

Which is Better: JPEG or Canon Raw?

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You have probably had this debate inside yourself. Do you shoot in raw or JPEG? Is there really that much difference between the two? The answer to this question really depends on what you plan on doing with your photographs. Learn more here.

What is Raw?

You have probably heard about the benefits of Canon raw over standard JPEG images, but you probably don't know why this format is supposed to be better. When you change your camera settings, you have to make the decision: Canon raw vs JPEG.

Before you decide which format to use, let's discuss what raw actually is. All cameras shoot in raw. This is the information that the camera receives as soon as the shutter is depressed. It saves this data for a short amount of time, and then it converts the data into a compressed file like a JPEG.

Your camera will throw this data out if you don't shoot in raw. If you do shoot in raw or have an option to save the raw data, the camera stores this data on your memory card. Most photographers don't need the extra data. The major reason for using raw is that you get to keep this extra information. Having this extra data slightly improves the look of the images. The question you are probably asking yourself, however, how much does this extra data improve the image?

When is JPEG Better?

Before answering this question, you should consider your memory. If you have always shot on JPEG, the first thing you'll notice is how little room you have left on your memory card after taking a few shots in raw. Raw files take up a lot of room. If you like taking a lot of pictures or have a job that requires you to take a lot of photographs, you are going to be changing memory cards every few minutes.



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will be changing memory cards often. This

means that you may miss an important shot while you are switching out the memory cards. Raw definitely does not work with fast-action shots.

Taking a lot of photographs in raw is almost counter-intuitive. Your camera takes a little extra time to process and save these larger files. More than that, however, you

Canon Cameras that Use Raw

Not all Canon cameras support the Canon raw format. Generally, the Canon EOS and PowerShot models allow you to save images in raw. These models include the popular Canon Rebel series and the Canon PowerShot G series. Other models include the following:

- PowerShot A4170
- EOS 40D
- PowerShot SX10
- PowerShot S2
- EPS 1000D

When to Use Raw

If, however, you are just taking portrait or standard [landscape shots](#), you can afford the extra time, especially if you plan on doing a lot of post-processing. This is the area where that extra data becomes important. When you shoot in JPEG, and the camera compresses the image, it has basically already done an edit to your image.

The more that you edit an image, the more it suffers in quality. Raw images are not very compressed at all so you get almost exactly what your camera saw. If you plan on tweaking every part of the photograph, then raw may work about better for you.

Another reason to use raw is for art photographs. You are going to blowing up the photograph to fit on canvases. The larger the image is the more likely you are to notice the lack of detail. For example, if you are taking a photograph of a deer, the edges of the antlers may not look as sharp when blown up to 200 percent.

JPEG Fine

If you do want a little better quality than the standard JPEG, but don't want to shoot in raw, consider using the JPEG Fine setting. This setting uses more memory, but not as much as raw. The files aren't compressed as much. You keep some additional data and details, especially in regards to shadows and highlights.

These files look better when you edit them. You can really notice the difference when it comes to contrast. If you are taking photographs of trees for example, the edges of the leaves on the Fine images look a little sharper than the standard JPEG images. Then, compare the Fine to the raw. You'll notice a slight difference, but probably not a huge difference.

Problem with Raw

You need to consider one other thing when working with raw. It's often hard to find a program that can actually handle these types of files. Raw is proprietary based so you need a camera that can actually handle the Canon raw files. Generally, the more expensive programs like Photoshop supports Canon raw formats. If you, however, plan on using a cheaper or free program to edit your photos, it may not.

So, which is it: [Canon raw](#) vs. JPEG? The answer to that question really depends on your situation. If you don't want to change memory cards often, then use the JPEG format. You are not going to notice a real difference in quality. You will, however, notice the JPEG compression if you plan on making a lot of edits to your photographs. In this case, shoot in raw, and be prepared to switch out your memory cards often.

References

[KenRockwell.com](#). "JPG vs Raw: Get it Right the First Time".

[The Photo Forum](#)

[Canon](#)

