

# The Ultimate Guide to Point-n-Shoot Cameras

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Once you have decided to give underwater photography a try, the next logical step is to purchase a camera. You want it to be compact, simple to use and to require low maintenance, yet be capable of reliable results. Actually, there has never been a better time to begin taking underwater pictures, because there are more choices than ever before; excellent cameras that provide surprising quality at a surprisingly economical price.

To help you in your search for an underwater camera, we've put together a guide that will not only explain some useful photo terminology, but will also show you a good sampling of the easy-to-use, 'point and shoot' cameras available. For more information, be sure to contact your local dive store and camera retailer.

## BASIC PHOTO

### TERMINOLOGY

#### FOCUS FREE

While this really isn't a technical term, what it means is that you do not have to focus the camera. A point and shoot camera is focused at a fixed specific distance from the camera, and images are sharpest at that focus point and for some distance before and beyond it (this would be called the 'depth of field,' i.e. the total range of distance that will be in focus). If you get too close or too far away from the focus point, your pictures will be out of focus. This range of distance will be indicated either on the camera or in the instruction guide, or a closest and farthest acceptable

#### FILM AND DX

Color film comes in two general types, transparency (slide) film and print film. Print film is far easier to use because of its wide latitude, i.e. the range of light intensity it can be exposed to and still produce an acceptable image; slide film has little latitude. Film is measured in ISO, referred to as the film speed. The higher the ISO, the 'faster' the film and the less light is required for a proper exposure, and vice versa. Slower films, on the other hand, generally are more crisp (the 'grain' is more fine) and have more color intensity. This

range may be shown.

### APERTURES AND F/STOPS

The amount of light that comes through the lens with these cameras will be solely controlled by the size of the lens opening, called the aperture. The larger the opening, the more light comes through the lens and hits the film. Some cameras have one fixed aperture size, while others have adjustable aperture settings. Each aperture size is given an assigned value, called an f/stop. Large f/stop values, such as f/22, indicate a small opening, while small f/stop values, such as f/3.5, indicate a large opening.

An adjustable aperture gives you more flexibility as you learn underwater photography; it means you can open the aperture up to take pictures in less light, or close it down to take pictures in brighter conditions.

### SHUTTER SPEED

The shutter speed is the measurement, in seconds (or, usually, in fractions of a second), of how long the aperture remains open when a picture is taken. The point and shoot cameras presented here are similar in that they have fixed shutter speeds.

means in bright, shallow conditions, you might use an ISO 100 or 200 film; if you are going deep or it is otherwise rather dark, you might choose a faster film, such as ISO 400. Most cameras will be able to read the ISO of the film automatically, through a coding process referred to as DX. This will allow the camera to adjust its flash to accommodate the different films' light needs. Some cameras may also show an acceptable ISO range, which will be indicated on the camera or in the instructions.

### ACCESSORIES

Once you understand the basic functions of the camera, you should also see what is available to enhance your future capabilities with the system. Does it have a close-up lens to allow photos of small things, or a wide-angle lens to allow pictures of larger subjects while being able to remain close to them? Does it have a sports finder, which allows you to aim the camera more easily, or a carrying case or additional strobe? These accessories may be important if you think you will want to advance your photographic technique beyond the basics.

### AQUATICA MINI SPORT



**Camera type:** Precision cast, non-corrodible aluminum alloy housing for the Vivitar BV-40 35 mm camera

**Lens:** 28 mm, f/8

**Focus:** Focus-free, three feet to infinity

**Shutter speed:** 1/100

**Built-in flash:** Yes

**Viewfinder:** Built-in

**Film speed:** ISO 100-400 auto DX coding

**Film advance:** Motorized advance and rewind  
**Power source:** 2 AA Alkaline batteries  
**Depth rating:** 330 feet  
**Suggested retail price:** Housing and camera \$279.95  
**Accessories:** Close-Up Kit, Strobe Light, Handle and Tray  
**Complete system:** \$489.95  
**Aqua Vision Systems, Inc.:** (514) 737-9481

### IKELITE AQUASHOT 3

**Housing type:** Polycarbonate housing for 35 mm single-use disposable cameras. Lenses not specified (all are fixed aperture).

**Cameras accepted:** Kodak, Fuji or Ikelite AquaSnap single-use 35 mm flash cameras; or Kodak single-use Funsaver APS camera

**Focus:** Focus-free, 3-6 feet

**Shutter speed:** Not specified

**Built-in flash:** Yes

**Sportsfinder:** Included

**Film advance:** Manual advance

**Depth rating:** 125 feet

**Suggested retail price:** \$90 (includes one Aquasnap camera)B

**Accessories:** Macro Kit, Water Correction Lens, Substrobe AQ/S, Travel Bag

**Complete system:** \$280



### IKELITE AQUASHOT 3E



**Housing type:** Polycarbonate housing for reloadable camera

**Camera accepted:** Uses reloadable Fuji Endeavor APS camera

**Lens:** Not specified (fixed aperture) **Focus:** Focus-free, 3-6 feet

**Shutter speed:** Not specified

**Built-in flash:** Yes

**Sportsfinder:** Included

**Film advance:** Motor drive film advance and rewind

**Depth rating:** 125 feet

**Suggested retail price:** \$100 or \$150 with Fuji Endeavor 10 camera

**Accessories:** Macro Kit, Water Correction Lens, Substrobe AQ/S, Travel Bag

**Complete system with camera:** \$340

**Ikelite Underwater Systems:** (317) 923-4523; [www.ikelite.com](http://www.ikelite.com)

### BONICA SNAPPER

**Camera type:** 35 mm inner camera with polycarbonate housing

**Lens:** 34 mm, f/8



**Focus:** Focus-free, three feet to infinity  
**Shutter speed:** 1/125 second  
**Built-in flash:** Yes  
**Sportsfinder:** Included  
**Film speed:** ISO 100-400 auto DX coding  
**Film advance:** Automatic motorized advance and motorized rewind  
**Power source:** 2 AA Alkaline batteries  
**Depth rating:** 150 feet  
**Suggested retail price:** \$149  
**Accessories:** Close-Up Kit, Neon Strobe Light, Carrying Case  
**Complete system:** \$499  
**Bonica Precision Inc.:** (800) 220-8463; [www.bonica-precision.com](http://www.bonica-precision.com)

#### SEALIFE REEFMASTER AC



**Camera type:** 35 mm inner camera with hard Deep Dive Shell  
**Lens:** Triple element, 35 mm, f/3.5 (fixed aperture)  
**Focus:** Focus-free, four feet to infinity  
**Shutter speed:** 1/140 second  
**Built-in flash:** Yes, color correcting  
**Sportsfinder:** Included  
**Film speed:** ISO 100-200 auto DX coding  
**Film advance:** Automatic advance and rewind  
**Power source:** 2 AA Alkaline batteries  
**Depth rating:** 164 feet  
**Suggested retail price:** \$189  
**Accessories:** 3X Close-Up Lens, Carrying Case  
**Complete kit:** \$249; **external flash:** \$199

#### SEALIFE REEFMASTER CL



**Camera type:** 35 mm inner camera with Lexan housing  
**Lens:** Triple element, 35 mm, f/3.5 (fixed aperture)  
**Focus:** Focus-free, 3.5 feet to infinity  
**Shutter speed:** 1/125 second  
**Built-in flash:** Yes  
**Sportsfinder:** Included  
**Film speed:** ISO 200 auto DX coding  
**Film advance:** Automatic advance  
**Power source:** 2 AA Alkaline batteries  
**Depth rating:** 164 feet  
**Suggested retail price:** \$169  
**Accessories:** 3X Close-Up Lens, Carrying Case  
**Pioneer Research:** (800) 257-7742 [www.pioneer-research.com](http://www.pioneer-research.com)

#### EPOQUE ET- 100 PLUS

**Camera type:** 35 mm amphibious camera with high-impact plastic exterior



**Lens:** 34 mm, f/16-f/3.5 (adjustable aperture)  
**Focus:** Focus-free, 2.6 feet to infinity  
**Shutter speed:** 1/125 second  
**Built-in flash:** Yes  
**Viewfinder:** Built-in; sportsfinder is optional accessory

**Film speed:** ISO 100-400 auto DX coding  
**Film advance:** Motorized advance and rewind  
**Power source:** 2 AA Alkaline batteries  
**Depth rating:** 150 feet  
**Suggested retail price:** \$179  
**Package price:** \$249 includes camera, Sportsfinder and Pelican case  
**Accessories:** Sportsfinder, Close-Up Lens, Filters, External Strobe  
**RTS Inc: (516) 242-6801**

### SEA & SEA MX-5

**Camera type:** 35 mm amphibious camera with clear ABS molded polycarbonate exterior  
**Lens:** Triple element, 28 mm lens, f/6.5 (fixed aperture)



**Focus:** Focus-free, 2.3-5.6 feet  
**Shutter speed:** 1/100 second  
**Built-in flash:** Yes  
**Sportsfinder:** Flip up sportsfinder doubles as lens protector  
**Film speed:** ISO 100 or 400 auto DX coding  
**Film advance:** Automatic load, advance and rewind  
**Power source:** 2 AA Alkaline batteries  
**Depth rating:** 100 feet  
**Suggested retail price:** Not available at press time

### SEA & SEA MX-10



**Camera type:** Amphibious 35 mm camera with ABS molded polycarbonate exterior  
**Lens:** Four element, 32 mm, f/4.5- f/22 (adjustable aperture)  
**Focus:** Focus-free, four feet to infinity  
**Shutter speed:** 1/100 second  
**Built-in flash:** Yes, with two aperture settings (f/4.5 or f/11)

**Viewfinder:** Built-in  
**Film speed:** ISO 100 or 400 auto DX coding  
**Film advance:** Automatic load, advance and rewind  
**Power source:** 2 AA Alkaline batteries  
**Depth rating:** 150 feet  
**Suggested retail price:** \$429  
**Accessories:** Close-Up Lens, Macro Lens, 20 mm Lens, Lens

Caddy, YS-40A Strobe

**Complete kit includes camera and YS-40A Strobe: \$699.95 Sea  
& Sea Underwater Photography USA: (800) 732-7977;  
[www.seaandsea.com](http://www.seaandsea.com)**

Now that you have done your research, the next step is to go out and get an underwater camera of your own. Then, go diving and give it your best shot. You'll find underwater photography to be so fun it's addictive, and you'll see your photos improving each dive. You may find you'll want to improve your knowledge by taking a photo course at your local dive center or through one of the very enjoyable programs that combine dive vacations and photo instruction. You may also eventually want to learn about more sophisticated cameras that can extend the range and quality of your photographs. Regardless, once you start taking pictures underwater, you'll have discovered one of diving's most enjoyable activities.