

Buying a Camcorder for the School Setting

Keith Kyker and Christopher Curchy, SCHOOLTV.com



Essential Features

Format – MiniDV	High-quality picture and sound; digital video format
Microphone jack	Allows connection of external microphone for interviews, etc.
Headphone jack	Allows monitoring of audio during recording
IEEE-1394 (Firewire, iLink)	Digital connection between camcorder and nonlinear editing system
S-VHS, composite video, and audio outputs	Outputs of analog audio and video to VCRs and TVs
Ergonomics	How does the camcorder feel in your hands (and in your students' hands?)
Zoom lens (optical and digital)	Close-ups of distant objects
Manual focus	User control of focus function
White balance	Adjustments for different lighting environments
LCD viewfinder screen	2" – 3" pop-out screen assists videographer in creating good camera shots
Installed microphone	Always included, but worth mentioning because of its importance

Nice Additional Features

Electronic Image Stabilization (EIS)	Digitally corrects and compensates for shaky camera operation
Automatic Gain Control (AGC) and Backlight	Boosts low-level video signals in difficult lighting environments
Low-light operation	Make sure your camcorder can operate in normal classroom lighting
High-speed shutter	Provides better definition for fast-moving (otherwise blurry) scenes
Installed speaker	Listening to recorded audio during playback
Adjustable tape speed	Allows you to change to a slower tape speed to make your videotape last longer during "crisis" situations