



BUILD DESIGN

This camera has a typical prosumer build to it with a protruding zoom lens and a large grip over the battery casing. It's easy to hold, and the carry strap is a nice extra

£200 - £299 | MID-RANGE

Olympus SP-510UZ

£229 | £259

OLYMPUS OFFERS CONSUMERS A SUPER ZOOM AT A SUPER PRICE

STREET PRICE

SRP



BATTERIES

Unusually for a prosumer, this camera takes AA batteries rather than a lithium-ion option. You don't get as many shots per charge, but they are easily available anywhere in the world



MEMORY CARD

The amount of internal memory is not specified, but you can fit 11 images at the highest quality, which is more than most cameras. The SP-510UZ also takes xD Picture Cards inserted into the side

The prosumer market has become saturated with ultra-zoom prosumer models of late, with cameras like the Panasonic Lumix FZ7 and the Kodak EasyShare Z612 offering 12x optical zoom for around the £300 mark. The new Olympus SP-510UZ drops the zoom ratio to 10x, but ups the sensor to 7.1 megapixels at a super-low price, making this attractive to both advanced users and beginners.

In our experience, ultra-zoom models typically weigh in at around 300g, but the Olympus is a little heavier at 325g, which you'll certainly notice if you have it slung around your neck – using the professional-looking strap supplied along with the camera in the box – for long periods of time. But despite the weight and the hefty dimensions, this is an attractive piece of kit. It looks very much like a miniature SLR in many respects (which will probably attract a lot of users), with a large grip on the right-hand side making it easy to keep hold of. The silver finish is pretty standard, but it doesn't feel like it would scratch easily, and it avoids the problem of mucky fingers leaving prints all over the casing.

There's a whole host of buttons and knobs to get to grips with, though most are pretty self-explanatory. The zoom lever encases the shutter release button in a position that's reasonably easy to find when composing a shot, though back-mounted zoom levers tend to be that bit more ergonomic. On the rear, alongside the 2.5-inch LCD screen, is a viewfinder, a pretty uncommon sight on most new digital camera releases. This is a welcome touch, and it means that you can turn off the LCD to save precious battery power, a must when you're using AA batteries rather than lithium-ion. To the right of the screen, you have shortcuts for the LCD display, the menu system, self-timer/delete and a d-pad, which gives you



TEST SHOT

The macro enables you to focus to 3cm, and though the image isn't as sharp as we'd like, the depth of field has great effect

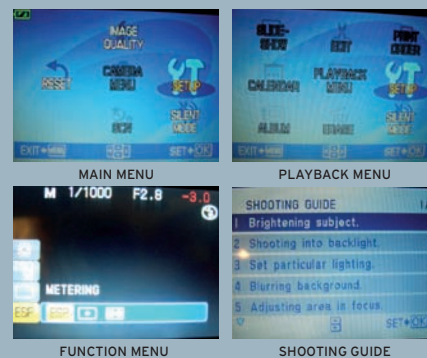
quick view, focus options, flash and exposure compensation at the touch of a button. The centre button on the d-pad doesn't link to the menu as expected, but is instead a function button. This enables you to change the ISO, white balance and metering in manual modes.

On the top of a camera is a built-in pop-up flash, which has a great range, but you have to remember to pop it up otherwise you can't change the flash modes. As a useful extra, it would be nice if a reminder came up on-screen if you tried to adjust your options without popping up the flash.

We found the Mode dial to be pretty cluttered, which indicates just how many shooting options you have to hand. If you're a beginner, then you can stick to the impressive Automatic mode, or select from one of the 21 scene options. As your skills advance, you'll have to confidence to move into programmable Auto mode, which gives you access to the function button options. More advanced users can use aperture or shutter



MENU SCREENS



NAVIGATING YOUR ON-SCREEN OPTIONS

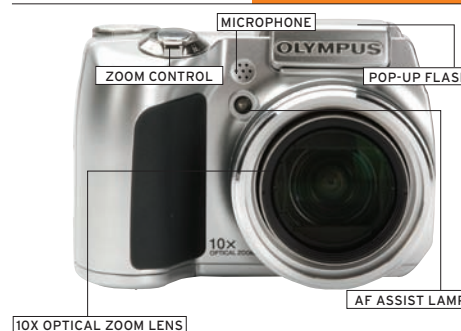
The camera's menu system is intuitive to use, with big icons and text denoting each area. Options that are not relevant to the shooting mode you're in are greyed out so you can keep things simple



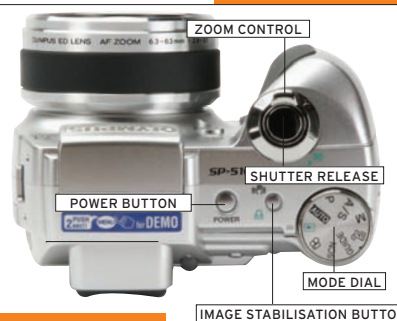
Camera specs

Model	Olympus SP-510UZ
Price	£229
Megapixels (effective)	7.1
Max resolution	3,072 x 2,304
Lens data	f/2.8-8 (38-380mm)
Zoom	10x opt, 5x dig
Focus/Macro	60cm-Inf/3cm
Shutter speeds	15-1/1000sec
ISO sensitivity	A, 50, 100, 200, 400, 800, 1600 (2500, 4000 in 3MP mode)
Exposure modes	A, P, AP, seven scene modes, nine advanced scene modes
Metering options	ESP, S, CW
Flash modes	A, RE, FI, Foff, RE+FI, SS
Connectivity	AV, DC, USB
Weight	325g (excl. batteries)
Dimensions	105.5 x 74.5 x 70mm
Batteries	AA, Ni-MH
Memory storage	xD, 21MB
LCD	2.5"

ON THE FRONT



ON THE TOP



WHAT WE LIKE

- Strong build design
- 10x optical zoom lens
- Manual shooting options

WHAT WE DON'T LIKE

- The lens cap is easy to lose
- It's easy to forget to pop up the flash
- Zoom control not too ergonomic

Verdict

FEATURES	★★★★★
EASE OF USE	★★★★★
QUALITY OF RESULTS	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
A bridge camera with enough features to keep more advanced users happy, and enough basic automatic and scene functions for beginners	

Overall score



CONNECTIONS

Connections are under rubber flaps. These feel secure when they are closed, but could snap off when open. You get AV, USB and DC, which is standard

LENS

The lens is capable of 7.1 megapixels and a whopping 10x optical zoom range has been built in. This is an impressive piece of glass, capable of producing great images

D-PAD CONTROL

This is rounded, making it easy to change settings. Left and right alter the focus mode and flash options; up is exposure compensation and down is quick review

priority options, or opt for fully manual shooting. A smart option is the My stop on the Mode dial, which enables you to save your favourite settings for use in the future. Beginners can also make the most of the Guide, which is an in-camera help and advice screen; advanced users can delve into the Advanced Manual supplied as a PDF on the CD-ROM and find out about all the options available for creative shooting. It's great that two help options are available.

Image quality is very impressive, with accurate colour rendition and sharp details in all conditions. Especially of note is low-light performance, which is aided by the ISO 1600 setting, though a degree of noise does creep in. If you're in a really dark location, you can crank the ISO up to 4000, but this means dropping down to three megapixels and it's not recommended as shots suffer from high noise levels. Still, a noisy shot is arguably better than no shot at all, so it's a nice extra to have. The Macro mode focuses down to 3cm (if you switch

to Super Macro), which is enough for most users and produces above average results, though the colours are a little soft at times. The 10x optical zoom is indispensable, and if you activate image stabilisation, you get sharp shots even when it's at full extension.

Overall, this is a wonderful camera that would suit enthusiasts of all levels. It really feels like you can 'grow' into photography using the SP-510UZ, as there's a level of control for every level of experience. The 10x zoom, 7.1 megapixels and the high ISO capabilities, along with image stabilisation and custom settings, make this a covetable and attractive model.

IN THE BOX

Olympus SP-510UZ digital camera
Advanced manual (PDF)
AV cable

USB cable
Software CD-ROM
Support neck strap
User manual