

How do you use your LCD screen?

Recent advances in camera technology have focused on improving the quality of the LCD screen on camera bodies. This has sparked some debate on what the purpose of the LCD screen should be for SLR camera bodies. One perspective is that better resolution is always a good thing, because it allows for better viewing and reviewing of images, especially when increasing the magnification factor or “zooming in” on the image. The ability to check details while on site, allow the photographer to re-shoot almost instantly, and have more of a safety net in capturing that “once-in-a-lifetime” moment. So goes the argument of the value behind high-res SLR screens.

Vendor	LCD Resolution	LCD Screen Size
Canon		
XTi	230,000	2.5
30D	230,000	2.5
40D	230,000	3.0
5D	230,000	2.5
1d Mark II	230,000	2.0
1d Mark II n	230,000	2.5
1d Mark III	230,000	3.0
Nikon		
D40	230,000	2.5
D40x	230,000	2.5
D60	230,000	2.5
D80	230,000	2.5
D200	230,000	2.5
D300	920,000	3.0
D3	920,000	3.0

On the flip side, there is the perception that the LCD screen should be used primarily for menu selections and histogram review. The argument here is that no LCD whether it is 1.8” or 3” in size is large enough to perform post processing reviews of images. These purists often refer to the first school of thought as “chimping” and frown upon it as a means of image review. The logic here is that if you know what you are doing, you shouldn’t have to review things like blur and detailed composition. While there is a tacit understanding that it is helpful to review an image for basic things like white balance checks and quick composition checks, the more detailed review that a higher resolution LCD screen allows a photographer to perform simply perpetuates bad practices, trends and habits that are not recommended as part of a solid and quality work flow.

Photography forums and personal blogs have become rife with different thoughts and opinions on the subject. Rather than take a side here, it may be helpful to simply show the various bodies from the two predominant vendors (Canon and Nikon), with the respective screen size and resolutions for each (see chart on left, above). It does seem that, given the information gleaned, that screen sizes are averaging between 2.5” and 3.0”, with a resolution of 230,000.

The two notable exceptions, the Nikon D3 and the D300, are at price points of \$4750 and \$1800 respectively. With that tidbit in mind, it seems to be a fair conclusion that anyone entering into the SLR market is likely not doing so with either of these bodies. So, for most of us, the discussion is really moot, since we’re likely using an SLR with a screen of 2.5-3.0” and a resolution of 230,000 pixels. For the select few that are purchasing these two bodies – you will likely have additional tools such as a computer and software for post processing your imagery, and will not see much need to check sharpness and accuracy with these screens anyway.