

How do I choose a digital camera?

What to look for in a digital camera for yearbook photography:

- A resolution of three megapixels or better (see table).
 - Lower resolution cameras are best suited for web pages or newspaper photos.
- Select camera resolution based on the maximum photo reproduction needed (see table).
 - Photos enlarged beyond this size will have a noticeable loss of resolution and may look pixelated.
- Use normal camera evaluation criteria when shopping for a digital camera.
 - For example, SLR cameras will almost always be a better choice than models with separate shutter and viewfinder.
- Only use "optical zoom" specs and settings for comparing cameras and actually taking photos.
 - The "digital zoom" feature only enlarges an area of the photo and inserts interpolated pixels to boost the resolution back to the original value.
- Make sure the camera comes with an LCD viewer.
 - Photos can be evaluated and reviewed immediately.
 - Poor photos can be deleted and retaken on the spot.
 - This can be valuable when a last-minute photo is needed to make a deadline.
- Images that are stored on Compact Flash, Secure Digital (SD) or PCMCIA (PC) cards offer more "sharing" options than those that use other media.
 - These cards are much easier to read on laptop or desktop computers.
- Get a memory card reader and at least one extra card when purchasing the camera.
 - The card reader allows the photographer to keep taking photos using the second card while photos on the first card are being downloaded into the computer.
- Get several additional cards if you want to be able to arm your photographer with multiple "rolls" of this digital film.

Pixels vs. Inches

Use the highest resolution setting your camera is capable of capturing. Instead of dpi settings, digital cameras measure quality with pixel dimensions. If you divide the pixel dimensions of an image by the resolution required (300 dpi), you can determine the maximum size these images should be used in the yearbook.

Use this table to calculate the largest size image that can be used from your camera.

Digital Camera Reference Chart		
Pixels Per Inch	Resolution (Dots Per Inch)	Image Size In Inches
1 Megapixel		
1260 x 960	300 dpi	4.3 x 3.2
	250 dpi	5.1 x 3.8
2 Megapixels		
1600 x 1200	300 dpi	5.3 x 4.0
	250 dpi	6.4 x 4.8
3 Megapixels		
1984 x 1488	300 dpi	6.6 x 5
	250 dpi	7.9 x 5.9
5 Megapixels		
2660 x 1920	300 dpi	8.6 x 6.4
	250 dpi	10.2 x 7.7
6 Megapixels		
3032 x 2008	300 dpi	10.1 x 6.7
	250 dpi	12.1 x 8.0
7 Megapixels		
3072 x 2304	300 dpi	10.2 x 7.6
	250 dpi	12.2 x 9.2
8 Megapixels		
3264 x 2448	300 dpi	10.9 x 8.1
	250 dpi	13.0 x 9.8
<i>This chart was calculated by dividing the pixel dimensions of a typical camera by the resolution.</i>		

Using this formula, it is easy to see why inexpensive digital cameras, or images captured in low resolution mode, will not produce great looking photos in your yearbook. The images they produce are too small at 300 dpi.

If the camera pixel dimensions are 640 x 480, it will take a photo that is roughly 2" x 1.5".

Calculate this by dividing:

$$640/300 = 2.133 \text{ inches,}$$

$$480/300 = 1.6 \text{ inches}$$

There isn't a big demand for candid photos this size in the yearbook! Enlarge

these pictures and you will be very disappointed at their quality in your yearbook.

Stay within the size limits shown in the table to get photos you will be proud of in your yearbook.

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