like to purchase a decent digital camera that will take nice intraoral pictures. I am absolutely clueless about this type of technology so I would appreciate all the help I could get. I want to be able to use the camera for personal use as well. Is there anything special I will need on my PC to be able to print these pictures out? Do I need a special printer or some special card-things? I assume you need to use high-quality photograph type printer paper...right?

drdice, Official Townie

Congratulations on stepping into the digital world. Your description screams the Olympus 2500--the healthcare kit. It is fool proof and comes with everything in the box. You can buy it on the Internet at www.dicom-image.com or www.normancamera.com.

Tarun Agarwal, Official Townie

My recommendation is to search the Internet for reviews of digital cameras. Some basic things you should know about digital cameras:

Megapixels: The higher the megapixel rating, the better your image. I would not get anything less than 3 megapixel.

Zoom lens: I would not buy a camera that doesn’t have a zoom lens. Most of the new ones have them now.

Memory: There are basically 3 types. SmartMedia, compactflash, and a memory stick. SmartMedia is the smallest of the three. It is a thin wafer chip that’s about 2” X 2” in size. This storage medium is normally used when the manufacturer is trying to make the camera as compact as possible. CompactFlash is quite a bit bigger than SmartMedia. I find that CompactFlash has a little bigger share of the market than SmartMedia. Both are manufactured by many different companies, so there’s lots of price competition. The CompactFlash is normally a little cheaper than SmartMedia. On the other hand, the Memory Stick is a technology that Sony developed, so there aren’t many companies licensed to manufacture them, so they are quite pricey. The big problem now with the Memory Stick is that the largest stick available is 128 MB...maybe 256. I know for a fact (because I have one) that...
CompactFlash has 512 MB cards on the market. Why is memory important? The higher the megapixels on your camera, the bigger the files. I would prefer to go on vacation with only one 512 MB CF card than four 128 MB memory sticks. Sony has several cameras that save onto mini-disks that have several advantages. First of all, they’re the cheapest memory compared to the other three mentioned above. Second, you take pictures that are stored directly onto a disk. Once you ‘close’ the disk, you can pop it into your CD-ROM and view your pictures immediately. So why isn’t this type of memory more popular in cameras? Because even though the disks are smaller than your normal CDS, they are still fairly large and makes the camera very bulky. The Sony CD300 is a 3.3 megapixel camera that uses this technology. I was really considering this camera until I saw how big it was in the stores. As far as uploading photos into your computer, you can connect the camera to your computer via a USB or serial port. The cables are provided by the camera manufacture or you can buy a card reader. Card readers will run you about $40. You connect it to your computer and just insert the memory card to upload instead of having to connect the camera to your computer.

After several weeks of research, the camera I have high on my list and will be ordering next week is the Canon G2. This camera replaced the G1 which had very good reviews. The G2 fixed a lot of the complaints people had with the G1. It is also one of the few 4+ megapixel cameras out there. It might be overkill for most applications, but I’d rather have more than less. The street price at most retailers for this camera is $799. I found a place on the Internet that sells it for $589 plus $30s/h. You can find this information at http://www.bwayphoto.com. Kodak has made a dedicated flash for their intraoral digital kit, but I don’t think you can buy it separately. If you are into high-end camera’s, like the Nikon D-1 type of cameras (body price without lens and flash is about $4500) the Nikon dedicated intraoral flash is available. To see these setups you can visit www.photomed.net. Lesterdine at www.dinecorp.com also has a modified ringflash for digital cameras for about $500.

Eliem, Official Townie

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