

Photography — Digital Photography: Yes or No?

Digital photography uses computer technology to create images. If you want to use photographs of your work on a Web site, be able to e-mail them, include them in professionally printed brochures or postcards, or in documents created on computers by word processing, digital photography is a good choice. Since digital photography creates images as digital files, it eliminates the scanning that must be done to create an electronic version of traditional photographs.

How is digital photography different?

Traditional photography uses film that contains many microscopic specks of silver emulsion that is light sensitive. These tiny specks are very numerous on film. Digital photography differs by depositing images on pixels, which is short for “picture elements.” These pixels are on a charged coupled device (CCD) instead of conventional film. When a picture is taken, temporary electronic changes to the CCD are turned into computer language and recorded on memory. Your computer and printer can use the pixels to display or print photographs. The quality of a digital image depends on the number of pixels used for the image. More pixels mean greater detail and sharpness. High-quality film has more light-sensitive specks, and therefore permits more sharpness than digital images, although that is expected to change. Currently, traditional cameras provide the equivalent of approximately six megapixels, while consumer digital cameras can store only about three megapixels.

Some advantages of digital photography

- 1. No film is needed.** Because digital photography uses no film there are no costs for film and processing, and no time spent buying film and waiting for development.
- 2. You see what the camera captured.** No film processing means there are no unwanted changes to colour, lightness or darkness.
- 3. Instant images.** You can preview the shots on a screen on the back of the camera, and delete the ones you don't like.
- 4. Easy editing.** You can use software to crop, zoom, sharpen, colour, contrast, lighten or darken, and make other alterations to the images.
- 5. Be as creative as you want.** Because there is no film with a limited number of exposures, you can take as many shots as you like, with all the creative angles and compositions you want. This increases the chances of getting the perfect shot.
- 6. No chemicals released into the environment.** Avoiding film processing prevents some toxic pollution.

Some disadvantages of digital photography

- 1. Increased cost.** Digital cameras can cost more than conventional cameras of comparable quality. The highest-resolution digital cameras cost thousands of dollars. Batteries can also be costly.
- 2. Need for more memory.** If you take a lot of photos at once, you may need to increase the memory in your camera.
- 3. Slower picture taking.** Digital cameras are slower to capture an image than traditional cameras. There is a slight delay between pushing the shutter and capturing the image. It takes the camera a moment to record each image before you can take another shot, meaning you can't take photos in rapid succession.
- 4. Less convenient for snapshots.** It's more difficult to get digital printouts to show clients or use for promotion than taking film for one-hour processing.
- 5. Equipment and technical knowledge.** You need the computer equipment, software and knowledge to download and edit your photographs, or pay someone else to do this for you.

- 6. Risk of loss.** Digital images risk being lost due to computer viruses, failures and technological obsolescence. Backing up your images is vital, but you may have to convert them to new formats if the technology changes.
- 7. Slide Format Demands.** At present, the majority of gallery, grant or residency calls for submission requires slides for viewing and assessing work. Creating slides from digital files is an extra, specialized process you would have to undertake.