

# Digital Imaging - Consumer Buying Guide

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## Camcorders

### How To Choose The Camcorder That's Right For You

Digital video was once the exclusive plaything of Hollywood producers. But the price of digital technology has dropped so quickly that now almost everyone can shoot and edit digital video. Review this list of important things to understand and consider when shopping for a camcorder that best suits your lifestyle.

#### What You Need & Can Do

#### Details And Tips

##### 1. Video Formats

What video formats are available?  
What are the advantages of each?

Check out these great choices.

Format	Media	Considerations
<b>Digital8</b>	Tape	Can use 8mm analog tapes. Shorter record time than MiniDV.
<b>MiniDV</b>	Tape	Smaller tape and longer record time than Digital8. Not compatible with analog formats.
<b>High-Definition MiniDV</b>	Tape	Double the resolution of MiniDV and dramatically better image quality. Burning to DVD downgrades image quality somewhat.
<b>MicroMV</b>	Tiny Tape	Tiny cassette size for extremely compact camcorders.
<b>MiniDVD</b>	DVD disc	Produces ready-to-play DVDs. Not all MiniDVD formats play on all DVD players.
<b>Removable media</b>	Flash media	Ultra-compact size but lower image quality. Great for web video.

##### 2. Which Format Is Right For You?

But my problem is very specific.  
Can you help me here?

Here's how to get what you want.

What You Want	How to Get It
Have lots of 8mm tapes	Check out Digital8 camcorders.
Lower cost	A Digital8 – less money. Lenses are good, but not tops.
Small and great	MiniDV camcorders come in a variety of sizes, sophisticated lenses and in-camera effects.
Play back on a DVD player	DVD camcorders record on mini DVD discs that can be played back in a newer DVD player.
Playback a lot	DVD camcorder because DVD media lasts longer.
Edit on a PC	Check the type of connection required (IEEE 1394, USB 2.0 or other). In the case of DVD discs, use the DVD-RW format.

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<p><b>3. Features</b></p> <p>Which features will make a difference for the kind of pictures you want to take?</p>	<p>Check out the range of camcorder features.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Feature</th> <th>Description</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>Optical zoom</b></td> <td>The amount the lens can enlarge a subject, or "zoom in" on it. A 10x optical zoom can make an image look 10 times closer.</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>3 CCDs</b></td> <td>Camcorders with 3 CCDs (Charged Couple Device – basically, an image sensor) provide higher resolution, better colors.</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Image stabilization</b></td> <td>Removes camcorder shake and creates much better video.</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Special effects</b></td> <td>Examples: sepia tone, strobe effect and fade-in/out. Add these effects after shooting using editing software.</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Analog in</b></td> <td>Lets you record non-digital, analog video to the camcorder.</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Accessory shoe</b></td> <td>A mounting point for accessories such as a video light. A powered accessory shoe uses the camcorder's battery to power accessories.</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Digital stills</b></td> <td>Can take digital stills, but usually at a lower resolution and image quality. Not a replacement for a digital camera.</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Webcam mode</b></td> <td>Shoots low-resolution and compresses video for sharing.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Feature	Description	<b>Optical zoom</b>	The amount the lens can enlarge a subject, or "zoom in" on it. A 10x optical zoom can make an image look 10 times closer.	<b>3 CCDs</b>	Camcorders with 3 CCDs (Charged Couple Device – basically, an image sensor) provide higher resolution, better colors.	<b>Image stabilization</b>	Removes camcorder shake and creates much better video.	<b>Special effects</b>	Examples: sepia tone, strobe effect and fade-in/out. Add these effects after shooting using editing software.	<b>Analog in</b>	Lets you record non-digital, analog video to the camcorder.	<b>Accessory shoe</b>	A mounting point for accessories such as a video light. A powered accessory shoe uses the camcorder's battery to power accessories.	<b>Digital stills</b>	Can take digital stills, but usually at a lower resolution and image quality. Not a replacement for a digital camera.	<b>Webcam mode</b>	Shoots low-resolution and compresses video for sharing.
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<p><b>4. Connectivity</b></p> <p>How can I get images from the camcorder to output devices?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can connect camcorder to devices with a cable: USB 2.0 or FireWire.®</li> <li>• Bluetooth offers wireless connectivity, but lacks bandwidth to deliver high-resolution video.</li> <li>• To connect to DTV, use analog and digital out; for microphones and headphones, use input jacks.</li> </ul>																		
<p><b>5. Body Styles</b></p>	<p>There is a variety from palm-sized to large, carry on-your-shoulder prosumer models. The smallest and largest are usually the more expensive.</p>																		
<p><b>6. Editing Digital Video</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bundled software: Easy editing applications come bundled with camcorders.</li> <li>• Professional software: Almost Hollywood. Costs more, longer to learn.</li> </ul>																		
<p><b>7. Sharing Digital Video</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make DVDs, video CDs and web video from digital camcorder footage.</li> <li>• Every copy has as the same digital image quality as the original.</li> </ul>																		
<p><b>8. Accessories</b></p> <p>What are my choices?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extra batteries.</li> <li>• Extra media – tapes, DVDs, flash memory.</li> <li>• A tripod – for steady shooting.</li> <li>• External microphone.</li> <li>• Additional lights – more important than for still cameras.</li> <li>• Carrying case.</li> </ul>																		