

Hue HD

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HUE™ HD CAMERA

You get the impression that the Hue HD camera is feeling rather good about itself. I wouldn't blame it for feeling smug, either. It gets out of its box and makes an impression without even having to try. It doesn't pose and pout; it just gets on with the job and has fun doing it.

Hang on though, this is just basically a camera on a stick, isn't it? Don't be daft – the Hue HD is a stand-alone head-turning visualiser that is miles better than a built-in webcam and knocks spots off those that clip onto a screen. This is a plug and play multi-tasker with a built-in microphone and twistable head. It's stylish, functional and funky and your classroom should have at least one.

Basically, you have a base which is the USB receiver and into this you plug the camera and its gooseneck arm. Once you've hooked up with your computer then you really are ready to go. If you want you can unplug the neck from the base and connect it directly to a USB port on your laptop and you're away. There aren't many things in life that simple but this is effortless and pretty much foolproof. There is a manual if you need help but to be honest, even if you do, it won't be for long.

So why do you need one? Because there is a whole pile of stuff you can do with one of these gems and the built-in microphone opens up a lot of doors. What about demonstrating a science experiment or taking snapshots of pupils work? How about recording a technique to replay for a demo later in the day or for recapping after weeks have whizzed by? Go on, you want to use it for digital storytelling don't you? Done. You could use it on Skype, MSN, and Yahoo Messenger for free video chats with a school on the other side of the world, subject experts, community members and even parents. Or for doing some tuition over t'internet. You might want to model something, project something or create a stop-motion animation movie. How about desktop conferencing and an online homework session? Go on, use it for recording on YouTube, why not? I'm using mine right now as a microscope to demonstrate a circuit board for a bit of revision. You will find a use for the HUE and if you don't it will cry. Remember it has full 360° rotation so it will still see you if you don't pay it attention.

What really matters with a camera is the image quality, so is it up to much? Reassuringly so,



although I'd recommend using it in a well-lit area where the light source is behind you. I know, that's a very basic tip – but it makes all the difference. The image quality on my whiteboard was excellent. The clarity of the sound is also up to the job and incredibly clear. It's robust too and will take a few knocks (although give it some respect and don't try throwing it off a multi-storey car park).

Is it cheap? Yes, as chips. For £29.95 + VAT you are getting a deal that would have Dave Dickinson grinning like a Cheshire cat. No need to count your fingers here as it is fantastic value and I think it's pitched at a very affordable price for schools. It's certainly the cost-effective

alternative to the all-singing and all-dancing visualisers that are in the hundreds of pounds.

The Hue HD is easy to move about and you manually focus it using a focus ring on front of the camera. You might be thinking that manual focus is so 1970s but the good thing about it is that as you move in and out of shot the camera is not constantly searching for the focus point and blurring everything in the process.

Do we need to tap this product on the shoulder about anything? Just a couple of minor points. The relatively heavy base is good but if you want to bend it forward, and I mean far forward, then it needs securing otherwise it will topple. But then that goes for us all. The flexible gooseneck is a really great feature of the HUE and it is quite long but a giraffe neck would be better for reaching those hard to get to leaves, so perhaps they can extend it a wee bit further. I'd like to see more top tips on how to use the camera, too. There are a handful on the box but that's all.

The Hue HD is a versatile product. Use it as a camera, a webcam, a low-cost visualiser or a CCTV if you really want. Mine is blue... but other colours are available. Enjoy.

VERDICT:

Snap happy

This is a wonderful bit of equipment and I can see it being well-liked by its peers and admired (with a tinge of envy) by its competition. Who'd've thought a USB camera could be this much fun?



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