HINTS & GUIDELINES FOR BUYING A DIGITAL CAMERA

At Oakton we have SLR film cameras for students to borrow, but you will need to either have or purchase your own digital camera.

1. Today’s cameras are getting better and you get more features with the money you spend. Purchase a camera with at least 8 megapixels. With 8 we will be able to print 8x10’s or larger. Below 8 may only give good photos up to 5x7.

2. If you are buying a new digital camera, for Oakton photo courses, it cannot be a simple point-and-shoot model. You will need to be able to manually change aperture and shutter speed. Select a camera with a dial like this showing settings for A (aperture) S or TV (shutter speed) and M (manual).

If you are purchasing a new camera, do not buy one that does not have these three settings.

3. Digital SLR cameras take the highest quality images, however they are expensive, larger and cannot be tucked in a pocket or backpack when you need to be on the move. Instead of purchasing a cheaper entry-level DSLR at this time, I suggest waiting until you have more experience and then decide which DSLR is best for you.

4. Purchasing a smaller fixed lens camera now will not a waste of money. The smaller camera you buy now will always be important as a backup for those times when you are not able to carry a larger DSLR.

Excellent smaller 8-10 megapixel cameras can be purchased for less than $250. Check out Canon Powershot Cameras. Canon is the only manufacturer making smaller fixed lens auto&manual cameras in their lower priced models. Nikon, Olympus, Sony, etc. only make auto& manual cameras in their higher priced models.

5. The Canon Powershot A590is is an excellent 8MP entry-level camera that Canon has sadly discontinued. If you are lucky, you may still be able to fins one in stock on the internet. Price should be $150 or less.
6. The A590 has been replaced by the 9MP *Canon Powershot SX110* is. This is also an excellent entry-level camera with even more features, but internet prices are higher at $250 or slightly less.

7. If possible, purchase a camera that uses AA batteries. There will be no need to purchase special rechargeable batteries and you can always be able to find AA batteries in any drug or grocery store.

8. The internet has very good prices and you usually get free shipping, plus pay no sales tax. However, it is a very good idea to first check out the camera you want in person at a local store before placing an internet order. Returning internet purchases can sometimes be a hassle.

9. Also, never buy on the internet unless you allow enough time for delivery. If you need a camera next week, it may not arrive in time.

10. Cards that come with the camera will never hold enough photos. Purchase a new card soon with **at least 2 GB of memory**. Look for deals in the Sunday flyers – Office Depot, Staples, Circuit City, Beast Buy and Microcenter. Recently 4GB cards are going for lower than $40.00. That’s an excellent price. *Sandisk Ultra II and Ultra III* memory cards are fast and reliable.

**INTERNET HELP**

*Steve’s-Digicams* – Find out which cameras are the best. This is the most comprehensive site for camera comparisons and reviews. [http://www.steves-digicams.com/](http://www.steves-digicams.com/)

*Bizrate.com* – Use this site to compare prices and find deals both on the internet and in local stores. [http://www.bizrate.com/](http://www.bizrate.com/) You can usually trust the smiley faces and buyers reviews on Bizrate can be very helpful. B&H Photo/Video in New York is very reliable and offers excellent warranties. B&H Photo is an FCPS approved vendor, so you know they must be good.


As always, you are always welcome to e-mail me with questions as you search for a new camera. alan.fisher@fcps.edu