

How Much Does it Cost to Shoot Film in 2023?

Just like everything else, shooting film has gotten extremely expensive.

You may have been shocked by the price the last time you tried to buy fresh film or had a few rolls developed at the same time.

Unfortunately, you shouldn't expect things to let up anytime soon – Kodak has already [announced a 17% price increase set to begin in March](#).

At the same time, the cost to produce consistent, high-quality developing and scanning has also become more costly than ever, resulting in photo lab price increases across the board.

A recent trip to the lab got us thinking – with steady price increases for each part of shooting film, how much does each film photo cost in total?

We ran the numbers and found that on average, to buy, develop, and scan 35mm color film, it costs \$0.75 per photo, \$27 per roll.

This got our wheels turning – we pulled a bunch of data to get the full picture of how much it costs to develop film in 2023. Check out our findings below.

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How Much Does it Cost to Develop Film in 2023?

Let's start by looking at each of the costs involved with every photo you shoot on film.

First, the film itself – we calculated the average price of each type of film, based on all of the options available to purchase. For consistencies sake, we only included 36 exposure rolls for 35mm.

Then, there's the developing and scanning – most people get these done at the same time, by the lab.

We calculated the average price for developing with what we would consider “standard” scans – somewhere around 2000 x 3000 pixels for 35mm.

With these numbers, we found the total cost per roll of film and per individual photo. We looked at 35mm film and 120 medium format in the three most common photo sizes (6×4.5, 6×6 and 6×7).

Cost of Color vs Black and White vs Slide Film

One of the biggest factors in the total price per photo is what chemistry you're shooting.

Color and black & white photos cost about the same amount, no matter the format.

We were surprised to find that for all formats, black and white and color photos were the same price when factoring all of the costs.

Black and white has historically been the cheapest option – that's still true when it comes to buying film.

On average, black and white film is 23% cheaper than C-41 color. That means that for every 10 rolls of 35mm B&W film you buy, you're spending about \$25 less than you would be on color.

That discount quickly disappears once you head to the lab, though. The average cost of developing and scanning a roll of 35mm black and white film is 19% higher than C-41 color.

It seems that all around, black and white has been losing popularity – with less demand for B&W developing, labs are raising prices, and oftentimes, developing less frequently than color.

If you find yourself shooting a lot of black and white, we'd definitely recommend finding a lab that is well equipped for this type of film.

Some places will even let you choose which developer is used for your photos and others offer cheaper developing prices because their workflow is more suited to black and white.

Shooting 35mm E-6 slide film is 64% more expensive than 35mm color.

Even the quickest glance at the graph above makes one thing painfully clear: E-6 slide film has gotten outrageously expensive.

E-6 has always been the most expensive type of film to purchase – there are far fewer film stocks available and all of them are considered “professional” grade.

Similarly, developing slides has always cost a bit more than standard color film, but that's increased significantly in recent years. And that's assuming your lab even offers the service anymore.

Shooting E-6 color positive film is a unique and enjoyable experience, but the high cost will likely be a deterrent for most casual photographers.

Even when shooting the cheapest format (35mm), it still costs around \$1.25 to buy, develop, and scan each photo on slide film.

Hardcore landscape photographers who love medium format slide film may want to start considering other options – each 6×7 photo on slide film costs a whopping \$3.41!

Cost of Developing 35mm Film vs Medium Format

This is nothing new, but in 2023, shooting medium format film is significantly more expensive than 35mm. The upgrade in image quality is certainly there, but you'll pay the price.

Shooting 120 film is 150% – 275% more expensive than 35mm format.

If you've been considering making the jump to medium format, be warned that your wallet will feel it. Even the cheapest photo format for 120 film (6×4.5) costs over twice as much per photo as 35mm.

For the most part, it's about the same amount to buy and develop a roll of 35mm and medium format film – it's just the cost per photo that significantly rises as you move to larger photo formats.

6×7 medium format cameras capture just 10 photos on 120 film, which makes that total cost of \$28 per roll a lot harder to swallow.

And even if you opt for a smaller negative size, you'll still be paying close to \$2 per photo if you're shooting medium format.

6×7 medium format photos are 50% more expensive than 6×4.5 format.

The cost per photo rises pretty consistently as you look at the difference between medium format photo sizes. You can expect to pay about \$1 more per photo if you're shooting 6×7 format vs 6×4.5.

This got us wondering: how well does the increase in price line up with the increase in photo size? Compared to 35mm film, we found that:

6×4.5 format costs 121% more per photo for negatives that are 172% larger.

6×6 format costs 176% more per photo for negatives that are 263% larger.

6×7 format costs **231% more** per photo for negatives that are **334% larger**.

Even though the price per photo increases significantly as you move to larger formats, the difference in size is at least comparable.

The takeaway here shouldn't be to avoid medium format film. Instead, you should just be mindful of the cost when shooting 120 and save it for special work.

With 172% – 334% bigger negatives, you can bet that large prints from medium format film will be much sharper than 35mm.

How Much Does Scanning Film Cost in 2023?

How much you spend at the lab has one of the biggest impacts on the total cost of each film photo.

You can save quite a bit per roll by having the lab develop your film but [taking care of the scanning yourself](#). Most people prefer the ease of getting scans done with developing, though.

For lab scans, we consider “Standard Scans” to be roughly 2000 x 3000 pixels for 35mm film. This size is perfectly adequate for any online viewing and should be able to produce clean prints up to about 6”x9”.

It's worth noting that some labs offer an even smaller scan option, with the above sizing being their “High Resolution Scan”. Just make sure to check the actual file size of each of your options.

When we say “High Resolution Scans”, we mean larger dimensions, and/or uncompressed TIFF files.

Each lab is a little different, but on the graph below, “High Resolution” represents the average cost of developing with the highest quality scans offered.

Once again, we included the cost to purchase the film as well as lab services in the calculation of the total cost per photo:

How to Save Money Shooting Film

So now you have more reason to believe what you already knew: in 2023, film photography ain't cheap.

With that in mind, we've come up with a couple tips to help you find the cheapest film developing and scanning that still meets your needs.

Cheapest Film Developing and Scanning

Developing and scanning usually make up over half the cost of each film photo you take. This is where you can find the most significant savings.

Cheap Photo Labs

When we were deciding which labs to survey for this article, we focused more on quality than price. The numbers shown are a good representation of the average prices across the board, but there are definitely cheaper options that exist.

[Dexter's Camera](#) in Ventura, CA comes to mind – they are probably one of the cheapest film photo labs we've ever seen.

All types and sizes of film are processed for only \$5, which can already amount to some significant savings for more expensive formats.

On top of these savings, they also offer standard resolution scans for an additional \$5, once again for all types and sizes of film. The scans are a little bit smaller than we prefer, but for five bucks, it's hard to complain. You can pay more for bigger files.

That means that for the most expensive type of film (E-6 medium format), Dexter's is just under 50% cheaper than the average develop and scan.

Another cheap place to develop disposable cameras or film is [Citizen's Photo](#) in Portland. They were one of the photo labs included in our info for this article.

They don't have uniform pricing like Dexter's above, but for the more common types of film, you can still get developing and scans for about the same price.

Low Resolution Scans and Re-Scans of Favorites

Especially if you're a beginner in film photography, you can save quite a bit of money by only getting high-resolution scans of your favorite images.

Even the smallest, cheapest scans will be perfectly fine for posting on Instagram and giving you a clear idea what the photos look like.

If one roll of 35mm film produces around five photos that you'd want scanned high-res, it's probably cheaper to only re-scan your favorites.

More than five, you should probably just scan the whole roll high-res when getting it developed.

If you've never done it before, it's easy to get film re-scanned after it's been developed. Just bring in the negatives with the selected photos, note which frames you want scanned, and then you pay a small price per photo scanned.

Scanning Film at Home

You know what's even cheaper than getting low-resolution scans? Not getting any scans at all...

Scanning your own film is 34% – 64 % cheaper than getting it done at the lab.

It's easier than ever to scan your film at home, and there are options for just about every budget.

That said, you should know that most DIY scanning options won't come near the quality of lab scans.

Scanning your film can also be quite tedious and time consuming – once you start doing it yourself, it's easy to see why labs have to charge what they do.

For most photographers, there isn't really a one-size-fits-all solution for scanning. Even if you start scanning film at home, you may occasionally need the help of the lab.

Related Post: [How to Scan Negatives \(Pros and Cons of Each Option\)](#)

Developing Film at the Drugstore

Although we don't recommend it, we had to mention one of the cheapest places to develop film – the drugstore.

Even though you may save a few bucks per roll, the downsides outweigh the savings for almost all photographers.

And if you do end up going this route, you may be surprised at how many drugstore chains have stopped developing film altogether.

Related Post: [Everything You Need to Know About Drugstore Film Developing.](#)

Cheapest Film Stocks to Buy

You can also bring down the total cost per photo by choosing a budget-friendly film stock. Here are some options that ring in below the average prices.

Cheap Black and White Film

As we mentioned above, black and white film is usually the cheapest type of film to buy. With an average price of \$10.57 per roll (35mm, 36-exposure), here are some film stocks that cost even less:

[Ilford HP5+](#)

[Ilford FP4+](#)

[Cinestill BWXX](#)

[CatLABS X Film 320](#)

Cheap Color Film

While professional color film stocks like [Kodak Portra 400](#) are beloved by analog photographers, they aren't cheap.

While Kodak and other film manufacturers offer professional options, most offer "consumer" grade film stocks, as well – especially for C-41 color.

For 35mm color film (again, 36-exposures), the average cost per roll came in at \$13.02. These are some cheaper options:

[Fujifilm Fujicolor 200](#)

[Fujifilm Superia X-Tra 400](#)

Cost Per Film Photo Calculator

We wanted to make sure to include a way to find the cost per film photo based on your individual preferences.

Check out our [free calculator](#) to find out how much each film photo is costing you.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Where did you get these numbers?**
 - For the prices of film, we recorded the price of every film stock available at 5 different retailers. We did not include special effect films, rebranded/repackaged stocks, or any film lacking recognition from the average film photographer.
 - For the cost of developing and scanning, we found them by calculating the average costs from all of the labs on our list of the [best places to develop film by mail](#).
- **Are these numbers up to date?**
 - All information in this article was obtained January 1, 2023.
- **What if I want to develop disposable cameras?**
 - Disposable cameras contain 35mm film, so you can develop disposable cameras anywhere that you can develop 35mm film. The price to develop disposable cameras should be similar to the prices for 35mm.
 - Some labs do charge a small fee (usually \$1 or \$2) for developing disposable cameras.
- **Where is the cheapest film developing?**

- There are some labs that offer [prices lower than the average](#) for developing. You can also save money by [scanning your own film](#).
- **Why do people still shoot film if it's so expensive?**
 - No matter how advanced technology becomes, we think that film photography will never lose its allure to some photographers.
- **Can I share the graphics from this article?**
 - Sure. You can even download them below. Please give credit by linking back to this article.

[Cost Per Photo Depending on Scans Download](#)

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