

Lens Guide for your Canon DSLR

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Prices as of October 2011

DSLRs are expensive, but remember the lenses are what truly make the shot, along with photography skill of course. You will replace your camera bodies, but your lenses will last a lifetime. You were serious enough to want “better” than a point-and-shoot, why not get a lens that helps take your shots to OMG level?

If your Canon is not a 5DMii or better you have a “cropped” sensor (called APS-C) and your effective lens millimeter will be multiplied by 1.6. So a 50mm lens becomes an 80mm. EF lenses work on all Canon cameras, while EF-S lenses are specifically designed for cropped sensors.

“Zoom” lenses are ones with a range of millimeters and “Prime” lenses have one fixed millimeter.

I'll start with the kit lenses. These zoom lenses are typically cheapest as part of a “kit” and are okay to start with, however won't hold their value on Ebay. These are nice walk-around lenses, but it won't take the serious photographer long to want an upgrade.

Canon EF-S 18-55mm f3.5-5.6 IS \$145, \$145 in kit.



<http://amzn.to/rkNcXD>

So-so starter zoom lens most consumers buy in a kit. Made kind of cheap. Very small focus ring on the front that doesn't hold lens hoods well. It is, however a bit sharper at 18mm than the 18-135mm or 18-200mm. It's light. Like the two lenses below, it has image stabilization.



Canon EF-S 18-135mm f3.5-5.6 IS \$392, \$348 in kit.

<http://amzn.to/oEDG5B>

Nice walk-around lens. Better build quality than 18-55. Lens creep is bad and annoying. As you walk around it will slide out constantly.



Canon EF-S 18-200mm f3.5-5.6 IS \$600, \$500 in kit (if you can find this kit)

<http://amzn.to/q3t6NW>

Same build quality as 18-135mm. Versatile. Lock button is a god send. Though some people claim they've missed shots trying to slide the button before zooming, I'd rather not have lens creep. The zoom between 135mm and 200m is minimal.

Next, some lenses to replace a kit lens or for specific needs:



Canon EF 50mm f1.8, \$130 Many people buy this lens for its price/quality.

<http://amzn.to/qSL1Fh>

This is the Thrifty-Fifty. You will manual focus a lot at f1.8 and I found the focus ring too far in front, small and harder to use. The mount is made of plastic.



Canon EF 50mm f1.4 USM \$385 (This was my 2nd lens after my 18-200mm kit)

<http://amzn.to/r3eaRi>

I love this lens for portraits. Nice size/position focus ring, you don't need to switch to manual focus to use. You will have to walk backwards a lot to get a normal pic of friends in frame. Get used to that with primes, your feet are the zoom. The bokeh (blur) is beautiful at f1.4, though the focus zone is small... tripod time! Canon sells a 50mm f1.2 for you rich peeps. The “USM” stands for Ultrasonic Motor, which means auto-focus won't make much noise.

If I could do it again, I would have bought a **24mm or 28mm** as my first quality lens. **50mm** is the ideal "normal" vision on a full sensor camera like the 5DMii, but on a crop-sensor camera like the T3i, it's really an **80mm**. This is great for single subject torso portraits and flowers, but that's about it (without a lot of backing up). This lens is just too zoomed for video.



Canon EF-S 55-250mm f4-5.6 \$197

<http://amzn.to/nOvVcM>

This is a decent zoom lens for the price. It's not very fast, so you'd do well to use it with a tripod. When an f-stop is listed as 4-5.6, it means it's f4 at 55mm and f5.6 fully zoomed.



Canon EF 35mm f2 \$419

<http://amzn.to/r7CEaY>

This is an excellent prime lens to buy if you're avoiding the “kit” and pairing with a body only. While a 50mm is truest to “normal” eyesight vision on a Canon 5DM2's full sensor, this 35mm becomes a 56mm on your crop body Canon XSi, T1i, T2i, T3i, 60D and 7D. Again your “feet will be your zoom.”



Canon EF 28mm f1.8 USM \$659

<http://amzn.to/ouqRUt>

Equivalent to a 44.8mm on a crop sensor, this is an excellent wide lens with a nice sized and positioned focus ring. This is also an excellent general purpose prime and a great alternative to a kit lens. Yeah it's pricey, but you will notice the quality of the build and the pictures.



Canon EF 85mm f1.8 \$419

<http://amzn.to/p7R01W>

A decent price for a fast prime. 85mm becomes 127.5mm on a crop-sensor. If you were going to shoot a wedding with all primes, this lens paired with a 50mm and a 28mm would be a good trio.



This **Sigma 24mm f1.8 \$549** is what I should have bought over that 50mm f1.4 (with my Crop-sensor 60D). This also functions as a macro lens.

<http://amzn.to/pYNxOe>

My next lens is going to be the **Tokina 11-16 f2.8 \$719**



<http://amzn.to/pCyhTC>

This is about as wide as you can get without going fisheye. Canon and Sigma just can't compete with that F stop in their wide lenses. And on a crop-sensor this is a 17.6mm-25.6mm. This lens is GREAT for weddings, architecture, nature and perfect for video. You want fast lenses for video, because you have to capture lots of light. Slow lenses need high ISO = more grain in dark colors.



Another alternative to the Canon 18-55 is this **Sigma 17-50 f2.8 \$650**

<http://amzn.to/rmRbxq>

Sigma makes great lenses usually similar quality to Canon at a cheaper price.

Finally, The OMG, DROOL Canon Lenses:



Canon 15-85mm f3.5-5.6 \$759

<http://amzn.to/n2jORz>

Not L glass but as good and priced like it is. Sharp glass favored by photogs. A lens pros will tell you to buy instead of a Kit lens. F3.5-5.6 is kinda slow so this lens isn't ideal for low-light shooting or video.



Canon 17-55mm f2.8 \$1120

<http://amzn.to/nnSkIN>

Sharp and photogs often argue whether this or the 15-85mm is best pro starter lens to get over a kit lens.

Either of the above would shine as a first lens for a body-only purchase, provided you have the extra cash. So if you plan to make money taking pictures, start with the best you can afford!



Canon 70-200mm f2.8 L II IS \$2375

<http://amzn.to/nmGrlq>

THE zoom lens to get for nature, weddings, even portraits. Get a 2X adapter by Canon and it becomes a compact 400mm. There are cheaper versions of this lens that don't have Image Stabilization or this f-stop if you're on a budget. (and who isn't?)



Canon 24-70mm f2.8 L \$1439

<http://amzn.to/p3bEDj>

The pro standard L for weddings, portraits and all-around shooting.



Canon 16-35mm f2.8 L \$1699

<http://amzn.to/mP7Hxw>

Awesome pro glass for all-around shooting and video.

So there is my guide. I didn't include every Canon lens. And yeah there are other lens alternatives than Sigma and Tokina. I didn't include the expensive Zeiss and Voigtlaender choices, though both are superb. And I didn't talk about the giant zooms the guys have at the football games. They cost \$10,000. Sell your car.

Also for you people on a budget and/or shooting video. Check out the FD mount (film) lenses on Ebay. For \$25 to \$60 you can get old used lenses to mount to your Canon with an adapter like this one. Get the adapter with the glass in it, as it lets you focus to infinity. You'll have to set your aperture and focus manually, but you'll be pulling manual focus for video with any type of lens.

<http://amzn.to/qs78m3>

A Nikon adapter may be a better choice. They always focus to infinity and don't require image-degrading optics in the adapter. There are also a lot of Nikkor Ai lenses that are cheap and good quality.



For more lens and other advice check out these forums:

<http://www.dpreview.com/forums/>

And if you want to shoot video watch Philip Bloom's guides.

<http://vimeo.com/videoschool/lesson/11/introduction-to-dslr-cameras>

And for video gear reviews the DSLR film noob:

<http://www.dslrfilmnoob.com/>

Here's my YouTube channel:

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