MEDIA • STORAGE • MEMORY CARDS

What Memory Cards Do

- Memory cards store the digital images and videos created by your camera.
- They are removable, reusable, and essential to your camera's workflow.
- Cards can and should be **reformatted** and used repeatedly.
- SD, CFexpress, and (in older systems) CompactFlash are proven, reliable formats.
- All cards **will eventually fail**, so plan for redundancy.
- Using **several smaller cards** is often safer than relying on one very large card.

Best Practices for Reliable Media

- **Format your card in-camera** before the first use and **before every new shoot**.
- **Avoid deleting images in-camera while photographing.**
    - Frequent deletions can contribute to unexpected card errors and file-system fragmentation, slow performance, and increase the risk of corruption.
    - Why This Happens - When you delete a single image, the camera marks that space as "available," but not always in a clean, contiguous block. As you continue shooting, new files may be written into scattered free spaces. This fragmentation can make the card work harder and increases the chance of errors, especially during high-speed bursts or video recording.
- **Do not switch a card between different cameras** without formatting it again.
- **Back up your images** before formatting or reusing a card.
- **Replace aging cards**—they have a finite lifespan.
- **Use multiple cards** for important shoots to reduce risk.
- **Store cards safely** in protective cases; avoid moisture, dust/pocket lint, heat, and bending.

FORMATTING YOUR MEDIA CARD

Formatting prepares the card to work optimally with **your specific camera**.

Why Format

- Deletes all images and data on the card.
- Removes system files created by previous cameras.
- Reduces compatibility issues and corruption risks.
- Ensures the card is set up cleanly for that camera's file structure.

When to Format

- **Format the card the first time you use it in a new camera.**
- **Format before every session** to start with a clean, reliable card.
- Always confirm your images are **downloaded and backed up** before formatting.
- Avoid switching a card between different cameras without formatting it again.
- Formatting in-camera is safer than deleting files on a computer.

Avoid Deleting Images In-Camera While Shooting

Deleting individual images **during a shoot** is discouraged because it can contribute to file-system fragmentation on the card. While modern cards are fairly resilient, frequent in-camera deletions can increase the risk of:

- **Fragmented file structure**
- **Slower write performance**
- **Higher chance of file corruption**
- **Unexpected card errors**

The risk isn't dramatic from a single deletion, but over time — especially on cards used heavily — it becomes a meaningful reliability factor.

Why This Happens

When you delete a single image, the camera marks that space as "available," but not always in a clean, contiguous block. As you continue shooting, new files may be written into scattered free spaces. This fragmentation can make the card work harder and increases the chance of errors, especially during high-speed bursts or video recording.

The Safer Workflow

- **Don't delete images during a shoot** unless absolutely necessary.
- **Format the card before each new session** to start with a clean file system.
- **Download and back up** before formatting.
- **Use multiple smaller cards** rather than one large one to reduce risk.

Recommended Media Cards (2026)

SD Cards (Most Cameras)

These are strong, all-purpose choices for stills and moderate video work.

SanDisk Extreme PRO SDXC (V30/V60)

- Fast, reliable, widely compatible
- Excellent for high-resolution stills and 4K video
- Frequently recommended as a top pick for 2025

Lexar Professional SDXC (V60/V90)

- High sustained write speeds
- Great for burst shooting and 4K/8K workflows
- Highlighted in 2025 SD card guides for performance and durability

CFexpress Cards (Pro-Level Cameras)

For mirrorless bodies like Canon R5/R6 II, Nikon Z8/Z9, Sony A1/A7S III, etc.

Lexar Professional Gold Series — CFexpress Type A

- Up to 900 MB/s read, 800 MB/s write
- VPG400 rating for reliable 8K/4K capture
- Strong professional reviews and rugged build

Delkin Devices POWER Series — CFexpress Type B

- Extremely high read/write speeds (up to 3650/3240 MB/s)
- Ideal for 8K RAW, high-frame-rate video, and long bursts
- Designed for demanding pro workflows

How to Choose the Right Card

Shooting Need	Recommended Format	Why
Everyday stills	SD V30/V60	Affordable, reliable, widely compatible
Fast action / wildlife	SD V60/V90 or CFexpress	High sustained write speeds prevent buffer issues
4K/8K video	CFexpress Type A/B	Required for high-bitrate recording
Rugged outdoor use	Pro-grade SD or CFexpress	Better durability and weather resistance

Fake / Counterfeit Memory Cards

Counterfeit cards are common in online marketplaces and can look nearly identical to real ones. They often have **slower speeds**, **smaller true capacity**, and a **much higher failure rate**.

How Fake Cards Cause Problems

- Files may **corrupt** during shooting or transfer
- The card may report **false capacity** (e.g., labeled 256GB but only holds 32GB)
- Write speeds are far below what's printed on the label
- Cards may fail suddenly, causing **lost images**
- Firmware inside the card may be altered to hide defects

How to Spot a Fake Card

- **Price is unusually low** compared to reputable retailers
- Packaging looks off: blurry printing, misspelled words, mismatched branding
- The card label or logo looks slightly different from the manufacturer's standard design
- The card feels lighter or flimsier than expected
- Capacity or speed claims seem unrealistic for the price
- The card fails speed tests or behaves inconsistently in-camera

How to Avoid Counterfeit Cards

- Buy from **authorized dealers** or directly from the manufacturer
- Avoid third-party sellers on large marketplaces
- Stick to trusted brands (SanDisk, Lexar, Sony, Delkin, ProGrade, Angelbird)
- Register your card on the manufacturer's website when possible
- Test new cards before important shoots using a speed-test utility

What to Do if You Suspect a Fake

- Stop using the card immediately
- Back up any recoverable images
- Run a capacity or speed test to confirm issues
- Contact the seller or manufacturer
- Replace the card — do not risk important work