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Storage Card

By Phil Askey

The storage card in a digital camera is it's film, it's the removable storage device which holds images taken with the camera (a few low-end digital cameras don't have removable storage cards but instead have a built-in flash RAM unit). Don't miss our all new [Digital Film Comparison page](#).

There are currently several competing storage card formats used in today's digital cameras:

PCMCIA PC Card



Storage cards of this type have exactly the same dimensions and electrical contacts as PCMCIA cards in notebooks, and can be used directly in a PCMCIA slot without any adapter. These cards are only found on high end professional digital SLR's, because of their large size they're not compact enough to be used in a "compact" digital camera. Available in three different physical sizes: Type I, II and III both flash memory and hard drives as a large range of capacities up to several GB.

Dimensions: 85.6 x 54.0 x (Type I: 3.3mm, Type II: 5.0mm, Type III: 10.5mm)

Compact Flash Type I



Probably the most common format used today, found in both digital cameras and other devices (PDA's, network applications etc.), small format and lightweight they have the same electrical contacts as a PCMCIA card and can be used in a PCMCIA slot with a simple adapter. Available in capacities up to 256 MB. [More info.](#)

Dimensions: 43.0 x 36.0 x 3.3mm

Compact Flash Type II



The only difference between Type I and Type II is the size of the package, slightly thicker at 5.5mm compared to Type I's 3.3mm. The large package size allows for larger capacities, notably IBM's successful Microdrive is a Type II device with capacities of 340, 512 and 1 GB. As with Type I devices Type II devices can be use directly in a PCMCIA slot with an adapter. [More info.](#)

Dimensions: 43.0 x 36.0 x 5.5mm

SmartMedia



SmartMedia is considerably thinner than Compact Flash, without the controller chips found in a Compact Flash card all that's found inside the SmartMedia's package are the flash memory chips themselves. Unfortunately this means that the controller chip in the digital camera must be programmed to recognise the storage card (a problem when 64MB SmartMedia cards were first introduced, and likely to be a problem when the new 128MB SmartMedia cards are introduced). [More info.](#)

Dimensions: 45.0 x 37.0 x 0.76mm

Sony MemoryStick



When Sony hit the market with their chewing gum sized MemoryStick, nobody thought it would be successful until Sony sold the rights to manufacture MemoryStick and MemoryStick compatible devices to other companies. Now Sony have done a good job of ensuring there are plenty of devices already available which use the MemoryStick. Available in capacities up to 128 MB with 256 MB on the horizon. Only currently found in Sony Digital Cameras. [More info.](#)

Dimensions: 50.0 x 21.5 x 2.8mm

Other Types

There are a few other types of storage card which haven't yet made their way into commercially available digital cameras, we'll update this section when they do.

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