

Digital SLR BUYER'S GUIDE



WHAT CAMERA TO BUY
MUST HAVE ACCESSORIES



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DIGITAL SLR BUYER'S GUIDE

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The prices of Digital Single Lens Reflex (DSLR) cameras have dropped significantly in recent years. This gives many photography enthusiasts the opportunity to get to 'the next level' in their hobby.

DSLR cameras have interchangeable lenses and have a mirror and prism system allowing you to look directly through the lens. They also have a LCD screen on the back like other compact digital cameras.

DSLR cameras have many advantages over 'point-and-shoot' compact digital cameras with one main disadvantage: that is 'compactness'. But the benefits outweigh the bulkiness of these cameras and it is the higher-end capabilities and image quality which draw people to them. DSLRs are for people who want to take photos that amaze their family and friends and/or those who want to be professional photographers.

The majority of Professional photographers use DSLRs now. For good reason, including.

- The ability to swap lenses and upgrade to better lenses over time
- The size of the image sensor is generally much larger in DSLR compared to compact Digital cameras making for better image quality with less noise.
- With DSLR cameras you can look directly through the lens via the viewfinder when composing a picture, rather than just looking at a LCD screen. This can make visualizing the final image easier without the issues of glare or insufficient brightness on the LCD screen. Generally less distraction.

Having said this last point - an interesting range of compact 'hybrid' digital cameras have come out which have interchangeable lenses but don't have a mirror or optical viewfinder giving them the advantage of compactness while benefiting from features in common with larger DSLRs. If portability is a top priority but you would still like to have better image quality than a regular digital camera then these are definitely worth a look - I have listed a few below.

MIRRORLESS EXCHANGEABLE LENS CAMERAS



[Click here for SONY Alpha NEX](#)

[Click here for PANASONIC Lumix DMC-GF1](#)

[Click here for Olympus PEN E-P2](#)

These are priced around the same as beginner/entry level DSLR cameras and may suit people who want “compact” without compromising on image quality.

But, back to DSLRs.

In this guide I have kept it simple.

Rather than overwhelm you with the many choices out there I have made DSLR suggestions from CANON and NIKON only. I'm aware that there are a number of other brands that make good quality cameras but my experiences are predominantly with CANON and NIKON. In addition, the many reviews on the internet and in magazines lead me to believe that you can't really go wrong with either of these brands. So that is why I am recommending either CANON or NIKON.

Certainly, the more you pay the better the build quality will be for both brands but you will be able to achieve amazing quality pictures with any of the cameras I have included in this guide.

This guide has the following sections:

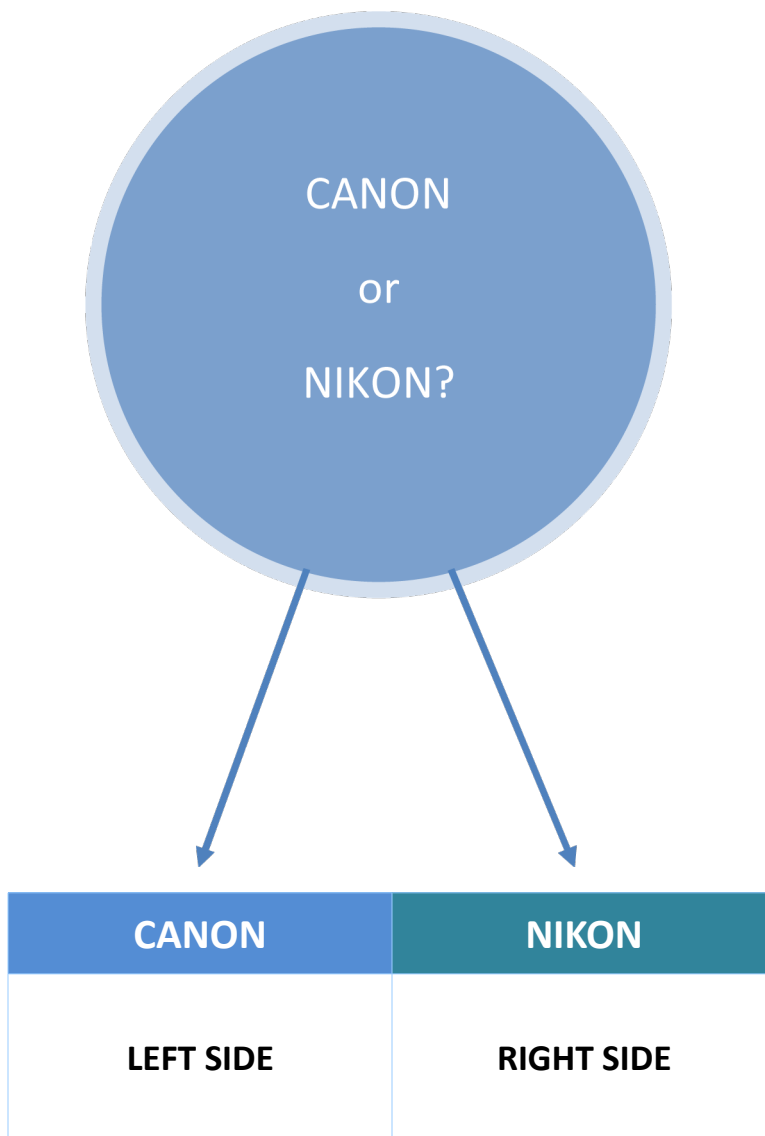
- Firstly, camera body choices starting with entry level up to Pro, as follows:
 - Entry Level
 - Beginner
 - Enthusiast
 - Semi-Pro
 - Professional
 - High-end
 - and finally High-end Hi-Res Professional DSLR cameras.
- Lens options
- Memory Cards
- External Flash and Flash Diffusers
- White Balance Filter
- Camera bags
- Tripods

These sections will have recommendations that will help you put together a DSLR kit with enough options for advanced photo shooting on location, vacation or at home.

Just a reminder, the following recommendations are based on my experience and research (as they say on the net - IMHO - in my humble opinion). They may not suit everyone. Please follow the links I have provided and read the many user reviews and do your due diligence before deciding on what suits your preference and level of photography.

I was prompted to write this after getting many inquiries, mostly from friends and family, on what DSLR I would recommend and what other items do I consider essential.

So - On with the show!



In the following pages CANON will be on the LEFT side of the page and NIKON will be on the RIGHT side of the page. Accessories that can be used with either will be centered on the page.

Your choice between CANON and NIKON will depend.

On what? - you might ask?

Both manufacturers make excellent cameras and both have really good customer service. So often the choice between the two will be personal preference or maybe a particular model has a feature that you really want that the equivalent model in the other brand does not have.

As I mentioned in the beginning, I'm not going to overwhelm you with choices but just give you the best cameras of their class that I would recommend.

If you are an existing DSLR or SLR user then you may have good lenses for one brand or the other that you want to reuse. If you currently own good CANON lenses then you will probably want to stick with a CANON body and the same goes for a NIKON.

Important Note: Be aware that lenses that are made specific for cropped sensors like APS-C on CANON, namely EF-S lenses will not be compatible if you upgrade to a Full Frame sensor CANON body.

If you are starting out then there really isn't much in it - each brand has great quality cameras. If this is your first DSLR then your choice may be more specific to the features of the different models.

I have listed CANON and NIKON models that are of a similar price point and feature level next to each other on the following pages.

Also, with each Camera model, I have provided a link to what I consider to be a good package deal (at the time of writing this guide) usually consisting of a Camera body and zoom lens (or two). For professional level cameras I have only provided links to the Camera body – if you are at this level you either have a good set of lenses already or you should consult my separate section on lenses and pick out lenses that will suit your needs.

If you are undecided between the models you could visit a camera shop and get first hand knowledge of what the cameras feel like in the hand and the ergonomics. Generally, the higher priced cameras are heavier and feel more solidly built.

NOTE: This Updated Guide now includes Canon T3 (1100D), Canon T3i (600D) and Nikon D5100.

I have shuffled the line up slightly placing the Canon T3 as the closest competitor to the Nikon D3100 and the new Canon T3i as the main competitor to the new Nikon D5100.

I have replaced the Canon T2i with the T3i as I feel the features and price difference make it worth recommending the T3i over the older T2i.

If you are trying to decide between the Canon T3i, Canon 60D and Nikon D5100 and would like to see a video that discusses the differences click on the link below:

[Nikon D5100 vs Canon T3i and 60D video preview](#)

ENTRY LEVEL

CANON

CANON EOS Rebel T3 (1100D)



- 12MP APS-C CMOS Sensor
- DIGIC 4 Processor with ISO 100-6400 (3200 plus will have noticeable grain)
- 3 fps JPEG or 2fps RAW
- 9 Point Autofocus (center cross type)
- TTL 63-zone Dual Layer Metering
- Up to 1/4000th sec and 1/200th sec flash sync
- 720p30 Movie mode with ext. mic.
- JPG and RAW files on SD Memory
- 2.7 inch LCD Monitor 230K pixels with live view/movie mode
- 95% viewfinder coverage (0.80x magnification)
- Basic+ creative point and shoot mode
- Exposure and White Balance bracketing

[Click here for best T3 package deal](#)

NIKON

NIKON D3100



- 14MP DX CMOS Sensor
- ISO 100-6400 (3200 plus will have noticeable grain)
- 3 fps with 11 Point Autofocus
- TTL using 420-pixel RGB Sensor
- Up to 1/4000th sec and 1/200th sec flash sync
- Full 1080p24 Movie recording with Full Time AF-F (but can lose subject)
- JPG and RAW on SD Cards
- 3 inch LCD Monitor with 230K pixels and Live View/movie mode
- 95% viewfinder coverage (0.80x magnification)
- Great picture quality and color rendition. No bracketing

[Click here for best D3100 package deal](#)

Conclusion: The CANON T3 has a lot packed into a low end DSLR. It has features from higher end models like the 9 point Autofocus and 63 area metering with the compromise being the lower resolution sensor and less rugged build quality. The Nikon D3100 is really the better choice of the two cameras but is also a little more expensive (around one hundred dollars more).

Feature wise and price, the Canon T3 is really somewhere between the Nikon D3100 and older Nikon D3000 but I have only included more recent cameras in this guide.

The Nikon 3100 is a step up and has the better quality sensor and 1080P HD video with autofocus. Both the Canon T3 and Nikon D3100 have a similar LCD and equivalent viewfinder (95% coverage with 0.8x magnification).

If you are a Canon fan and want a little more that the T3 has to offer then the Canon T3i (600D) is a better choice – up next...

BEGINNER

CANON

CANON EOS Rebel T3i (600D)



- 18MP APS-C CMOS Sensor
- DIGIC 4 Processor with ISO 100-6400 (3200 plus will have noticeable grain)
- 3.7 fps and 9 Point Autofocus with cross type at center
- TTL 63-zone Dual Layer Metering
- Up to 1/4000th sec and 1/200th sec flash sync
- Full 1080p30 and 720p60fps Movie modes with external Mic jack
- JPG and RAW files on SD Memory
- Amazing articulating 3 inch LCD Monitor with over 1 Million pixels and Live View
- 95% viewfinder coverage (0.85x magnification)
- Reliable metering and White balance and AE and White balance Bracketing
- wireless flash control

[Click here for best T3i package deal](#)

NIKON

NIKON D5100



- 16MP DX CMOS Sensor
- ISO 100-25600 (3200+ grain noticeable but better than Canon)
- 4 fps and 11 Point Autofocus with one cross type
- TTL using 420-pixel RGB Sensor
- Up to 1/4000th sec and 1/200th sec flash sync
- Full 1080p24 Movie mode (no 720p60fps) with Full Time AF-F
- In camera effects
- JPG and RAW on SD Cards
- Articulating 3 inch LCD Monitor with 920K pixels and Live View
- 95% viewfinder coverage (0.78x magnification)
- Great picture quality and color rendition. Exposure bracketing

[Click here for best D5100 package deal](#)

Conclusion: CANON T3i has upgraded the T2i with a swiveling (articulating) LCD screen and also includes other beginner friendly features like Basic+ mode and “Feature Guide”. It also includes the creative filters seen on the 60D and wireless flash control. The Canon T3i adds a video “snapshot” mode and 3-10X digital zoom (although image degradation will be noticeable after 3X).

The Nikon D5100 has a slightly better quality sensor and shooting rate at 4fps. The CANON T3i edges it out with better HD Video features which includes a 720p60fps mode and external microphone jack. The Canon T3i has a slightly better LCD screen and larger viewfinder view (0.85x vs 0.78x on the NIKON). On the other hand, the Nikon D5100 has built in HDR – High Dynamic Range imaging (based on 2 images) has full time Autofocus in Live view and movie mode but no built in wireless flash feature.

Overall, it's a close race here and your choice may come down to what lenses you have already or whether you have a preference for Canon or Nikon.

The following sections have the same models as the first edition of this Buyer's Guide.

ENTHUSIAST

CANON

CANON EOS 60D



- 18MP APS-C CMOS Sensor
- DIGIC 4 Processor with ISO 100-6400 (3200 plus will have noticeable grain)
- 5.3 fps and 9 Point Autofocus
- TTL 63-zone Dual Layer Metering
- Full 1080p30 Movie recording with manual audio levels
- JPG and RAW files on SD cards
- In camera RAW conversion
- Amazing 3 inch Vari-angle LCD screen (1.04M pixels) and Live View
- Electronic level
- Reliable metering and White balance and AE and White balance Bracketing

[Click here for best 60D package deal](#)

NIKON

NIKON D7000



- 16.2MP DX CMOS Sensor
- ISO 100-6400 (low noise with high ISO)
- 6 fps and a huge 39 Point Autofocus
- TTL using 2,016-pixel RGB Sensor
- Full 1080p24 Movie recording with Full Time AF-F (but can lose subject)
- JPG and RAW on Dual SD Cards
- 3 inch LCD Monitor with 921K pixels and Live View
- Magnesium Alloy Body
- Built in Timelapse feature
- Excellent picture quality and color rendition. AE bracketing

[Click here for best D7000 package deal](#)

Conclusion: For photographs the NIKON D7000 outclasses the CANON 60D especially with its advanced autofocus system and excellent low noise at high ISO. Also the 100% coverage viewfinder (vs 96% on the CANON) and 2xSD memory cards slots are really great features. The build quality of the D7000 is a little better than the 60D with the Magnesium alloy body vs Plastic shell on 60D.

On the other hand, for aspiring videographers the CANON 60D is a better choice, particularly the useful swivel (articulating) LCD screen which is great for shooting low or at unusual angles. The manual audio input levels are also excellent for video – an improvement on CANON's more expensive video capable 7D. Shooting at 30fps at full HD (1080p) and 60fps at 720p makes the 60D a better option than the D7000 as well.

So in this case, if you are interested in doing a lot of Video the CANON 60D is the better choice, while the NIKON D7000 has the edge for still photography.

Both these cameras will make an excellent choice and are a significant 'jump' up over the Beginner cameras listed earlier. In fact, I could see some Professionals considering these as second backup cameras.

Next ... the Semi-Pro cameras.

A quick note: the model naming systems on both CANON and NIKON are not totally logical and this makes it difficult for a newcomer to understand which cameras are higher end – that is why I have simplified the different choices from Beginner to Professional, in order, in the different sections of this guide.

SEMI-PRO

CANON

CANON EOS 7D



- 18MP APS-C CMOS Sensor
- Dual DIGIC 4 Processors with ISO 100-6400 (3200 plus will have some grain)
- 8 fps and 19 Point Autofocus
- TTL 63-zone Dual Layer Metering
- Full 1080p30 Movie recording
- JPG and RAW files on Compact Flash (CF) Type I or II cards
- In camera RAW conversion
- 3 inch Clear View II LCD screen (920K pixels) and Live View
- 1X viewfinder with 100% coverage
- Magnesium Alloy Body with environmental sealing
- Dual axis electronic level
- Wireless Flash Control
- Advanced evaluative metering linked to AF points. AE and White balance Bracketing (+/- 3 levels)

NIKON

NIKON D300s



- 12.3MP DX CMOS Sensor
- ISO 200-3200 (excellent at high ISO)
- 7 fps and a huge 51 Point Autofocus
- TTL using 1005-pixel RGB Sensor
- 720p24 Movie recording
- In camera movie editing
- JPG and RAW on Dual CF and SD Cards
- 3 inch LCD Monitor with 920K pixels and Live View
- Quiet release mode
- 0.94X viewfinder with 100% coverage
- Environment sealed Magnesium Alloy Body with great ergonomics
- D3 style multi-controller
- AE and White balance bracketing (both from 2 to 9 frames)

[Click here for best 7D package deal](#)

[Click here for best D300s package deal](#)

Conclusion: Tough challenge between CANON and NIKON here. CANON 7D has higher resolution and slightly faster shooting speed than NIKON D300s. The 300s has the advantage in terms of autofocus system but the CANON 7D has superior Video. Image quality coming out of both these cameras will be excellent and certainly be useable as backup for a professional level camera.

The choice will most likely come down to whether you want better video and if you have an existing lens collection you would like to use.

Also, the 7D is a fraction cheaper giving it the edge over the 300s.

Now... the Big Boys!

PROFESSIONAL

CANON

CANON EOS 5D Mark II



- 21MP Full Frame CMOS Sensor
- DIGIC 4 Processor with ISO 100-6400 (Low Noise at High ISO)
- 3.9 fps and 9 Point Autofocus
- TTL 35-zone Dual Layer Metering
- Full 1080p30 Movie recording
- JPG, RAW and SRAW files on Compact Flash (CF) Type I or II cards
- 3 inch Clear View II LCD screen (920K pixels) and Live View
- 0.71X viewfinder with 98% coverage
- Magnesium Alloy Body with environmental sealing
- Two silent shooting modes (Live View)
- IrPort for IR remote shutter release
- AE and White balance Bracketing (+/- 3 levels)
- AF micro adjustment
- NO included Flash
- Does NOT support EF-S lenses

[Click here for best 5D Mark II package deal](#)

NIKON

NIKON D700



- 12.1MP Full Frame FX CMOS Sensor
- ISO 200-6400 (excellent at high ISO)
- 5 fps and a huge 51 Point Autofocus with autofocus tracking
- TTL using 1005-pixel RGB Sensor
- 720p24 Movie recording
- JPG and RAW (NEF) on CF Cards (UMDA compatible)
- 3 inch LCD Monitor with 920K pixels and Live View
- Kevlar/carbon fiber composite shutter
- 0.72X viewfinder with 95% coverage
- Environment sealed Magnesium Alloy Body with great ergonomics
- AE and White balance bracketing (both from 2 to 9 frames)
- Virtual horizon (level)
- AF fine-tuning (calibration)
- Pop-up flash
- Supports DX lenses - crops

[Click here for best D700 package deal](#)

Conclusion: The CANON 5D Mark II has upped the resolution from the previous CANON 5D and has added Full 1080p30 HD video with manual exposure features. The D700 has a superior autofocus system and produces images that are a slightly superior in color rendition and noise levels (although lower resolution) to the CANON 5D Mark II.

Interestingly, the NIKON D700 has a popup Flash not usually found on Professional Level DSLRs and it has another useful advantage over the ED Mark II in that it can accept DX (cropped frame) lenses as well as FX (full frame lenses) making it a viable option for NIKON users moving up from a DX CMOS camera who have a bunch of good lenses.

So, if you are already a NIKON shooter with a good collection of lenses the NIKON D700 will make a fine camera. Alternatively, if Video interests you then the CANON 5D Mark II is the choice.

If you are mostly interested in Video and not so much the low noise capabilities of a Full Frame sensor of the CANON 5d Mark II then the CANON 60D may be a better choice with it's high quality articulating LCD screen and manual audio level control. Pairing the 60D with a decent fast lens (good at low light levels) will produce images and Video close to that of the CANON 5D Mark II or CANON 7D for that matter.

HIGH-END PROFESSIONAL

CANON

CANON EOS 1D Mark IV



- 16MP APS-H (1.3x crop) CMOS Sensor
- Dual DIGIC 4 Processors with ISO 100-12800 (Low Noise at High ISO)
- 10 fps and 45 Point TTL and 39 cross-type point Autofocus
- TTL 63-zone Metering linked to AF points
- Full 1080p30 Movie recording
- JPG, RAW, mRAW and sRAW files on CF (UMDA compatible) and SD cards
- 3 inch LCD screen (920K pixels) and Live View
- 0.76X viewfinder with 100% coverage
- Magnesium Alloy Body with environmental sealing
- Silent shooting mode
- AE and White balance Bracketing (+/- 3 levels)
- EOS integrated cleaning system
- Does NOT support EF-S lenses

[Click here for 1D Mark IV \(Body Only\)](#)

NIKON

NIKON D3S



- 12.1MP Full Frame FX CMOS Sensor
- ISO 200-12800 (excellent at high ISO)
- 11 fps and a huge 51 Point and 15 cross-type Autofocus
- Large buffer: 30 RAW frames per burst
- TTL using 1005-pixel RGB Sensor
- 720p24 Movie recording
- JPG and RAW (NEF) on Dual CF Cards (UMDA compatible)
- 3 inch LCD Monitor with 920K pixels and Live View
- In camera RAW processing
- Kevlar/carbon fiber composite shutter
- 0.7X viewfinder with 100% coverage
- Environment sealed Magnesium Alloy Body with great ergonomics
- AE and White balance bracketing (both from 2 to 9 frames)
- Virtual horizon (level)
- Supports DX lenses – crops

[Click here for D3S \(Body Only\)](#)

Conclusion: CANON's 1D Mark III was plagued by AF problems that gave it a bad name but this has been corrected in the 1D Mark IV. The NIKON D3S handles the lowest light best with it's low noise high ISO speeds.

Although the Video features of the CANON 1D Mark IV surpass that of the NIKON D3S, it feels a little unnatural for the ergonomics of the 1D Mark IV which is really made as an excellent photo shooter.

Both the CANON 1D Mark IV and the NIKON D3S are the pinnacle for sports shooters with their great responsiveness and explosive frame rates and although the NIKON offers a little better low light image quality the slight crop (1.3x) of the CANON 1D Mark IV will give a little extra reach with long lenses.

Bottom line: both excellent cameras.

The last two cameras are the "Trade in Your Car" or "Get a second Mortgage" category!

HIGH-END HI-RES PROFESSIONAL

CANON

CANON EOS 1Ds Mark III



- 21.1MP Full Frame CMOS Sensor
- Dual DIGIC III Processors with ISO 100-1600 (Low Noise at High ISO)
- 5 fps and 45 Point TTL and 19 cross-type point Autofocus
- TTL 63-zone Metering linked to AF points
- Full 1080p30 Movie recording
- JPG, RAW and sRAW files on CF (UMDA compatible) and SD cards
- 3 inch LCD screen (920K pixels) and Live View
- 0.76X viewfinder with 100% coverage
- Magnesium Alloy Body with environmental sealing
- Silent shooting mode
- AE (2 to 7 shots) and White balance Bracketing (+/- 3 levels)
- EOS integrated cleaning system
- Does NOT support EF-S lenses

[Click here for 1DS Mark III \(Body Only\)](#)

NIKON

NIKON D3X



- 24.5MP Full Frame FX CMOS Sensor
- ISO 100-1600 (excellent at high ISO)
- 5fps (7fps in DX mode) and a huge 51 Point and 15 cross-type Autofocus
- Large buffer: 30 RAW frames per burst
- TTL using 1005-pixel RGB Sensor
- 720p24 Movie recording
- JPG and RAW (NEF) on Dual CF Cards (UMDA compatible)
- 3 inch LCD Monitor with 920K pixels and Live View
- In camera RAW processing
- Kevlar/carbon fiber composite shutter
- 0.7X viewfinder with 100% coverage
- Environment sealed Magnesium Alloy Body with great ergonomics
- AE and White balance bracketing (both from 2 to 9 frames)
- Virtual horizon (level)
- Supports DX lenses – crops

[Click here for D3X \(Body Only\)](#)

Conclusion: These two cameras are for high resolution shooting like fashion or landscape. They are similar to their faster shooting but lower resolution siblings (CANON 1D Mark IV and NIKON D3S respectively) although they do not handle low light as well.

If you are a sports shooter you definitely want the CANON's 1D Mark IV or NIKON 3DS as these deliver the goods when speed counts.

The CANON 1DS Mark III and NIKON 3DX produce clean low ISO images that have superb pixel level detail. The price tag is high on these cameras so unless you are in the market for the phenomenal image detail in a studio setting or landscape then it would be better to look to their capable siblings. Of the two the NIKON D3X has the highest price tag at around \$1400 more than the CANON 1DS Mark III.

A good camera can really only shine with good optics.

That brings us to the next section on lenses. In this case, I will be listing good lens options and not really giving a comparison conclusion between brands. The lens you buy will be dependent more on the Camera brand choice.

GREAT ENTRY LEVEL ZOOMS

CANON	NIKON
<p data-bbox="321 422 683 453">CANON EF-S 18-135mm</p>  <p data-bbox="253 1037 634 1192"><ul style="list-style-type: none">• f3.5-f5.6 aperture• For APS-C Sensor cameras• Image Stabilization• 67mm filter compatibility</p> <p data-bbox="204 1241 695 1268">Click here for 18-135mm Canon Zoom</p>	<p data-bbox="956 422 1284 453">NIKON DX 18-105mm</p>  <p data-bbox="875 1037 1252 1192"><ul style="list-style-type: none">• f3.5-f5.6 aperture• for DX Sensor cameras• Image Stabilization• 67mm filter compatibility</p> <p data-bbox="826 1241 1313 1268">Click here for 18-105mm Nikon Zoom</p>

These zooms provide a good range for the price and are portable enough for traveling.

You will note that some of the kits above may include these lenses which is generally cheaper than buying them separately.

Now for some longer zooms if you are interested in 'getting closer' to your subject.

LONGER PROSUMER ZOOMS

CANON	NIKON
<p data-bbox="332 422 669 453">CANON EF 70-300mm</p>  <p data-bbox="251 1081 717 1276"><ul style="list-style-type: none">• f4-f5.6 aperture• For Full Frame and APS-C Sensor cameras• Image Stabilization• 58mm filter compatibility</p> <p data-bbox="203 1325 695 1352">Click here for 70-300mm Canon Zoom</p>	<p data-bbox="954 422 1291 453">NIKON DX 70-300mm</p>  <p data-bbox="873 1081 1409 1276"><ul style="list-style-type: none">• f4.5-f5.6 aperture• for Full Frame and DX Sensor cameras• Image Stabilization• ED (Extra-low Dispersion) glass• 67 mm filter compatibility</p> <p data-bbox="824 1325 1317 1352">Click here for 70-300mm Nikon Zoom</p>

These zooms provide extra range, and on cropped sensors have effectively higher magnification. For example on a CANON APS-C (1.6x Crop factor) the 70-300mm becomes effectively a 112-480mm lens.

These lenses provide a decent image, not as 'tack sharp' as the Professional level zooms (up next) but are good value for money.

PROFESSIONAL MID-RANGE ZOOMS

CANON	NIKON
<p data-bbox="331 422 672 453">CANON EF 24-70mm L</p>  <ul data-bbox="253 1010 727 1241" style="list-style-type: none">• f2.8 constant aperture• For Full Frame and APS-C Sensor cameras• USM Ultrasonic Motor Autofocus• Ultra-low dispersion glass• 77mm filter compatibility <p data-bbox="204 1287 756 1318">Click here for 24-70mm f2.8 L Canon Zoom</p>	<p data-bbox="967 422 1276 453">NIKON 24-70mm ED</p>  <ul data-bbox="873 1010 1409 1241" style="list-style-type: none">• f2.8 constant aperture• for Full Frame and DX Sensor cameras• Silent wave Motor (SWM) quiet Autofocus• ED (Extra-low Dispersion) glass• 77 mm filter compatibility <p data-bbox="824 1287 1398 1318">Click here for 24-70mm f2.8 ED Nikon Zoom</p>

I'm mostly a CANON user and the CANON 24-70mm f2.8L lens is one of my favorites. It is the most used lens in my arsenal, especially during event photography (like weddings). It's clarity and low light abilities rival that of prime lenses. Likewise, the NIKON 24-70mm is one of the finest quality Nikkor zooms and will be one of your most used lenses. Both the CANON and NIKON are on the heavy side (2.1 and 2.45lbs respectively) and are both expensive (the NIKON more so) but totally worth it for stunning image quality. Now, to longer zooms...

PROFESSIONAL LONGER ZOOMS

CANON	NIKON
<p data-bbox="321 422 683 453">CANON EF 70-200mm L</p>  <ul data-bbox="251 1060 738 1375" style="list-style-type: none">• f2.8 version II (constant aperture)• For Full Frame and APS-C Sensor cameras (112-320mm on APS-C)• USM Ultrasonic Motor Autofocus• Image Stabilization• Ultra-low dispersion glass• Tripod Mount• 77mm filter compatibility <p data-bbox="203 1423 771 1455">Click here for 70-200mm f2.8 L Canon Zoom</p>	<p data-bbox="954 422 1284 453">NIKON 70-200mm ED</p>  <ul data-bbox="868 1060 1404 1375" style="list-style-type: none">• f2.8 constant aperture• for Full Frame and DX Sensor cameras• VR II Image Stabilization• Silent wave Motor (SWM) quiet Autofocus• ED (Extra-low Dispersion) glass• Tripod Mount• 77 mm filter compatibility <p data-bbox="824 1423 1409 1455">Click here for 70-200mm f2.8 ED Nikon Zoom</p>



My CANON 70-200mm f2.8L II lens is my next most used lens after my 24-70mm. The edge to edge sharpness of both these CANON and NIKON 70-200mm zooms is phenomenal once again rivaling that of prime lenses. Image stabilization in both help in lower light conditions with slower shutter speeds. These lenses are heavy (both 3.3lbs) and are both expensive (both around US\$2000) but, again, essential for any professional's kit. Now, to wide zooms...

PROFESSIONAL WIDE ZOOMS

CANON	NIKON
<p data-bbox="331 422 672 453">CANON EF 16-35mm L</p>  <ul data-bbox="253 1031 730 1266" style="list-style-type: none">• f2.8 constant aperture• For Full Frame and APS-C Sensor cameras (25-56mm on APS-C)• USM Ultrasonic Motor Autofocus• Ultra-low dispersion glass• 82mm filter compatibility <p data-bbox="204 1310 756 1341">Click here for 16-35mm f2.8 L Canon Zoom</p>	<p data-bbox="967 422 1276 453">NIKON 17-35mm ED</p>  <ul data-bbox="870 1031 1412 1266" style="list-style-type: none">• f2.8 constant aperture• for Full Frame and DX Sensor cameras• VR II Image Stabilization• Silent Wave Motor (SWM) Autofocus• ED (Extra-low Dispersion) glass• 77 mm filter compatibility <p data-bbox="821 1310 1396 1341">Click here for 17-35mm f2.8 ED Nikon Zoom</p>

Both the CANON 16-35mm f2.8L and NIKON 17-35mm ED f2.8 lenses are excellent wide zooms. Great for landscapes, real estate and interior photos. Edge to edge sharpness of both these lenses is great with a little barrel distortion and slight corner softness at their widest settings (16 and 17mm respectively) on Full Frame Cameras. In cropped sensors this is less noticeable. They are still reasonably wide at around 25mm on CANON APS-C and NIKON DX sensor bodies. The NIKON 17-35mm is around US\$300 more than the CANON 16-35mm lens. Now Prime time!

ENTRY LEVEL PRIME

CANON	NIKON
<p data-bbox="332 422 669 453">CANON EF 50mm f1.8</p>  <p data-bbox="250 1037 719 1150"><ul style="list-style-type: none">• f1.8 aperture• For Full Frame and APS-C Sensor• 52mm filter compatibility</p> <p data-bbox="203 1194 696 1226">Click here for 50mm f1.8 Canon Prime</p>	<p data-bbox="982 422 1260 453">NIKON 50mm f1.8</p>  <p data-bbox="870 1037 1409 1150"><ul style="list-style-type: none">• f1.8 aperture• for Full Frame and DX Sensor cameras• 52mm filter compatibility</p> <p data-bbox="823 1194 1317 1226">Click here for 50mm f1.8 Nikon Prime</p>

Although, these are the cheapest 50mm Prime lenses from CANON and NIKON they still provide good image sharpness and are great at low light. Prime lenses at f1.8 allow a lot of light in and can be used in lower lighting without a flash. These lenses are affordable enough as an entry into Prime lenses.

For the next level up consider the f1.4 prime lenses up next.

MID-LEVEL PRIME

CANON	NIKON
<p data-bbox="332 422 669 453">CANON EF 50mm f1.4</p>  <p data-bbox="251 1010 748 1241"><ul style="list-style-type: none">• f1.4 aperture• For Full Frame (Standard Lens) and APS-C Sensor (80mm Medium Telephoto)• USM Ultrasonic Motor Autofocus• 58mm filter compatibility</p> <p data-bbox="203 1289 695 1320">Click here for 50mm f1.4 Canon Prime</p>	<p data-bbox="982 422 1260 453">NIKON 50mm f1.4</p>  <p data-bbox="872 1010 1409 1205"><ul style="list-style-type: none">• f1.4 aperture• for Full Frame (Standard Lens) and DX sensor (75mm)• Silent Wave Motor (SWM) Autofocus• 58mm filter compatibility</p> <p data-bbox="823 1289 1336 1320">Click here for 50mm f1.4G Nikon Prime</p>

These 50mm Prime lenses from CANON and NIKON have a better construction and are a little sharper than the entry level f1.8 Primes. If you know you are going to be shooting a lot with a 50mm Prime then you will be very happy with these capable lenses.

The next level up are the f1.2 Primes and although they are a tad sharper and are a little better at low light I find them a little difficult to recommend at 3 times the price! I would rather by a f1.4 Prime and put the change towards one of the good quality zooms I mentioned earlier.

I could devote an entire eBook just on lenses but I think the above lenses would be a great start to anyone's kit.

The following are some specialized lenses from both manufacturers:

- Expensive long telephoto lenses from each manufacturer for sports and nature photography.
- Ultra wide and 'Fish Eye' lenses for landscape and interior architecture.
- Specialized Tilt Shift (CANON) or Perspective Control (NIKON) Lenses for Architectural and Landscape Photography

Next ... Memory Cards.

MEMORY CARDS

You will need to get a Memory Card (or bunch of them) for your DSLR. I would recommend Transcend and Sandisk.

Entry level DSLR cameras tend to use SD, SDHC or SDXC memory cards and Professional DSLRs have Compact Flash (CF)(UDMA in some) and may have an SD memory slot as well.

SD CARDS

With the current memory card prices you will want to go with at least a 16GB SD card preferable SDHC Class 10 minimum. For Entry level:

[Transcend 16GB Class 10 SDHC Card](#)

For Video or Professional performance I would recommend:

[Sandisk 16GB Extreme SDHC Class 6 \(20MB/s\) or](#)

[Sandisk 16GB Extreme SDHC Class 10 \(30MB/s\)](#)

COMPACT FLASH (CF) CARDS

With the current Memory prices (at the time of writing this) a 16GB CF memory card seems to be the sweet spot. I have always had flawless performance with Sandisk Extreme III memory cards in mission critical situations - if you've done wedding photography you know what I'm talking about :O. I would recommend the following newer cards (as long as your camera is CF UMDA compatible):

[Sandisk 16GB Extreme CF memory card - UDMA 60MB/s 400x](#)

or for ultimate performance (probably faster than current cameras can handle):

[SanDisk 16GB Extreme Pro CF memory card - UDMA 90MB/s 600x](#)

EXTERNAL FLASH

CANON	NIKON
<p data-bbox="256 422 743 457">CANON Speedlite 430EX II Flash</p>  <p data-bbox="256 1041 789 1388"><ul style="list-style-type: none">• E-TTL II• Flash controls settable through camera's LCD screen on compatible EOS digital SLR models• Flash head can be tilted and swiveled• Can be used as a "slave unit" with Canon's wireless E-TTL• Built-in wide-angle pull-down diffuser• LCD information panel</p> <p data-bbox="204 1476 776 1507">Click here for Canon Speedlite 430EX II Flash</p>	<p data-bbox="880 422 1360 457">NIKON SB-600 Speedlight Flash</p>  <p data-bbox="873 1041 1398 1434"><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports the Nikon Creative Lighting System• Auto zoom from 24 to 85mm• Supports i-TTL (for balanced Fill-Flash), D-TTL, TTL, Manual• Wide Area AF assist illuminator• High-Speed Sync• Supports Advanced Wireless Lighting• FV lock (locks flash value)• LCD display</p> <p data-bbox="824 1476 1398 1507">Click here for Nikon SB-600 Speedlight Flash</p>

Entry level DSLR cameras generally come with popup flash units. If you want to add a dedicated Flash these options from CANON and NIKON would be the best for starters. Both CANON and NIKON have a cheaper model in their flash range but I feel the flash head on those models are a little too close to the lens center. If you are going to get into serious flash photography you are better off starting with

the mid-range models. For better performance and wireless capabilities you can look into the professional models below.

Professional External Flash

CANON	NIKON
<p data-bbox="256 531 743 569">CANON Speedlite 580EX II Flash</p>  <p data-bbox="250 1115 764 1388"><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Features of the 430EX II plus:• AF-assist beam• Faster recycling time• Completely silent• Can be used as a “Master unit” with Canon's wireless E-TTL• Dust and water resistance</p> <p data-bbox="203 1434 776 1465">Click here for Canon Speedlite 580EX II Flash</p>	<p data-bbox="883 531 1360 569">NIKON SB-900 Speedlight Flash</p>  <p data-bbox="873 1115 1398 1346"><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Features of the SB-600 plus:• Auto zoom from 17 to 200mm• More Flash exposure control settings• Optional external power supplies• Wireless flash modes including Master (4 Channels 3 groups)</p> <p data-bbox="824 1434 1398 1465">Click here for Nikon SB-900 Speedlight Flash</p>

These professional level Flash units have good battery life and quicker recycling time than the mid-range units, crucial when doing event photography like weddings. They add the ability to be Master units in a wireless multi-flash setup also. Nearly double the price but easily double the value.

I have done a lot of event photography (weddings and guest speaker events) and I find that one of the key items for getting good Flash images is a **diffuser**.

Personally, I find that the lighting of 'raw' Flash is too stark – “the deer in the headlights look”. It is a look that many 'point and shoot' cameras create as well.

You can aim the flash head up or to the side utilizing **Bounce Flash** which helps a lot but I find a good diffuser produces a nicer more natural looking image.

I have tried a few diffusers but my favorites are Gary Fong diffusers.

You can get an inexpensive Puffer Popup flash diffuser which ingeniously attaches to the hot-shoe of your camera:



[Click here for Gary Fong Puffer Pop Up Flash Diffuser](#)

For dedicated external Flash units the Lightsphere Universal System Cloud is the best option (has improved attachment method from earlier Lightsphere models)



[Click here for Gary Fong Lightsphere Universal System Cloud](#)

WHITE BALANCE FILTER

Different light sources will give off light with different temperatures. Lighting can be hotter (orange to red cast) or cooler (Bluer cast). Cameras try to adjust to different lighting conditions to make white objects appear “pure white” without a color-cast. This function is called White Balancing. Most DSLR cameras handle external White Balance fairly well (auto setting). Usually you get a better result by choosing the setting for 'sunny', 'cloudy/shade', 'incandescent', 'tungsten' etc., according to the actual conditions but the best way to get near perfect white balance (especially indoors) is to set a Custom White Balance.

You can set custom white balance by photographing a pure gray card and choosing the image as your custom white balance reference **or** by using an ExpoDisc.

The ExpoDisc is my favorite white balance tool. You clip the disc to the front of your lens and take a photograph from your subject's position aimed towards where you want to take the photo from and that becomes your reference shot. An essential tip with the ExpoDisc is to choose Manual Focus as there will be nothing to focus on (some cameras will not fire without 'locking on' in Autofocus mode).





[Click here for ExpoDisc EXPOD67 67mm Neutral White Balance Filter](#)

(make sure you choose the right size for your lens – or your biggest size if you have more than one lens of different filter sizes - that way you can hold the ExpoDisc over the smaller lens when you take your reference shot, even though it won't clip on)

Camera Bags

Many manufacturers make camera bags but CANON and NIKON do make some decent entry level bags that will fit a camera body a couple of lenses and a flash unit as well as pockets for spare memory cards and lens cleaners etc.

CANON	NIKON
 A black Canon camera bag with multiple straps and buckles. The Canon logo is visible on the front flap.	 A black Nikon camera bag with yellow accents and a handle. The Nikon logo is visible on the front.
Click here for Canon 2400 SLR Gadget Bag for EOS SLR Cameras	Click here for Nikon Starter Digital SLR Camera Case

For around \$30 these are really worth the money for protecting your Entry level or Enthusiast DSLR camera kit.

Camera Backpacks

For a more protection I'm really a fan of the Camera Backpacks.

My favorite backpacks are by Kata. If you are a frequent traveler the nice thing about these backpacks is that they don't scream "STEAL ME"! Without the CANON or NIKON logo on them they are not obviously Camera bags. The padded protection and nice extras like rain cover make them very useful for the great outdoors and traveling in general.

My Favorite:



[Click here for Kata R-103 GDC Rucksack](#)

The Kata R-103 is rugged with really good padding and includes a laptop pouch (fits slim 15.4 inch or less) and plenty room for DSLR, long lens, couple of other lenses (or extra body) an external flash and plenty pockets for Memory cards, filters and other accessories.

If you need more space they have bigger models like the Kata HB-207 GDC, but don't go much bigger than this as you will not be able to use it for carry-on baggage (the real point of these camera backpacks for travelers)

[Click here for Kata HB-207 GDC Hiker Backpack](#)

Tripods

There are an overwhelming amount of tripods to choose from. For a DSLR camera you want a relatively stable tripod so I would avoid the \$20 and below models. For a relatively cheap decent quality Tripod I would recommend the Polaroid 72" Photo/ Video Tripod below:



[Click here for Polaroid 72 inch Photo/Video Tripod](#)

For heavier lenses and Professional level DSLR cameras I would recommend Manfrotto Tripods – they are super sturdy, a little on the heavy side but will give you the stability you need not to mention last a lifetime! You will need to buy the Tripod legs and head separately.



[Click here for Manfrotto 055XPROB Pro Tripod Legs](#)

[Click here for Manfrotto 322RC2 Joystick Head](#)

That's it for now!

As you experiment more with your DSLR camera you may find that you need other accessories not covered here; like Remote Shutter releases or filters etc.

This guide was not an attempt to give you an exhaustive list of items to consider but rather an overview of my recommendations for putting together a useful DSLR kit for a wide variety of shooting and experimentation.

For the sake of full disclosure and a disclaimer: the recommendations in this guide are my opinions on what I honestly consider to be quality items and good value but you are welcome to explore the multitude of reviews on the internet and come up with your own conclusions. I will not be liable for any consequences as to my recommendations, inaccuracies or omissions in this document. This is an honest attempt to provide useful advice and should be taken as such. Having said that, I will be compensated in the form of commissions if you purchase via any of the links in this document. Otherwise, I have no particular affiliation with CANON or NIKON other than I use their products and find them of good quality.

I hope you find this guide useful and I wish you all the best in putting together your DSLR kit – Get ready for stunning photos!

Cheers



Ken Schultz



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