

The Digital SLR Guide Checklist

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Web Site: [The Digital SLR Guide](http://www.digital-slr-guide.com)

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Quasi-Legal Disclaimer

Go ahead. Share this checklist with anyone you like – friends, family, co-workers, or anyone else who might find it useful. You can e-mail it to them or print it out and pass it around. Whatever suits you.

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If others would like to download the checklist, please send them to:

<http://www.digital-slr-guide.com/digital-slr-checklist.html>

If you have any questions about the guide or this checklist, please [ask me a question](#).

Step 1 - Identify Your Photography Style

Introduction

You can't find the best digital SLR camera until you know what you love to photograph.

It's like this: you can't buy food at the grocery store until you know what you want to have for dinner.

You can of course. You can wander the aisles of the grocery store until you decide what you'd like to eat. You can also check out every single digital SLR camera until you find one that works for you.

What's the drawback to the second approach? You waste a lot of time.

If you like to be efficient about things, define your photography style FIRST. Then find the camera that will match it.

Photography Styles

Find the photography style that you identify with. If you identify with 3 that's OK. See if one is more important to you than the others.

STYLE	DEFINITION
Action and Sport	You may not think you're an action photographer. If your joy in life is photographing children and pets, you are! They never stop moving around, and they rarely sit still for a photo.
Portraits	Faces are fascinating to you. When you go on vacation you are more inclined to take photos of the locals than the scenery. There is something about the human face and the expressiveness of the eyes that is captivating.
Landscapes	Landscape photographers are somewhat opposite to portrait photographers. While the portrait person likes to interact with people, the landscaper is more at home in the beauty of nature without another single person for miles.
Macro	The devil is in the details - and you want to try to find it. Macro photography is for those who love the small things in life, and pay enough attention to their surroundings to notice all of the tiny details.
Night/Low Light	You enjoy prowling around in the dark or are fascinated by the way night-time can change a city. That, or you really enjoy taking photos inside dim galleries and museums.
Travel/Outdoor	You want your camera to go EVERYWHERE with you. Whether it's hiking, biking, or jumping out of an airplane, the best digital SLR camera for you will be small and light.

Indoor	You are most inclined to pull out a camera when your small child is reaching for his favorite toy. You take photos of birthday parties, dinners, and other events that occur inside a house.
Spontaneous	You want to be able to react on a moment's notice, and know that speed is essential to capturing the photo of a lifetime. You have a habit of waiting until the last moment to bring out the camera.
Planned/Studio	No photo you take is without some form of preparation. Whether it's a child's portrait or a still life of your favorite flower, you like to get everything set up so that the light, color and mood are just right.

I am an action photographer because I like to take photos of my 10 month old son and my yellow Labrador. The two of them never stop moving around!

I need a really fast digital SLR to capture every fleeting moment that the two of them have. It's especially fun trying to catch them together.

Write down your photography style here:

Got it? Good! You're done with Step 1. Check the checkbox if you like.

☐

DONE WITH STEP 1 – You know the photos you want to take

Step 2 - Learn Digital SLR Terms

Introduction

You know what kind of photos you like to take. Now you just need a camera that will take them.

Do you know what ISO, crop factor, continuous drive, megapixels and IS mean?

You should.

If you got digital SLR shopping without knowing the terms, it's possible for a clever salesperson to upsell you to a camera you don't need.

They will talk all about how you need an 8 megapixel CMOS sensor with IS and an 8fps drive system with a 30 photo buffer.

When you know what all of that means, you can also determine exactly what you need and what you don't.

There's no way to get upsold and you won't buy more digital SLR camera than you're going to use.

I could go into more detail here, but it's easier if you just look up this information online at www.digital-slr-guide.com.

Find the answer to the question "[What is a digital SLR?](#)" and [learn all of the digital SLR terms](#) you'll need to know before you go camera shopping.

Once you learn digital SLR terms, you're ready to move on to Step 3.



DONE WITH STEP 2 – You know digital SLR terms

Step 3 - Compare Digital SLR Cameras

It's finally time to start looking at some camera models.

Here's the good news: since you're done with steps 1 and 2 you should not only know what kind of a camera you want, you'll also know what all of the digital SLR features mean.

Here's a table to help you on your way. The table lists all of the photography styles (again) and matches them with the camera features that you'll need.

STYLE	CAMERA FEATURES
Action and Sport	Quick startup time High maximum shutter speed High continuous frame rate Large buffer Fast predictive autofocus
Portraits	High image quality Good color (especially flesh tones) Black and White mode Image Stabilization
Landscapes	High image quality Good color (especially earth tones) Image stabilization Quiet operation
Macro	Image stabilization
Night/Low Light	Low noise at all ISO settings Image noise reduction for slow shutter speeds Remote shutter release
Travel/Outdoor	Small size and low weight
Indoor	Low noise at high ISO settings

	Flash distanced from lens
Spontaneous	Quick startup time Fast predictive autofocus
Planned/Studio	Works well with lighting accessories

Now you just need to find the camera that suits your needs and has all of the features you want.

There are two ways to go about this: you can either pick a camera that is the best in its class (the [top rated camera](#), the [smallest](#), the [quietest](#), the [fastest](#)) or you can read some of our [digital SLR camera reviews](#).

By the time you get done with this step, you should have found one digital SLR camera that you really like.

It's OK if you've found two – if price is a deciding factor, you can make your final decision once you start comparing prices.



DONE WITH STEP 3 – You've compared digital SLR cameras

Step 4 - Compare Prices, Find the Best Deal and Buy

Introduction

You're getting close to the finish line here...it's almost time to buy. You've got just a few more decisions to make.

Digital SLR Kit or Body Only?

Before you comparison shop, decide if you're just getting the digital SLR camera or a lens to go with it.

If you don't already have a lot of old film camera lenses lying around then you're going to need something before you can use the SLR to take photos.

Many cameras are available today as a digital SLR kit, where the camera is packaged with a lens. While this is convenient, you don't always get the best lens, and it's sometimes not much more expensive to just get the camera body and get a really good lens to go with it.

If you don't want to go through the trouble of comparing lenses (you've already done a lot of work just for the darn camera) then just get the lens it comes with.

If you decide in the future that you'd like a better lens, it's easy enough to go out and find one then. If you'd like more information about lenses, read more about [the best lens for you digital SLR](#).

Buying Online vs. Retail

You're always going to get the best price online. I have never found a retail deal (even during a sale) that could beat the price of an online merchant.

The only reason to buy retail is if you're concerned about the camera getting damaged, and want the customer support you can get from a retail store.

If getting the best deal is your only concern, then head to the Internet.

You can either try your luck at auction web sites like eBay, but you might have to outbid a lot of competition and you might not save that much money in the end.

eBay sellers tend to charge a lot for shipping, so the price of a digital SLR can really jump up once the auction is over.

If you'd like to get your camera in less than a month, and want to get a really good price, then you can buy your digital SLR from any one of these camera retailers: [Adorama](#), [B&H Photo Video](#) and [J&R](#).

Adorama tends to have the best prices and is devoted to selling cameras and accessories, while B&H and J&R also sell audio/video equipment, DVDs and other non-photography items.



DONE WITH STEP 4 – You've found the best price for your SLR

In Conclusion

Congratulations! You made it through all of the four steps to find the best digital SLR for you.

I hope that you found these steps useful, and that they saved you some time and money shopping for your new digital SLR camera.

I also hope that you learned more about digital SLRs in the process, so you don't feel quite so overwhelmed by all the technology.

Thank you for taking the time to visit the Digital SLR Guide and for downloading this checklist.

If there is anything that is still confusing for you, please [ask me a question](#).

If you found this checklist and the guide helpful (or think that it still needs some work), please [give me feedback](#).

Most of all, I hope that you enjoy using your new digital SLR camera, and continue to enjoy it for years to come!