



Vintage lenses are a fantastic gateway into the world of photography. Many are usually cheap (relatively) and comparatively well constructed. Additionally, the majority of old lenses are surprisingly sharp with fast apertures, even by today's standards.

Speaking of current standards, seeing as the majority of these types of lenses were manufactured for use with 35mm film, they are essentially ready-made to match with the growing number of high resolution [full-frame](#) digital cameras available to us today.

Adapting vintage lenses

When it comes to using old lenses with new digital cameras, there are two things to consider: lens mount compatibility and a little thing called "flange-focal distance."

We'll talk more about flange-focal distance in the next section, but for now, let's focus (haha) simply on how to get a lens from manufacturer A to fit on a camera from manufacturer B. It's all really quite easy – mostly.



Some of these lenses also add a unique character to your images, which might or might not be desirable depending on your own expectations. Lenses such as the legendary [Helios](#) have become prized lenses for portrait photographers and videographers due to its distinctive “swirly” bokeh.

You’ll need an adapter to use your old lenses with new digital cameras. However, this isn’t limited to vintage glass, as today, there are quite a few ways to use even modern lenses across a wide range of camera platforms. For our purposes, though, we’ll stick to showing you how to use older lenses.

The first problem an adapter solves is the conversion of your lens mount to the mount your camera uses.

Think of the adapter as a “connector” with one side matching the lens and one side matching the camera. This allows us to physically attach the lens to the camera even though they sport different mounts.

Some closing thoughts...

I sometimes wonder if the original makers of some of my vintage lenses ever thought about the manner they might get used thirty, forty, or even fifty years down the road.

Making use of [old lenses](#) with new digital cameras is not a new concept. However, with the recent rise in popularity of mirrorless digital cameras, their use is becoming more and more common.

With the correct adapter and a bit of basic photographic know-how, you can put many of these beautiful old lenses to work for you with minimal investment in both time and money. So whether you’re looking for a budget-friendly way to make great photos or you’re simply a fan of the character of old glass, I believe you’ll find it worth your while to try out some vintage lenses for yourself.

Have you used some old lenses with your digital camera? We’re all camera geeks here, so we’d love to see your results! Feel free to post your images made with old camera lenses below.



In short, vintage lenses bring a lot to the table in terms of sharpness, build quality and cost-effectiveness. This is all well and good, but how do you get these old lenses to fit your camera?