

Camcorder Buying Guide

Video Cameras Compatible with Dartfish:

You do not have to spend lots of money for a video camera to use with Dartfish. The type of video camera must be **miniDV** if you want to streamline video directly into your computer. The miniDV camcorders use the small “VHS-looking” tapes.

You **cannot** use Dartfish’s “*In The Action*” with:

DVD Camcorders

Hard Drive Camcorders

High Definition Camcorders (with the high definition option “on”)

These cameras cannot streamline video into Dartfish because they record video in a different video format. There is no program on the market that can streamline video from these camcorders to your computer. If you use these camcorders, you must import the video using “DV Import” if you have Dartfish 5.0 (you will need an external program to upload video to your computer first if you have an older version of Dartfish). Once loaded, you can analyze and share these videos using Dartfish.

The quality of camera that you purchase is up to you, but keep in mind, the video you take and analyze in Dartfish is only as good as the quality of the video you capture.

Important camcorder specifications to consider:

Shutter speed: I look for cameras that have a high shutter speed (as I video tape sports that are performed at high velocity and I don’t want motion blur), and I look at the range of shutter speeds. I prefer the cameras that can record up to 1/2000 or 1/4000 of a second and have small increases in speed.

ie\ 1/60, 1/100, 1/250, 1/350, 1/500, 1/750, 1/1000 . . . 1/4000, as opposed to; 1/60, 1/100, 1/500, 1/1000, 1/4000

Firewire location: If you have to run your camcorder off battery power, you want to avoid opening the viewfinder as it will drain your battery more quickly. The firewire plug-in on many camcorders is located under the viewfinder. Therefore, the viewfinder must be open if you want to use your firewire. Look for a camcorder that has the firewire port either below the viewfinder or on the back of the camcorder, usually beside the battery.

Battery eject location: Often I have to leave my camera on a tripod on record. When I have to change batteries I need to do it quickly. I do not want to have to take the camera off the tripod in order to eject the battery, so be mindful of where the battery eject button is located.

Tape eject location: On the same note, I don't want to take my camcorder off the tripod in order to change tapes. Therefore, I look for camcorders that load and eject the tape on either the top or the back of the camera – not on the bottom.

Iris/Gain control: I often video tape in poor lighting conditions (indoors) and I often need to increase my shutter speed in order to decrease motion blur. Increasing shutter speed however will decrease the amount of light entering the camcorder. Therefore, as shutter speed increases, the video gets darker. Gain control will let me brighten the video (making the picture look a little “grainy”) but will allow me to film at a higher shutter speed than I would normally be able to. If most of your filming is outdoors, I wouldn't worry about this option.

**Other than shutter speed which is very important, I wouldn't say the others are necessarily deal breakers – just the cherries on top.*

Other Equipment Considerations:

Extra batteries: If you need to buy extra camera batteries or extended life batteries, consider Ebay! I paid \$40.00 for 2 Canon extended life batteries off of Ebay. The cheapest I found the same batteries in retail stores: \$120.00 each. Even after paying shipping and customs I saved over \$180.00.

Tripod: Use one - your hand is not as steady as you may like to think. Look for a tripod with a 3-way adjustable head, that is also a quick release head. If you travel often, find a tripod that is sturdy and lightweight. Check to make sure the piece you attach to the camcorder does not require a coin to tighten.

Firewire cable: When using firewire for video, you can get lengths greater than 15m despite what the computer “experts” will tell you. You can get lengths up to 164ft without requiring a firewire repeater.

Pelican cases: They have a lifetime warranty and can be tailored to fit your equipment. I suggest purchasing the “pick and pluck” interior rather than paying extra for the case to be custom built. If you have a lot of equipment, get one with wheels. I highly recommend www.optimalcaseandlights.com.

Cardbus/PCMCIA card: If you plan on using “*In the Action*” with 2 camcorder views, you will need a cardbus to add another firewire port to your computer.