Key Features: Memory Card Back-Up Drives & Multimedia Viewers

Notes: (1) These devices are preformatted as MS-DOS (FAT32), making them cross-compatible with Apple Macintosh and Windows computers out of the box. To be recognized as an external drive, the device may need to be switched on first and some devices require a USB setting. (2) CF = CompactFlash, MS = Memory Stick, SD = Secure Digital, MMC = MultiMediaCard, xD = xD-Picture Card, USB-OTG = USB On-The-Go (an extended USB protocol requiring a special, often optional cable to connect to digital cameras and other devices). (3) Given that most are roughly the same size, it's safe to assume that these devices employ a 2.5" drive, unless otherwise specified. A 1.8" drive is generally more rugged and doesn't need added shock protection. (4) Evaluations based on sample products. Not all products were available for testing. (5) Sample memory card used in testing was a 50x Kingston Elite Pro CF card that contained 1.62GB of image data. Back-up times will vary based on card used and volume of data.

Device (Website)	Connectivity	Memory Card Slots	Display	Type & Features	Card Backups (Back-up Time)	Size & Weight	MSRP/Drive Size	Comments/Evaluation
Digital Foci Photo Safe II (www.digitalfoci.com)	USB 2.0	Three slots for CF, MS/Duo/Pro, SD/SDHC/MMC, xD	2" monochrome backlit LCD	Memory card backup: instantly recognized as external drive; card reader/writer recognized on PC but not Mac; user-replaceable Li-Ion battery; auto shut-off	One-touch card backup; assigns unique folder names; (back-up time: 5 minutes)	4.6x3x0.8" 9.6 oz	$119/80GB $149/160GB $199/250GB	A simple and compact back-up solution: turn it on, pop in a card, and execute. Deduct points for a lack of on-board file management. Mac users deduct points for missing card read/write functionality. (Digital Foci also has multimedia devices with full-color displays.)
Epson P-7000/6000 (www.epson.com)	USB 2.0; A/V output; headphone jack	Two slots for CF, SD/SDHC/MMC, MS, xD	LED-backlit 4"TFT LCD (16 million colors)	Multimedia viewer/memory card backup: histogram; EXIF data; recognized as external drive w/USB setting; serves as card reader/writer; built-in speaker; P-7000 supplied with Travel Pack accessory kit	One-touch card backup; audible completion signal; verify option (doubles back-up time); assigns unique folder names; detects and rejects duplicate folders; (back-up time: almost 5 1/2 minutes w/o verify)	5.9x1.3x3.5" 16 oz	P-7000: $799/160GB P-6000: $599/80GB	The best display in this category with amazing color, clarity, and brilliance. Bells and whistles (such as retouch function) are nice but not essential in this type of device. Deduct points for bulkiness, high price, and slow backups.
JOBO GIGA Vu SONIC (www.jobo.com)	USB 2.0; USB-OTG	Two slots for CF, SD/SDHC/MMC, MS/Pro/MagicGate/Select	3.2" QVGA color	Memory card backup: raw file support; histogram; Li-Ion battery	Manufacturer's specification: 1GB in 30 seconds	5.2x3x1" 10 oz	$320/80GB $350/120GB $380/160GB $430/250GB	Sample not available at press time. Judging from a sample previewed at photokina, it appears to have much in common with the Sanho UDMA (below).
MemoryKick MediaCenter (www.argraph.com)	USB 2.0; A/V output; headphone jack	Two slots for CF, SD/SDHC/MMC, MS/Pro/Duo, xD	2.2"TFT LCD, 262K colors	Multimedia viewer/memory card backup: 1.8" drive; instantly recognized as external drive; auto shut-off; raw file support; MP3 and video player; serves as card reader/writer; non-replaceable drive/battery; built-in speaker	One-touch card backup; (back-up time: almost 6 minutes)	2.6x4.3x0.7" 5.6 oz	$299/30GB $349/60GB $459/120GB	The smallest and newest device in this group, the MediaCenter uses an innovative touch-sensitive interface. Deduct points for atypical histogram and EXIF data displays; awkward menu navigation; slow backups; and erratic video playback. The rugged 1.8" drive and roughly cell phone size are definite assets.
Nexto-eXtreme ND2700 (www.nextodi.com)	USB 2.0; USB-OTG; eSATA	Two slots for CF, SD/SDHC/MMC/MMC Plus, MS/MagicGate/Pro, xD	Monochrome backlit LCD	Memory card backup: user-replaceable drive; instantly recognized as external drive; Li-Ion battery; self-diagnostics; auto shut-off	One-touch card backup w/high-speed verify function; auto-detects duplicate folders (back-up time: under 4 minutes)	5x3x0.9" 8.1 oz	$429/160GB $489/250GB $534/320GB $719/500GB	I really appreciate the fast file transfers and especially the super-fast verification and being able to replace the hard drive with one up to 2TB capacity. Deduct points for the hard-to-read screen display.
Sanho HyperDrive ColorSpace UDMA (www.bkaphoto.com)	USB 2.0; USB-OTG	Two slots for CF, SD/SDHC/MMC, MS/Pro/MagicGate/Select, xD	3.2" QVGA color	Memory card backup: user-replaceable drive; built-in Li-Ion battery; auto shut-off; raw file support; histogram; EXIF data; recognized as external drive with USB setting; serves as card reader/writer	Assigns unique file names to downloaded folders; visual confirmation; audible completion signal when files transferred; file manager option to rename folder/file; (back-up time: under 4 minutes)	5.2x3x1" 10.5 oz	$349/120GB $369/160GB $399/250GB $429/320GB $549/500GB	The UDMA is a vast improvement over the HyperDrive Space, with sleeker operation and a nice-size color screen. Deduct points for poor navigation and failure to instantly recognize card insertion.

Key Features: Portable Drives

Notes: (1) Drives can be reformatted for your preferred operating system. But first, copy resident back-up software/other files to a safe place. (2) Given that most are roughly the same size, it's safe to assume that these devices employ a 2.5" drive, unless otherwise specified. A 1.8" drive is generally more rugged and doesn't need added shock protection. (3) For our purposes, we'll consider a drive as entering Sleep/Standby mode even when it spins down and the heads park. True sleep/standby is evidenced by extinguishing LEDs. (4) Evaluations based on sample products. Not all products were available for testing.

Device (Website)	Platform/ Connectivity (Out Of The Box)	Features	Size & Weight	MSRP/Drive Size	Comments/Evaluation
Buffalo Technology MiniStation Cobalt (www.buffalotech.com)	Mac/Windows; USB 2.0	Shock-resistant design; TurboUSB data transfer rates—up to 20 percent faster; Memeo AutoSync software included (Mac/ Windows); SecureLockMobile encryption software for Windows PC; choice of colors	NA	$109/250GB $129/320GB $189/500GB	Sample not available at press time.
Clickfree Portable Backup Drive (www.goclickfree.com)	Windows; USB 2.0	Comes with back-up software for one-touch operation or user-defined backups	4.5x2.9x0.7"	$89/120GB $109/160GB $129/250GB $179/320GB $219/500GB	This quiet, cool drive makes it so easy and effortless to back up your computer's hard drive. But I'm disappointed that the promised cross-platform version/firmware upgrade has not materialized. Deduct points for staying awake while host computer sleeps.
Iomega eGo BlackBelt (www.iomega.com)	Mac/Windows; USB 2.0	Drop Guard Xtreme protects against drops up to 7 ft; local (software via download) and online backup included; Power Grip band (other eGo portables available in different colors/configurations)	5.3x3.5x0.8" 7.7 oz	$99/250GB (capacity ranges with model)	Slightly bulkier than some of the other drives we looked at, but it runs quiet and cool. Effectively enters standby (spins down) along with host computer. I would especially feel comfortable carrying this around on a vigorous journey because of its shock protection.
LaCie Rugged Hard Disk (www.lacie.com)	Mac/Windows; USB 2.0 (also available with FireWire 400/ 800 for Mac)	Dual shock protection (max drop height: 35"); scratch-resistant aluminum shell; back-up software included	5.7x3.5x1" 8.8 oz	$109/250GB $119/320GB $159/500GB (FireWire version prices vary from above)	Sample not available at press time.
Other World Computing Mercury On-The-Go Pro (www.macsales.com)	Mac; USB 2.0; FireWire 400/ 800	Fast 7200 RPM drive; shock isolation system; back-up and utility software included	5.5x3.5x1" under 11 oz	$139/200GB $149/250GB $167/320GB (other models available for Windows)	With its cool see-through design, this quiet drive can practically double as a desktop drive w/o the power requirements. Effectively goes into Sleep mode (spins down) along with host computer. While the drive itself may be protected against shock, the plastic casing appears more fragile, so I'd hesitate to subject the drive to rough handling.
Seagate FreeAgent Go for Mac (www.seagate.com)	Mac; USB 2.0 and FireWire 400/800 (docking station requires FireWire 800 port)	Apple Time Machine ready; docking station included (Windows version available in different colors and includes back-up software)	5.4x3.2x0.7" 7.8 oz (w/o docking station)	$149/250GB $169/320GB $189/500GB	Sleek and stylish, but the docking station really makes it for me, adding convenience. It runs quiet but slightly warm, and goes to sleep along with host computer.
SimpleTech Signature Mini (www.simpletech.com)	Windows; USB 2.0	Rubberized exterior; available in different flavors (literally—Espresso, Bubblegum, etc.); local and online backup included	4.9x3.1x0.8"	Espresso: $79/120GB $159/500GB (capacity varies with "flavor")	Easy-grip rubberized exterior affords some protection against shock; runs cool and quiet; fashionably slim and lightweight. Deduct points for staying awake while host computer sleeps.
Transcend StoreJet 25 Mobile (www.transcendusa.com)	Mac/Windows (FAT32 file system); USB 2.0	Dual-stage anti-shock design (meets US military standards); back-up and security software included	5.3x3.2x0.7" 7.3 oz	$78/160GB $92/250GB $108/320GB $186/500GB	Ultra-quiet with barely any noticeable vibration, you won't know it's running till you see the read/write LED flicker, but it does appear to go to sleep along with the host computer. Cross-platform compatibility is a plus. And ruggedized design should come in handy over challenging treks.
Verbatim Portable Hard Drive (www.verbatim.com)	Mac; USB 2.0 and FireWire 400	Compatible with Apple Time Machine (USB-only models available with back-up software for Windows)	5.4x3.4x0.6" 5.8 oz	$80/160GB (USB-only models as high as 500GB)	With its sleek design, this drive not only runs cool but effectively goes to sleep (spins down) when the computer enters Sleep mode. I wish it came in a larger capacity with FireWire support.
Western Digital My Passport Studio (www.wdc.com)	Mac; USB 2.0 and FireWire 400/800	Illuminated capacity gauge; includes high-speed turbo driver for maximum performance; compatible with Apple Time Machine (USB-only models formatted for Windows)	5x3.2x0.7" 6.4 oz	$199/320GB $229/400GB $249/500GB	The slim Passport-series drives look like tiny books. I tested the Mac drive with FireWire connection. It runs quiet but does get warm to the touch. However, it goes into standby when computer is put to sleep.
Wolverine Data Ultra-Portable USB Drive (www.wolverinedata.com)	Mac/Windows (FAT32 file system); USB 2.0	1.8" drive; roughly cell phone size	4.3x2.6x0.6"	$79/20GB $99/40GB $129/60GB	The rugged 1.8" drive and tiny size are decided assets. This is a more economical and efficient means of storage than several stacked USB drives that would amount to the same size. And cross-platform compatibility is a big plus. Wolverine also has multimedia viewers with memory card support and color displays.