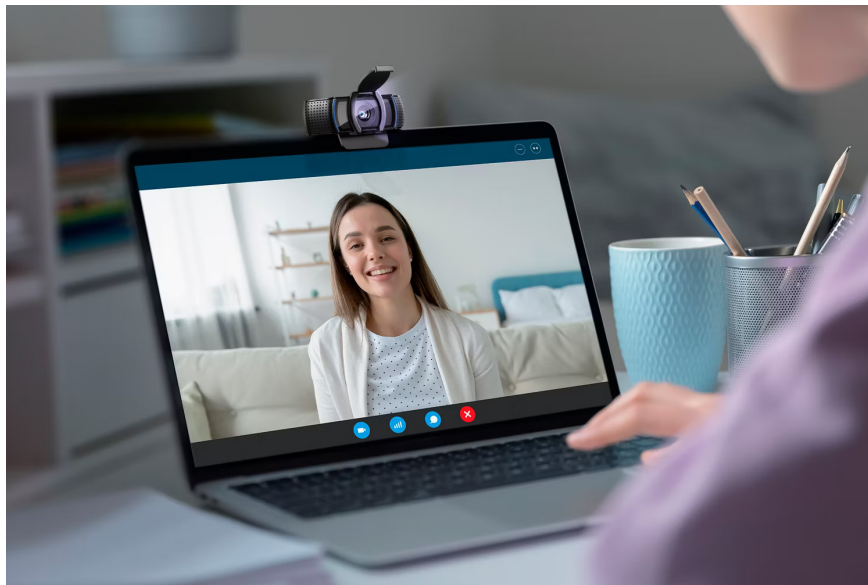


6 important tips when buying a new webcam

An external webcam is better than any built-in option. It gives you installation flexibility and delivers higher image quality, etc. But what should you look for when buying a new webcam?

1. Consider the purpose of buying a webcam



Webcams offer a variety of features targeted at certain use cases. The specific reason you buy a webcam should be your guide. For streaming and content creation, you will need a webcam that offers the right features, such as good resolution with higher frame rates, different mounting options, good built-in microphone (if you don't have one), etc.

For online meetings, you won't need much of the functionality that high-end webcams offer like 4K resolution, as most, even the best online meeting software, are limited to 1080p.

2. Test image/video quality and low-light performance



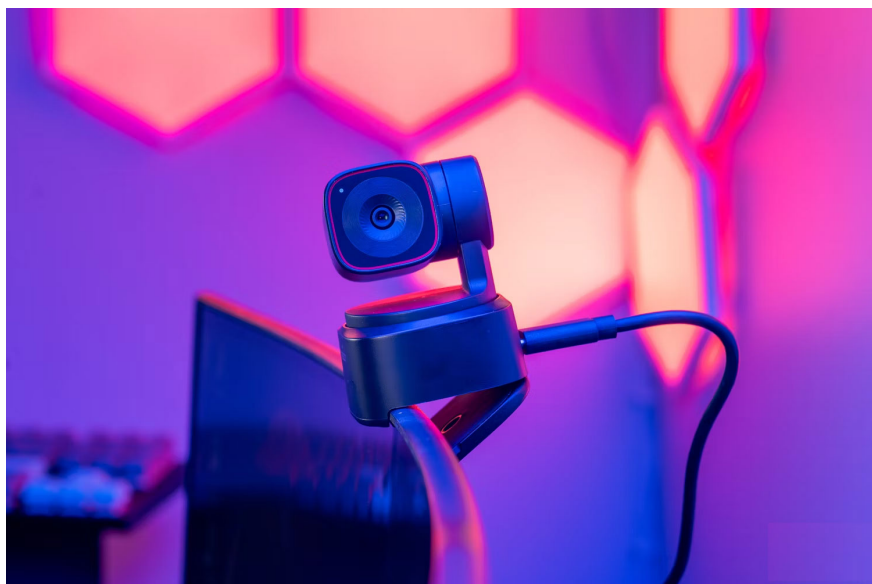
An important aspect that separates mid-range webcams from the best is image and video quality. When buying a new webcam, check the maximum quality it can capture. Webcams come in many different resolutions: 720p, 1080p, 2K, 4K and 8K.

8K is the maximum resolution seen on any webcam, but they are expensive and overkill for most use cases. In the high-end segment, choose one that can record 4K video. For example, the Insta360 Link can record 4K video at 24, 25 or 30 frames per second.

However, not everyone needs a 4K webcam. When you're on a tight budget, a 1080p webcam like the Logitech C920x HD Pro is all you need. Stay away from 720p webcams as they offer the same quality as most built-in webcams. The price difference is very small, so choosing a 1080p webcam will significantly improve video quality without much increase in cost.

Finally, you should check for any mention of low-light performance, especially if you plan to use the camera at night or if the workspace isn't well-lit.

3. See mounting options and versatility



The webcam offers many different mounting options. Most, if not all, have clips to attach to the top of your laptop or computer screen. Additionally, some allow you to mount the webcam on a tripod. A tripod mount is necessary if you need more flexibility in positioning your webcam because you can place it at a variety of heights and angles. This is also a plus for high-end options that can be heavier when mounted on a laptop screen.

Flexibility in how you position your webcam is equally important and can greatly improve your experience. That's one of the reasons why people prefer external webcams. Some webcams can rotate left and right or tilt up and down, making it possible to adjust the frame without repositioning the entire webcam. The Logitech Brio has a clip, but you can hook it to a tripod, while the Obsbot Tiny 2 Lite can rotate up, down, and side to side.

4. Prioritize autofocus and field of view



Autofocus is a function that ensures the camera can automatically adjust focus to ensure the subject of the image or video appears clear and prominent. This feature plays an important role in keeping images sharp and focused, even when you move around or hold objects up to the camera.

The field of view determines the portion of the scene captured. If you plan to use your webcam for group calls or to show more of your surroundings, choose a webcam with a wider field of view. A webcam with a narrower field of view is best if you don't want to expose much of your surroundings.

Most people can make good use of a webcam with a narrower field of view. But in some cases, you won't have to choose between the two because some webcams offer variable focal length.

5. Consider setup compatibility



Even if you buy one of the best webcams available, compatibility can still ruin your experience. It can significantly affect ease of use and in some cases, performance.

As a result, webcams often include compatibility information on their product pages. First, check the compatible operating system and version. If you are still using Windows 7 Vista, make sure your webcam supports this operating system. You should also check to see if the webcam requires any specific drivers or software and that your system is compatible.

Also check what type of connection the webcam uses. Most use USB, so check that your device has the appropriate port to connect a webcam as there are many different types of USB connectors. If they are not compatible, you will need an adapter.

But to avoid additional costs, make sure your webcam's connector is compatible with at least one of your available ports or has the right adapter right out of the box.

6. Look for additional features

The other features the webcam offers may or may not be necessary, depending on your needs. Some webcams include a microphone, which is a must-have feature if there's no built-in option or if the microphone you have isn't the best. As for the microphone, make sure it has noise cancellation for the best experience.

Auto-tracking is a must-have feature if your work involves a lot of movement (like whiteboard presentations), as it ensures you're always at the center of the video. Another handy feature you can look for is gesture control, which allows you to easily perform different actions, such as changing between preset modes.

Different webcams offer many useful additional features, but for most of these you will need to spend more money.

Your current needs and setup are very important when purchasing a new webcam. From there, you'll know what essential features your webcam needs: Flexible mounting options, superior image quality, autofocus, etc.

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