

Camera Introduction

Greetings my fellow neighbors, and happy winter! With the evolution and modernization of the neighborhood concerns committee, there is a drive and push toward personal security cameras. With that push came many questions, partnered with a request for a write-up so here it is!



Photo credit: Jason Cipriani/CNN Underscored

Brands – There are too many brand names out there to list them all. The personal security business is very lucrative at the moment, so everyone is trying to get into the game, from Google and Amazon to your smaller security company. The best route is to determine what features you want/need in a camera or system and explore from there. So what features are out there?

Power – Some cameras are battery powered. This allows you to stick them somewhere and forget about them without having to drill into your house or walls and worry about ugly cables. The tradeoff here is that batteries die so, depending on the manufacturer, you may need to recharge or replace the batteries every 6-12 months. For some homeowners this might not be a problem, but if you want to put one on the second story of your house and you were old enough to vote when Reagan was running for office, using ladders that frequently might not be ideal. Other cameras can be plugged into a wall outlet or tied into your circuit at home. Lastly, some manufacturers like Ring have small solar panels used to charge the batteries in the camera, a unique and greener solution.



Photo credit: iStock

Lighting – Many cameras are available with lighting options, either on a timer, motion activator, etc. Many cameras also have the ability to see at night, which lighting may help with. The benefit to the lighting -besides illuminating an area - is that it may act as a deterrent to any ne'er-do-wells without having to leave your outdoor lights on all night.

Notification – Most security cameras these days have an application for your smart phone and/or a tablet-style home monitor that you can set up for notifications when your cameras are activated. Some charge a monthly fee for monitoring, and this does require an outside internet connection with Wi-Fi. The companies that offer monitoring are similar to security companies of old, which can watch your camera notifications and notify emergency services as needed.



Photo credit: Chris Monroe/CNET

Resolution – Resolution- the ability to see details in the video you record - is going to be a tradeoff between needs and pricing. If you post a camera outside, you want to be able to see features if something happens. While there are cameras with 4K resolution, you will definitely pay a premium for them.

Coverage – Where to place your cameras presents a topic of discussion. Do you want to cover the road and driveway, the foyer in your home, or the backyard? Do you have a neighbor who is throwing their dog doo over the fence? Indoor/outdoor use and whether you want the illumination will help determine what sort of camera you need and where you want to mount it, or them. Some folks may want 360 degrees of coverage around their home, but if you have a wall with no windows or doors, there isn't much reason to monitor it for most people. I would personally recommend at least one camera that covers some of the road and/or neighbor's yard to help take care of each other and be a community, but that's just me.



Photo credit: Safewise

Storage – Video storage is vital in the event an incident occurs and you need documentation or evidence. Some camera systems have the ability to use a Digital Video Recorder, or DVR, to store video locally so you can access it later. Problems with this include power outages and fires, which would render the whole thing almost useless. The benefit to a local DVR is that your video is stored at your house, not on the cloud where other entities are increasingly adept at gaining access. That said, if you hold the sort of job or community position that would make you a target of sophisticated cloud hacking, you likely already have a camera system far superior to anything I would recommend to a common user.

Price – Price is often the most important factor in camera choice. You can spend several thousand dollars on hard-wired 4k cameras with FLIR, multiple DVRs in a RAID array, and a secure remote server for off-site storage, or you can spend \$40 on a Wyze camera from Home Depot and log into the app on your phone. Whatever your budget, make sure you know what features you want in a camera and go from there!

These are the biggest decision-makers for most people wanting a camera. Ideally, no one would need cameras; however, we live in a day and age where roving patrols do not do much to negate the sort of criminal activity we see in this neighborhood, which tends to be minor vandalism from teenagers. In these situations, it is better to record and notify law enforcement than to try and intervene. In fact, on more than one occasion, vandalism issues in this neighborhood were resolved with video footage from a neighbor. Look out for each other! If you need more information or want to make comparisons, there are a number of resources a Google search away, but here are some comparisons from [Consumer Reports](#), [PC Mag](#), and [CNET](#).

A short list of camera manufacturers:

[Ring](#)

[Google Nest Cam](#)

[Wyze Cam](#)

[Arlo](#)

[Eufy](#) – As a special note, Eufy recently came under fire for claiming to keep data local, but uploading data to the cloud without user consent. [Here](#) is a Gizmodo article about it.

Lastly, if you have or get cameras that are mounted outside, consider letting your neighbors or the Neighborhood Watch know, that way if an incident occurs, we know who we can reach out to for help!