



By
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The Digital Doctor

Holiday Shopping Ideas



Let me start off by saying that this column is devoted to suggestions in purchasing digital products for this holiday season. Let me also state that in order to save space, I will skip over technical definitions which are explained by going to my Web site www.digitaldoonline.com, <Learn>, scroll down to <Lesson 6>, and <How to Buy a Digital Camera Handout Revised.>

Here are some things to consider when choosing a digital camera.

1. How powerful is the computer I am using? This is important because the more powerful your digital camera is, the more memory and the more powerful the CPU of the computer must be. The more information (resolution) a digital image has, the more power the computer needs to be to manipulate it. If you have a four-year-old computer, don't buy a five-megapixel (mp) camera.
2. You should also consider other inno-

vations like optical zoom — the telescoping zooming power of the lens — often described as 3x (3 times) or 10x. The more optical power you have (the higher the number), the more you need Image Stabilization or Anti-Shake technology. The other new technology is called "FD" — Face Detection. This process forces the camera to identify up to eight faces in a group of people and make all focus and light adjustments based upon those readings.

3. What do you want to use the camera for? If you are going to take snapshots and put them in a scrapbook or on a CD/DVD, then all you really need is a three-mp camera. If you are going to make 11x14 prints or posters, then you need a more powerful five- to 10-mp camera.

4. How should I hold the camera? There are four classes of cameras by size. Subcompacts (cameras which can fit into your pocket or purse), compacts (cameras which are light and can fit in one hand), full-sized (cameras which are "point-and-shoot" but which need two hands to hold), and dSLR's (digital Single Lens Reflexes) which allow you

to look right through the lens but which also need two hands to aim and shoot because these cameras weigh between twenty and 46 ounces.

The problem is, the smaller the camera, the more difficult it is to hold steady. Also, if you are over 40, you always held a camera to your eye, looked through the viewfinder, but cameras have switched, almost exclusively, to LCD screens. These screens are not practical in bright sunlight, waste your batteries and, if you walk around holding the camera two feet in front of you (watching the LCD screen), you are an accident waiting to happen. I strongly recommend that your camera have an optical viewfinder.

5. What brand should I buy? All the usual suspects make cameras. Some have more bells and whistles than others. Any good camera store will sell Nikon, Canon, Fuji and Olympus. Minolta was recently gobbled up by Sony, so if you like style and bells and whistles and are satisfied with Minolta quality, you might consider a Sony. Pentax and Panasonic are getting better at producing digital products, but both got into the digital camera business

just four years ago. Kodak is getting better all the time. HP is at the bottom of the spectrum. Stay away from those old, reliable names like Honeywell, Bell & Howell, Argus, etc. They all sold off their names and you can buy those knock-off products on HSN or QVC.

6. Where should I buy a digital camera? If you're going to buy a camera for less than \$250, you can buy it at P.C. Richard, Best Buy or Circuit City. If you want a high-end camera — go to a camera store. Neptune Camera or the camera stores (Cameta Camera, Koh's, etc.) mentioned on my Web site in <Important Stuff> are great places to purchase cameras if you're going to spend over \$250. Never buy a camera on the Internet unless you know what you're doing. Finally, never buy a camera until you've held it to your eye and experienced how it felt in your hand.

Stuart Gershon is known as "The Digital Doctor." He has given over two hundred classes at 57 different libraries in Nassau and Suffolk. You can get more information and the schedule of his classes at: www.DigitalDocOnline.com.