

What camcorder should you buy?

Good resource:

<http://www.pcworld.com/products/cameras/camcorders.html>

Click on “How to Buy a Digital Camcorder”

My video tutorials: <http://AlejandroCremaschi.com/nckpvideo>

General recommendations:

1. Buy a digital camcorder (most common nowadays), not to an analog one
2. Look for camcorders with at least 10X optical zoom
3. Look for stereo microphone placed in front (not on top) of camcorder
4. Optional: look for camcorders with a microphone outlet, if you want to connect an external mic for better sound quality
5. At least 680,000 pixels of CCD video resolution. The higher the number, the crisper the image
6. Look for “very low-light sensitivity” or “ultra low-light sensitivity” for indoor recordings
7. Check the LCD screen in daylight – some are too dim to see outdoors or with daylight
8. Check the battery life. Look for at least 1.5 hours of battery recording time
9. Try out the camcorder controls before buying. Some are tricky to figure out!
10. Wide screen shooting (16:9 aspect ratio, e.g. 1280 x 720 pixels) will allow you to avoid the black bars on the sides of the screen in most HDTV sets
11. Buy a tripod
12. Buy a camcorder that has media capacity of at least 1 hour, or more if you want to record a long recital without changing the tape or DVD

What do you want the camcorder for?

Recording lessons for students with NO editing

- Camcorder that records to mini DVD

Recording for posting on YouTube with some editing

- Media: Any type of media will work. See pros and cons of different media below
- **Avoid camcorders that record video using AVCHD** compression format (hard to edit)
- High definition camcorders will requires a newer, more powerful computer for editing. Use standard definition with older computers
- Be sure the camera has a USB or Firewire connector to transfer the video to your computer for editing (most digital cameras do)

Recording for burning DVDs with editing, navigation menus, etc

Same as "Recording for posting on YouTube" above

Different types of media: PROS and CONS

MiniDV. (A camcorder that uses a small digital TAPE).

Recording time: 1 hour to 1:30 hour

Pros

1. Easy to archive
2. Very compatible with most cheap programs such as iMovie (Mac) and Movie Maker HD (PC)
3. Good video quality

Cons

1. If you intent to record recitals that last more than 1:30, you will need to change the tape
2. Transferring video to computer will take as long as the length of your movie
3. Most are standard definition only (some are high definition)
4. Can't lend to student, unless the student has a camcorder that plays miniDV's, or unless you transfer the video to your computer and post to Youtube or burn a DVD for them
5. Are becoming less common nowadays (SD cameras are becoming more popular)

Mini DVD. (A camcorder that uses a small DVD).

Recording time: 30 minutes to 1:30 hour

Pros

1. Easy to archive
2. Quickly transfer videos to computer through USB cable
3. You can lend mini DVD to your students. They can play the DVD on a standard DVD player at home

Cons

1. If you intend to record recitals that last more than 1:30 hours, you will need to change the media
2. Most computers with "slot" DVD drives (such as Macs) will not accept a mini DVD (but you can transfer the video to the computer through a USB or Firewire cable)
3. Short recording time (30 minutes) when you choose better video and audio quality
4. If you want to do some editing, avoid camcorders that record in AVCHD file compression format (ask the store employee). AVCHD will require a very powerful computer and a more expensive program to edit. Instead look for MPEG-2, MPEG-4 or H.264 file compressions

Hard drive camcorder. (Camcorder with a hard drive inside, no external media)

Recording time: usually many hours of video (usually over 30 hours)

Pros

1. Usually large storage – many hours of video
2. No need to carry media

3. Quickly transfer video to your computer through USB cable

Cons

1. Difficult to archive. Need to download video to computer and save in hard drive of the computer, or burn DVD. BUT some camcorders combine a hard drive with SD memory card (see below for SD card)
2. Can't lend media to students. You would need to lend the camcorder, or transfer files to your computer and post to Youtube or burn a DVD for them
3. If you want to do some editing, avoid camcorders that record in AVCHD file compression format (ask the store employee). AVCHD will require a powerful computer and a more expensive program to edit. Instead look for MPEG-2, MPEG-4 or H.264 file compressions
4. If the camcorder hard drive breaks, you lose all your video, unless you have transferred it to your computer

SD (memory card) camcorder. (A camcorder with an SD memory card slot)

Recording time: depending on the SD capacity and compression. With an SD with 8 Gigabytes, 1:30 to 5 hours

Pros

1. SD cards are easy to archive
2. Usually very compact and light
3. Quickly transfer videos to computer through USB cable

Cons

1. You can't lend media to students, unless they have an SD memory card reader, or you transfer the files to your computer and post on Youtube or burn a DVD for them
2. If you want to do some editing, avoid camcorders that record in AVCHD file compression format (ask the store employee). AVCHD will require a very powerful computer and a more expensive program to edit. Instead look for MPEG-2, MPEG-4 or H.264 file compressions

Camcorder with built-in memory, such as "Flip video" camcorders (A camcorder with a memory chip inside, that requires no external media)

Recording time: varies according to memory. Usually 1 to 2 hours.

Pros

1. Tiny and light. Some even use AA batteries
2. Inexpensive. Intended for "web" videos
3. Quickly transfer videos to computer through USB connector

Cons

1. You can't lend media to students, unless you transfer the files to your computer and post on Youtube or burn a DVD for them
2. LCD screen usually smaller than other media
3. If you want to do some editing, avoid camcorders that record in AVCHD file compression format (ask the store employee). AVCHD will require a very powerful computer and a more expensive program to edit. Instead look for MPEG-2, MPEG-4 or H.264 file compressions