

**SPYROS HENIADIS**  
GET OUT THERE AND TAKE SOME DAMN PHOTOS!  
[SELFHELPHOTOGRAPHER.COM](http://SELFHELPHOTOGRAPHER.COM)

## COMPARISON GUIDE

# MIRRORLESS



**VS**



# DSLR

DSLR or Mirrorless?

Have you been agonizing over this question? The short answer is that neither is better.

Both have their advantages and disadvantages, and what's best depends entirely on what you want out of your camera, so let's get to it!

## **Difference #1: Viewfinders**

### **DSLR: Optical Viewfinder**

In a DSLR, you have an optical viewfinder, and inside the camera a mirror that reflects light through a prism and into the viewfinder so you can see what the camera sees "through the lens"

---

#### Advantages

- You will see exactly what the camera sees when you look through the viewfinder.
- There is no lag or delay in what you see in that viewfinder.

---

#### Disadvantages

- Can't see in the dark

### **Mirrorless: Electronic Viewfinder/No Viewfinder**

In a mirrorless camera there is no mirror or prism. Instead, the light strikes the image sensor, and when you look through the viewfinder, what you see is a digital image on a screen.

---

#### Advantages

- Live preview of what your image will look like based on your current settings.
- Ability to overlay information on the viewfinder. (live histogram, in camera level, etc..)
- Focus aids like focus peaking or magnification make manual focusing very easy.
- Viewfinder can be boosted to "see" in low light.
- Can immediately review the image in the viewfinder after taking the photo.

---

## Disadvantages

- Not a “real” image, but an electronic image on a screen.
- Some lag when moving the camera very quickly.
- Not all mirrorless cameras have viewfinders.

## **WINNER: DRAW**

This comes down entirely to preference. I’ve used both electronic and optical viewfinders and both are great. If you want to use vintage manual focus lenses on your camera, a mirrorless camera with a viewfinder is a great option. If you want a “true” image with zero lag because you quickly move your camera a lot, a DSLR is a great option.

## **Difference #2: Size & Weight**

### **DSLR: Generally Bigger & Heavier**

Because DSLRs have to make room for the mirror and the prism, they tend to be larger, and the addition of the mirror, the parts to move the mirror, and the prism, they also tend to be heavier.

---

## Advantages

- More room for buttons and controls, making it easy to handle and use.
- Bigger and deeper hand grip, making it easier to securely hold and handle.
- The deeper placement of the sensor in the body makes it a bit less prone to dust/dirt
- Can be used as a weapon in a pinch 🤪

---

## Disadvantages

- Takes up more room in the camera bag
- Heavier to carry around

### **Mirrorless: Generally Smaller & Lighter**

It’s definitely easier to make a mirrorless camera smaller, but the size and weight is also dependent on the size of the sensor in the camera. In addition to that, you need to consider the lenses you plan to use.

For instance, a mirrorless full frame camera body might be .5 lb (.23kg) lighter than a full frame DSLR camera body, but if you put a 70-200mm f2.8 lens on both cameras, the lens still weighs 3-4 lbs (1.36-1.81 kg), so you only lost around .5 lb (.23kg) by going with a full frame mirrorless.

It's when you get into mirrorless cameras with smaller sensors that you see truly small and light systems. The Micro 4/3 system is a perfect example of this.

For example, the Olympus OMD EM5 mark two body weighs .9 lbs (.41kg), and the Olympus 40-150mm f2.8 pro lens weighs 1.94 lbs (.88kg). This makes the total weight of the camera and lens is 2.84 lbs (1.29kg), which is lighter than a 70-200mm f2.8 lens alone!

---

## Advantages

- Smaller body takes up less room in the camera bag
- Lighter body (even in full frame) will make the total weight a bit lighter
- Smaller sensor mirrorless cameras are significantly smaller and lighter

---

## Disadvantages

- Smaller bodies (if poorly designed) can lead to cramped control layouts.
- Camera grips can be small to non-existent.
- Easier to get dust/dirt on the sensor when changing lenses

## **WINNER: Mirrorless**

Even with the same sensor size, mirrorless camera bodies will be lighter than their equal DSLR counterparts, and with smaller sensor cameras mirrorless truly get small and light, and though the smaller bodies can get a bit cramped, the designs of modern mirrorless cameras are well done with controls that are easy to access and use.

## **Difference #3: Lens Selection**

### **DSLR: Greater and Deeper Lens Selection**

Because DSLRs have been around longer than mirrorless cameras, the lens selections are broad and varied, with robust third party lens support making lenses both abundant and affordable

---

## Advantages

- Hundreds of lens options for any and all types of photography
- Robust third party lens support for greater selection and affordability

---

## Disadvantages

- Depending on the system, not as easy to use vintage/affordable manual focus lenses

## Mirrorless: Growing lens selection, but not as great/deep as DSLR

Because mirrorless systems are newer, there are fewer native lenses, and fewer third party lenses available. However, mirrorless manufacturers have been aggressive in developing native lenses, and mirrorless cameras are fantastic at adapting and using vintage manual focus lenses.

---

### Advantages

- Great at adapting vintage manual focus lenses
- Growing third party lens support
- Aggressive native lens development

---

### Disadvantages

- Lens development can be a slow process
- Lenses you want/need might not be available depending on your system

## WINNER: DSLR

It's clear here that if you want the best possible lens selection, a DSLR is the way to go. Mirrorless systems have great growing lens selections, and cover all basic needs, but it varies from system to system. If you are going mirrorless, make sure that lenses you want/need are available for the system you're choosing.

## Difference #4: Focus Speed

### DSLR: Faster Auto Focus

DSLRs have dedicated focus modules that have been well developed over time, which generally speaking make them faster to auto focus in general, and better at focus tracking moving subjects.

---

### Advantages

- Dedicated focus module for fast, accurate focusing
- Better at tracking moving subjects

---

### Disadvantages

- Separate focus module can lead to calibration issues

## Mirrorless: Fast and Accurate, But Still A Bit Behind

Mirrorless cameras use sensor based pixel focusing technologies that are still being developed and improved. They have come a long way since first introduction, and generally speaking mirrorless cameras focus fast and accurately, but DSLRs still have a slight edge here

---

### Advantages

- Sensor based focus virtually eliminates calibration issues
- 

### Disadvantages

- Not quite as fast/accurate at focus tracking moving subjects

## WINNER: DSLR

Mirrorless cameras can focus very well, and are pretty good at tracking moving subjects, but DSLRs do have an edge here and are slightly better.

## Difference #5: Battery Life

### DSLR: Longer Battery Life

DSLRs have bigger batteries, and consume less energy, giving them significantly longer battery life.

---

### Advantages

- Longer battery life
  - Fewer batteries to carry around and charge
- 

### Disadvantages

- Bigger batteries are slightly heavier and add to the overall weight

### Mirrorless: Shorter Battery Life

On the flip side, mirrorless cameras have smaller batteries due to the smaller body designs, and they use more energy with the electronic viewfinders and active rear LCD screens.

---

## Advantages

- None

---

## Disadvantages

- Smaller batteries don't last as long
- Cameras consume more energy
- More batteries to carry around

## **WINNER: DSLR**

DSLRs are the clear winner here. The battery life is just leaps and bounds better

So there you have it! DSLRs and Mirrorless cameras are all excellent, and deciding which is best for you is a matter of determining what you want out of a camera and then deciding if a DSLR or Mirrorless camera can meet those needs. And then, you need to learn how to use that camera, because if you don't know how to use it, no matter how good the camera is it won't do you any good. So if you'd like to master your camera to take amazing photos, [click here to check out my Guide to Shooting in Manual Mode video course](#), and then...

**GET OUT THERE  
AND TAKE  
SOME DAMN  
PHOTOS!**