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# Before You Buy a Digital Video Camera

Contributed by Administrator  
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The digital camcorder takes the analog information and, rather than storing the video signal as a continuous track of magnetic patterns, it gathers and translates it to bytes of data. Then it records the picture and sound as ones and zeros. Digital camcorders can be broken down into three primary formats: mini-DV, Digital8 and DVD.

## Mini-DV

Mini-DV is the most common of the digital formats. The tape is the smallest of all formats, making it possible to make the camcorders smaller than any other format. But, mini-DV camcorders aren't always smaller than other video cameras. I have seen some that are the same size as the 8mm camcorders. Size depends upon price and features. Although the Mini-DV tape is about 1/12th the size of the VHS tape, its recording capability is 2 hours at 500 lines of resolution.

## Digital8

The Digital8 format is a good choice for the person who owns an 8mm, or Hi8, camcorder, and wants to upgrade to digital. Digital8 format features are comparable to those offered in Mini-DV camcorders, except for one key ability. The Digital8 camcorder can playback your old 8mm and Hi8 videos. The Digital8 format uses the 8mm tapes, but reduces the recording time. It can record up to 500 lines of resolution for one hour per tape. Playback is the same as with the Mini-DV and 8mm formats.

## DVD

Depending on the recording mode, the DVD can record up to two hours on one disc. Just like a CD player, the DVD offers more features at higher quality, such as 'direct access' which allows the person watching to jump directly to the scene they want to see. You can't find this feature on any format that uses tape. For playback simply connect your DVD camcorder to the TV or download your video footage onto your hard drive.