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Choosing a digital picture frame

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These days, digital picture frames seem to be on sale everywhere - even truck stops.

The frames have come down in price and up in quality, making them an ideal way to display all of those holiday photos. But how do you choose the right one?

Besides getting a frame that has the style to match your tastes, narrow your needed features first to make sure you get what you want.

There are many to choose from, ranging in price from \$50 to \$300, so here are some things to consider before you buy.

SIZE

Bigger is better in this case, but the price also goes up with the size. LCD frames are measured diagonally, so decide what size is needed to avoid coming home with the wrong size. The most popular size is around 7 inches.

Needed or not? Yes, as long as the frame fits its intended location.

BUILT IN-MEMORY

This allows the frame to store digital images without the need of a memory card dedicated to the frame. Often it's not more than 256mb, which can store dozens of photos. The internal memory is sure to increase in size in future models.

Needed or not? Not really. Memory cards are cheap enough these days.

CARD READERS

Most every digital frame has a card reader built into the frame, allowing memory cards to be inserted to view the photos.

Make sure the frame you choose accepts the same card your camera uses. It's also a good idea to get one that takes as many cards as possible. You never know what your next camera will use.

Needed or not? Definitely! If you can't load your photos in, what good is the frame?

AUDIO

Background music can be added to slide shows; some even let you compose your own MP3 to narrate a slide show.

Needed or not? A nice feature, but how much will you really use it?

REMOTE CONTROL

The control buttons on the frames are typically small and hard to maneuver while still viewing the frame. A wireless remote control comes in handy to stop a slide

show or access the different settings.
Needed or not? Yes, and most come with one.

BLUETOOTH

With a Bluetooth-enabled cell phone, send photos directly from the phone to the frame. Needed or not? Nope, the quality of cell-phone photos is bad enough on the phone, no need to see them even larger.

POWER

Most often, power is available to run the frame, but what if you want to hang it on a wall where an ugly wire will hang out the bottom?

To solve this, look for a battery-operated frame and try to find one that accepts rechargeables.

Needed or not? This depends on where you want your frame and how far it will be viewed from.

TOP BRANDS

Kodak

Kodak frames work with wireless technology to add pictures and videos from a computer or the Kodak EasyShare Gallery.

Other features: automatic on/off settings, programmable slide shows with MP3's playing on built-in speakers and Interchangeable covers to match the look of a room.

Information: www.kodak.com

CEIVA

CEIVA allows the user to purchase the frame and give it to a relative on the other side of the planet and, with a paid CEIVA PicturePlan, photos are uploaded on their Web site. In seconds they appear on the frame.

The possibilities are endless (both good and bad), but it's a feature sure to make any grandparent smile when updated photos of a grandchild appear daily.

The frame will download the photos with an Internet connection or a phone line.

Information: www.ceiva.com

Pandigital

Pandigital has frames to fit every need in size, shape, color and features.

All frames have a 6-in-1 memory card reader to handle all the popular formats.

Images can be displayed from the memory cards or transferred to the internal memory.

Images can also be transferred by hooking up the frame to a computer's USB port.

Information: www.pandigital.net