

Making the Most of Digital Camera Memory Cards

Contributed by Dave Saunders
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Digital cameras are revolutionizing the world of home and professional photography, but they are married to memory cards just as traditional cameras are married to film. Making the best use of memory cards can have a very big impact on your enjoyment of digital photography. Choosing the right memory card for the job can be as important as choosing the right film for a traditional camera.

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{bot_wrgoogle}If you are new to digital cameras, the digital camera memory cards are the most important parts of any digital camera, without which they may not work at all. So if you are handling a digital camera or planning a purchase, you must know more about the memory cards used in these cameras.

Something many new digital camera owners find counter-intuitive is that bigger is not always better with a digital memory card. The actual response speed of your digital camera can depend greatly on the memory card it is using. The speed that your camera writes new pictures to the digital memory card is partially dependent on the transfer speed of the digital camera but is also dependent on factors in the memory card itself. Memory cards that have "buffers" can take the data into a faster type of memory and then transfer the data from there to the slower "flash memory" which provides the main storage of almost all digital camera memory cards. Some digital camera provide their own buffer memory to allow you to take your next picture while the previous picture is being transferred to the memory card.

When you delete an image from the memory card of your digital camera, the flash memory is "reconfigured" because of special issues having to do with how this memory stores data. Normally this is an issue that you don't have to worry about at all. However, if you have a very large memory card and delete an image, you may experience a several minute delay while "house cleaning" is performed on the memory card. Because of this, do not delete images while you are taking pictures. Instead wait until you are at home, your hotel or in the car before reviewing your pictures and deleting the ones you don't want. Smaller cards take less time for this "house cleaning" so many experienced digital camera owners will choose to have more than one medium sized memory card instead of one very large one.

Now the question arises-how many memory cards are enough for your camera? On an average basis, you must have at least two memory cards for your digital camera. That is, if you are using it in a normal and average fashion.

Most professional photographers choose to carry about four to six memory cards. This helps them shoot smoothly and constantly. If they run out of memory, they just take the loaded card out and insert the fresh one. Because memory cards can malfunction (just like traditional film canisters, but not as often), you should choose to have at least two memory cards at all times. By having at least two cards, you can work with one and keep the other in reserve for emergency. Having at least one extra memory card for your digital camera will also ensure that you have the backup protection needed if you run out of space on your first card or in the possible event of the first card malfunctioning.

The next important issue is how to take proper care of these memory cards. The memory cards may seem like some small and fragile piece of technology, but they are actually fairly sturdy. The flash memory is encased in a stiff plastic shell which can withstand normal wear and handling. At one end of the memory card is either a set of little holes or copper strips. These are the sensitive part of the card. Any voltage source or a large jolt of static could corrupt the memory and probably cause permanent damage to the card. When the card is not in your camera, it is best to keep it stored in a protective case or in your camera case. Putting it in your pocket could cause a short (from your keys perhaps) or dirty the electrical contacts. There have been instances where the users have misbehaved greatly with them and the memory cards have yet survived and continued to function correctly. But, this does not mean that one should not care for them.

When it is time to transfer your data from the memory card to your PC, it is best to have a memory card reader, or have a PC with a built-in reader. The data cables provided with most digital cameras are very slow compared to the speed of a "direct reader" and it is often easier to review, copy and delete images from a memory card when using a reader instead of through the data cable connection.

When traveling, X-Rays have never been shown to corrupt the data on, or damage, a digital camera memory card. The memory card is also not magnetic in nature so the motors in the X-Ray machine's conveyor belt should not be able to cause any harm either.

Armed with knowledge comes the power to benefit from that knowledge. If you have learned something new about digital memory cards, hopefully you will benefit by enjoying your digital camera more and finding more opportunities to take great pictures.

About The Author

Dave Saunders is a nutritional educator and published author. He enjoys writing on his many hobbies and passions. You can find other news and articles on digital cameras at <http://www.aboutdigitalcameras.net>.