

Keeping your Digital Camera Up-to-Date

You got your digital camera two or three years ago, so it's in good condition, and still works fine. Of course, camera technology has moved on and those 10 Megapixels you were so pleased with have now become a bit 'old-hat'. But is your camera as good as it's ever going to be? You don't always need to trade last year's model camera in for this year's version. You're not going to be able to put a new sensor in, or any other hardware to keep up to date, in the way you might change a processor, add more memory or change the hard disk in a computer. You can upgrade, however, by updating the camera's **firmware** - that's the software that is embedded in your digital camera.

Digital camera firmware updates are a great free way to upgrade your camera without splurging on the hottest new model. Firmware updates for your digital camera can help with your camera's performance, whether it be the LCD brightness or to extend battery life, or it can correct a problem with the camera that wasn't noticed before it was released, improve a compression rate or add something to the menu.

How do you tell if you need to upgrade? Firstly you'll need to check which version of firmware is installed in your camera. The method will differ from camera to camera, generally either via an item on the menu or by holding down the menu button while switching on. Firmware updates for your digital camera are put out by the manufacturers, and can usually be found by fishing around the support pages of their websites, so you can check on your camera manufacturer's website, to see if you've missed an upgrade.

I'll leave you to find your correct firmware download page on the net - they all seem to have different methods of finding what you want. Once located, look for the installation directions. The firmware is then downloaded to your computer and then copied on to either your camera's memory card, which goes into its usual slot on the computer, or via the USB connection cable. Once on the card, or directly in the camera, follow the instructions carefully. You'll have to get that little program to be read by the camera's memory. In practice it's easier than it sounds. However, if in doubt, I'd recommend a visit to your camera supplier (or a tame camera shop), who may be able to either do the job for you or get you to exactly the page you need (after all, being 'internet connected' is not - yet - an essential part of owning a digital camera).