

Photography masterclass:

1. Choosing the right camera

Professional photographer **Zak Waters** originally started out as an assistant to several Magnum photographers and now freelances for the quality UK press and news agencies. Over the next 10 weeks he will be giving us the benefit of his experience in a series of photography masterclasses. Here he explains how to choose the right digital camera for your needs



"Can you recommend a good camera?" I've been asked this question so many times over the years. The truth is I don't really know. I bought my

camera because it suited my needs, but everyone is different. Only you can decide which one will work well for you.

If you're looking to buy a new camera,

start by asking yourself these questions: what do I need it for?; how much do I actually want to do to get a great picture?; and how much can I afford? Do some research on the internet and check out which camera your friends or colleagues use. Once you've got an approximate idea of what you want (and how much you want to spend), then head to your local high-street retailer.

Again, don't be afraid to ask questions at the retailer. Ask to look at their cameras, handle them, check the battery supply and do some test shots. Question if the LCD

screen is big enough, if the camera seems easy to use, and if it will be heavy to carry. You might want to also check if it has macro and if it's wide angle enough.

One thing I've learned over the years is not to be too scared of technology and its advancements. Adapt as you go along and learn on a need-to-know basis. You know what you need to learn if you understand where you are as a photographer. One new piece of technology which I love the sound of is Sony's Smile Shutter, an innovative shutter system which actively responds to smiling faces.



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Camera manufactures are now taking the old "point and shoot" principle into new territory. Panasonic, for example, has developed "intelligent auto technology" or "iA" for short, which basically senses the optimal shooting modes and combines shake, scene, motion and face detection all before you press the shutter. All you have to do is point the camera. It used to be that mega pixels were the traditional benchmarking for digital cameras — now the new benchmark seems to be all about benefit-led features and superior lenses. A new era perhaps.

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