

From Dark Room to Digital

Capture Those Picture-Perfect Moments of Life with
the Latest and Greatest Cameras and Innovative Features

What do you remember about your first camera? When my father was eight years old he used a Kodak Brownie Camera for the first time and captured the towering redwoods. When I was about the same age I woke up on Valentine's Day morning to find a spectacular display with my first point-and-shoot camera, along with a kid-friendly manual with simple directions for how to frame shots, wind film (yes, film), and use a flash. Because documenting memories with photography is more common than it's ever been, there tends to be less pomp and circumstance surrounding the art, so it can be easy to flounder in a sea of digital images and camera options. Whether you're an everyday photographer or a semiprofessional, have a glance at this snapshot of current cameras, innovative features, and ways to preserve your printed memories for more than a lifetime.

CURRENT CAMERA OPTIONS Film cameras may be traditional, but they are not timeless. More costly and less convenient, film cameras have now been all but replaced by three main types of digital cameras: camera phone, simple point-and-shoot, and high-end DSLR (digital single-lens reflex) camera. Note that the most important feature is the ability to take high-resolution photos, which is easily measured by the megapixels. The more megapixels, the more information in a photo, and the larger you can make prints.

Many smartphones have increasingly capable cameras that rival the photo quality of some traditional cameras. Convenient for casual, on-the-go photographers and for catching important moments on a whim, camera phones are now

a viable option. Point-and-shoot cameras are more sophisticated yet simple enough, with several modes and flash settings. The next level is the DSLR, which is more involved regarding details such as shutter speed and focus, but available in a range of prices for those who want to create high-quality photographs.

FUN PHOTO ALTERNATIVES Trends often come full circle, and the same is true with photography. Even though people aren't clamoring for functioning film cameras, many people love the retro style and nostalgia of older images. Although the classic Polaroid camera was retired following the invention of personalized printing stations, the company created a twenty-first century

alternative: an instant digital camera. But guess what—there’s an app for that too. Create Polaroid-style photos with a digital process via applications such as ShakeItPhoto. Apps such as Instagram and Hipstamatic provide a variety of digital lenses, filters, and other settings to use on your camera phone for creative vintage-style snapshots.

STORING YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS Once you’ve perfected your photos, be sure to save them effectively. Digital files allow for endless cropping and editing possibilities, but they can also be easily lost. Images are saved directly to a memory card that is easily affected by heat and magnetism, so be sure to frequently transfer your photos to a computer, external hard drive, CD, or DVD.

Ideally, the images should be copied to a combination of sources to ensure that your files will be safe.

With the transition to digital, more photos are taken but fewer prints are made. When you are ready to print selected photos, be sure to use archival-quality photo paper. Quick prints at home or at the drugstore are convenient but may fade in a few years. Maintain new and old prints by keeping them out of direct sunlight. The Preservation and Archives professionals with The National Archives recommend storing photos that aren’t on display in plastic sleeves and in aboveground interior closets. Historical family photos are priceless, so consider preserving your casual and well-composed portraits for future generations to enjoy. *Written by Maresa Giovannini. YHL*

Take Your Best Shot

- 1 Composition.** To improve the quality of your photos, keep your subject simple, fill the frame, and use the rule of thirds: visually break up the photo by placing the subject off-center and placing the horizon high or low instead of in the middle. Use these techniques for a more dynamic feel to your photographs.
- 2 Sharpness.** Blurry photos are a common conundrum. Tripods are the best solution to steady a shot, but if you’re on the go, look for a table or a fence post to help create a sharper image.
- 3 Lighting.** Before you snap a photo, consider the light around you and what you want from the image. Front light fills the subject with light but lacks depth. Backlight brings out silhouettes. Sidelight creates shadows and brings out texture. If outdoors, opt to shoot early in the day or later in the afternoon when the sun is at a side angle so you have more flexibility with natural light.
- 4 Photoshop.** If you can’t quite compose the perfect photo, you can always turn to an after-capture program such as Photoshop to simply edit the shape, sharpness, color, and anything else that could benefit from a bit of tweaking.

