

## Digital Photo Frames

Digital photo frames are a popular choice for displaying digital photos. Without the additional cost of printing, you can enjoy your photos anytime and almost anywhere because digital frames do not require a direct connection to a computer. Another attractive feature is the option of having continuously changing pictures, as most frames offer an adjustable time interval switch. Some frames are wall mountable, while others can be displayed on a desktop or bookcase.

### Features

Digital frames offer a number of features, including built-in memory for storing photos, playing digital music to accompany photos, and/or playing short video clips. The screen sizes range from 3.5 inch to 10 × 12 inch screens, with 7 and 8 inch screens (measured diagonally) having the best resolution. *Consumer Reports* provides sound guidelines for the types of features to look for when buying a digital frame.

Options include built-in stereo speakers to recreate quality sound from music or video files, sending photos to a computer printer, loading pictures over the Internet, from RSS feeds, photo-sharing sites such as Flickr, Picasa, from e-mail, by Bluetooth, or memory card. Still others have high-tech features like full Web browsers, streaming Internet radio, and text news feeds. With the exception of a few brands, Wi-Fi photo frames generally cost quite a bit more than those that display only local content. Still others feature an internal battery, which allows up to 1 hour of cable-free photo viewing.

**Resolution and image quality.** Eight-inch frames with 800 × 600 resolutions are recommended for the best picture quality; larger frames need digitally higher resolution pictures to give a clear image. A matte finish is more desirable than a shiny finish, as some models have glass-covered screens that can cause glare.

**Aspect ratio** represents the relationship between an image's height and width. Eight of the 10 frames *Consumer Reports* tested had either a 4:3 or 3:2 aspect ratio, which works well because most digital SLR cameras shoot at 4:3 or 3:2. Widescreen frames with a 15:9 aspect ratio are not as good because they tend to distort the picture or crop the pictures poorly. But this type of screen gives your images a widescreen feel, making it a better choice for some.

**Connections.** Most models can accept the common types of memory cards, such as SD, compact flash, or memory stick. If you want to transfer digital images directly from your computer, look for a frame that has a USB port or Bluetooth capability.

**Versatility.** Be aware that not all picture frames offer both "landscape" and "portrait" mode, so check before you buy. Some frames offer a choice of setting the frame on a credenza or hanging it on a wall.

**Audio and video extras.** Some models make it possible to play music or digital videos. Some may have a built-in iPod dock, while others display text files as well.

**WiFi Capability.** Wireless capability enables you to pull pictures directly from your computer. Such networked models

usually support wireless (802.11) connections.

**All-in-One Devices.** There are a number of devices that offer more multiple functions that were once done by separate stand-alone units. One available frame can wake you up in the mornings and let you listen to your favorite songs. Some frames include printer capabilities or built-in cordless phones. *Consumer Reports* recommends sticking to the basics because some of the built-in features do not perform as well as stand-alone devices made specifically for one function.

**Ease of use.** Always check to see how easy it will be to use a digital frame. What could be easier than simply inserting a memory card from a digital camera, turning the frame on, and viewing the pictures displayed? Check to see if the memory card slot is in a convenient location on the frame. Other ease-of-use features include keeping a still image, using the slide-show feature, and controlling the speed of image change.

### **Calculating the Number of Images Stored on a Digital Card**

To calculate how many pictures a memory card can hold, divide the capacity of your card by the average file size of your images. For example, if you have a 256MB card and use a camera that has an average file size of 1.2MB, then 256 divided by 1.2, which gives you approximately 213 pictures.

### **Cost**

There are a vast number of options to choose from when shopping for a digital frame, as well as a wide price range. Many frames start at less than \$100, depending on the size and features, so make sure you are getting the features you want and can afford.

### **Check the Ratings**

Use *Consumer Reports* for the latest digital frame comparisons.

### **Sources**

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