

5 Money-Saving Tips for Buying a new Digital SLR

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Tip 1 - Buy a Digital SLR Kit or Package

What's A Digital SLR Kit or Package?

A digital SLR kit is a camera that comes with a lens.

You have two options when buying your new digital SLR - you can get the camera with a lens (a kit) or you can get the camera by itself and buy the lens separate.

A digital SLR package is when you get even more extras with the camera like a battery, memory card, carrying bag and tripod.

Advantages of Buying a Kit

Since you're buying several items all at once, camera retailers give you more of a discount than they would if you purchased each item individually.

The combined cost of a camera body and lens is typically only \$100 or \$200 more than the camera body by itself.

Finding a separate \$200 lens on your own is challenging (if you'd like something decent).

Lack of Choice

Here's the one drawback: you don't get to choose the lens that comes with the camera.

Also, since it's a package deal, the lenses included with most digital SLR cameras are definitely the bargain models.

If you really want to get the most out of your digital SLR experience, then you not only need to find the best camera, you also need to find the best lens.

Tip 2 - Get Just Enough Megapixels

How Many Do You Need?

It depends on how large you want to print your photos.

If you're never going to print anything larger than 4x6 (standard photo print size) then 4.0 megapixels will do just fine.

The Catch

Here's the one problem with this: every new camera that comes out on the market has more megapixels than the last.

Eventually, you won't be able to find a digital SLR that has anything less than 8.0 megapixels.

Find a Used Camera

If you really can't stand the idea of paying for a bunch of megapixels that you'll never use, then I recommend you try to find a used digital SLR camera.

Many people sell old cameras on eBay when they upgrade to the latest model, and online retailers also sell used equipment.

While you run the risk of getting a camera that eventually malfunctions, you can save a ton of dough.

Tip 3 - Purchase Online

The Best Price

If all you want to do is save money when you buy your new digital SLR, then you should probably buy online.

My own research on digital SLR camera prices has revealed that sometimes you can save almost \$100 when you purchase online vs. a standard retailer.

Yes, you are taking some risks:

- If the camera malfunctions, you have to send it to the manufacturer
- The camera may get damaged during shipping
- If you have any problems, you have to deal with customer support

These risks can be reduced if you buy from a reputable online business with years of experience providing digital camera equipment to the public.

Recommended Retailers

There are two online digital camera stores that I buy from on a regular basis.

Both carry all the camera equipment I could ever want, their prices are similar, and they offer excellent customer service.

Even better, I have rarely dealt with customer service since I have never had any problems with items purchased from these retailers.

ADORAMA

Adorama specialized in cameras - that's all they sell. This is the place to go if you are looking for special lenses, flash units or anything out of the ordinary. The prices are excellent and the selection is second-to-none.

J&R

J&R sells a lot more than just digital SLR cameras, so they don't have quite the inventory as Adorama. They do offer a wide variety of popular digital SLR models, and with free shipping, their prices are hard to beat.

Tip 4 - Avoid The Gray Market

Cameras For Less

As you are shopping for a digital SLR camera, you might come across gray market cameras and lenses.

Prices for gray market items are always cheaper. So why isn't this a good deal?

Gray market cameras and lenses do not come with U.S. warranties.

You take a large risk when you purchase a gray market camera. While I would be less worried about a lens (they don't tend to break all that much) a digital SLR camera has a lot of electronic components.

If anything were to break on your digital SLR you would have to pay full price to get it repaired since there is no valid warranty.

While you might save a bit of money when you first buy the camera, the long-term cost of ownership could wipe out anything you save.

Tip 5 - Read Camera Reviews

Know What You're Getting

The best way to avoid buyer's remorse (and having a really expensive paperweight in the house) is to be sure that you've found the right digital SLR for you before you buy.

Some cameras also turn out to be lemons after several months in action, and then you're going to have to deal with the infamous customer service department.

How do you avoid this?

Read what other people have to say about a digital SLR camera before you buy. There have been many times that I have been on the verge of a purchase, only to read a long string of negative reviews.

Sometimes it's clear that someone just wanted to complain, but many other times the issues have been legitimate.

One thing's for sure: reading camera reviews will either keep you from spending a lot of money on a camera that you won't like, or it will reinforce your conviction that you've found the best camera for you.

Chris Roberts is the owner and author of the Digital SLR Guide. He created the guide in 2005 to provide consumers with practical advice about digital SLR cameras. The guide includes advice that will save you money when making a new digital SLR purchase, and provides in-depth reviews of some of the most popular cameras, lenses and accessories available today.