

Canon EOS Rebel T6s Review



●●●●○ 4.0 Excellent

By [Jim Fisher](#) June 29, 2015



THE BOTTOM LINE

The Canon EOS Rebel T6s offers some big upgrades over older Rebel bodies, making it our top pick for under-\$1,000 D-SLRs.

MSRP \$849.99

\$899.99 at Amazon

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PROS

- ✓ 19-point cross-type AF system.
- ✓ 5fps continuous shooting.
- ✓ 24-megapixel image sensor.
- ✓ Front and rear control dials.
- ✓ Vari-angle touch LCD.
- ✓ Top information display.
- ✓ Smooth video autofocus.
- ✓ Wi-Fi.

CONS

- ✗ Pentamirror viewfinder.
- ✗ Limited buffer when shooting Raw.
- ✗ Full HD video tops out at 30fps.

Canon's consumer line of Rebel SLRs has been a bit stagnant for some time, with very little in the way of new upgrades or technology since the 2012 introduction of the [T4i](#), a [camera](#) that was simply rebranded and continued to be sold as the [T5i](#) ([\\$899.00 at Amazon](#)) just a year later. The new EOS Rebel T6s (\$849.99), and its fraternal twin [T6i](#), sport a brand new 24-megapixel image sensor, the best focus system that has graced a

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Rebel camera to date, Wi-Fi, and other refinements. It offers the best balance of features and performance for consumers, making it our new Editors' Choice for sub-\$1,000 SLRs. It ousts the aging [Pentax K-3](#) ([\\$1,085.95 at Adorama](#)), which still may be a more attractive choice for some, but it won't be around forever, as its replacement, the K-3 II is available now.

Design and Features

The T6s ([\\$899.99 at Amazon](#)) isn't the smallest SLR in the Canon lineup, but its size is in line with others in this class at 4 by 5.2 by 3.1 inches (HWD) and 1.2 pounds without a lens. It is a bit larger than its closest competitor, the [Nikon D5500](#) (3.9 by 4.9 by 3 inches, 1.1 pounds), but the extra surface area makes the T6s a bit more comfortable to hold and use. If you want a really small SLR, consider instead the [EOS Rebel SL1](#) ([\\$499.00 at Amazon](#)) (3.6 by 4.6 by 2.7 inches, 14.4 ounces), or a [mirrorless](#) interchangeable lens camera.



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One of the areas where the T6s outclasses the T6i ([\\$1,099.00 at Amazon](#)) is in its control layout. Canon opted to include dual control dials and a top monochrome information LCD on the T6s, both of which give it the feel and handling of more expensive models like the [EOS 70D \(\\$971.44 at Amazon\)](#). The power switch and mode dial (with a locking mechanism to prevent you from turning it accidentally) sit to the left of the optical viewfinder on the top plate. The power switch is a three-stage design, with positions for Off, Still Capture, and Video Capture. You'll want to take a little care turning the camera on, as it doesn't take too much pressure to go directly into Video mode, even if that's not your intent. To the viewfinder's right are the aforementioned LCD, the front control dial and shutter release, and buttons to activate the LCD backlight, adjust the ISO, and change the autofocus area.

There are two buttons on the left side. One raises the pop-up flash, and displays a menu with flash adjustment settings when pressed again. The other, located below the lens release button, is the Depth of Field Preview button. It stops down the lens to the working f-stop, which shows you how much of your image will be in focus when you take a picture. Menu and Info buttons sit at the top left corner of the rear, and the Live View toggle (which starts and stops recording when the camera is set to movie mode) sits directly to its right. At the far right corner you'll find the exposure lock and a second button to set the focus area; instead of changing between the three areas with a touch, this button requires you to tap the rear LCD to confirm your choice.

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The Q button sits just to the right of the LCD, below the rear thumb rest. It turns the standard rear information display into a touch-sensitive menu for direct adjustment of many shooting controls. The Play button sits directly below it, and the rear control wheel below that. The wheel offers direct control of exposure compensation in most modes (although you'll need to tap the shutter button first) and aperture in Manual mode. The wheel supports four directional presses (White Balance, AF mode, Picture Style, and Drive mode) and has a center Set button. There's a Lock switch below the dial, which prevents it from changing settings when enabled; the Delete button is right next door.

Like other cameras in the Rebel series, the T6s uses an optical pentamirror viewfinder. It's a design that's common in consumer SLRs—the Nikon D5500 uses the same type of viewfinder—but is noticeably smaller and dimmer than a pentaprism, which are typically found in more expensive SLRs. Pentax is an outlier in this regard; it puts pentaprisms in all of its models, even the inexpensive K-50 (\$346.95 at Walmart). With Canon, you'll need to move up to a 70D or a7D Mark II (\$1,499.00 at Dell) to get a better viewfinder.

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The rear LCD is a 3-inch touch-sensitive panel with a 1,040k-dot resolution. It's very sharp, and its vari-angle design allows it to swing out to the side, face up, forward, or down, and rest hidden against the body for those times when you'd like to concentrate on the viewfinder alone. The T6s does have an eye sensor that automatically disables the rear display when you bring the camera to your eye, a feature that's missing from the T6i.

For the first time, Wi-Fi is built into a Rebel camera; it had previously only been available in the 70D and ~~6D~~ (\$1,299.00 at Amazon). When paired with a smartphone or tablet, either via Wi-Fi or NFC, the T6s can copy images and videos via Wi-Fi using the free Canon Camera Connect app for iOS and Android. The app has a location log function; when enabled, it records your phone's GPS position, which can be matched to image shot. This feature should appeal to photographers who are otherwise put off by the T6s's lack of an in-body GPS system.

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Remote control is also available via the app. A Live View feed streams to your phone and allows you to adjust settings, tap on part of the frame to focus, and capture an image. Exposure controls can be limited by what position the camera's physical mode dial is in, but full manual operation is available in M mode, aperture control in A, and shutter control in S, as well as ISO, exposure compensation, and metering pattern adjustment. It's one of the better remote apps for an SLR, easily outclassing the very basic remote app that Nikon offers for its cameras.

Performance and Image Quality

The T6s starts and captures an in-focus image in about 0.7-second, which is actually a little on the slow side compared with the Nikon D5500 ([\\$719.99 at eBay](#)), which does the same in 0.2-second. But its 5fps continuous shooting rate matches that of the D5500. If you're capturing images in Raw or Raw+JPG you're limited to 6 photos before the shooting rate slows, but you can shoot JPGs continuously when using a fast memory card, like the SanDisk 95MBps card we use to test digital camera speeds. The only camera that's significantly faster in this price range is the Pentax K-3, which shoots at 8.3fps, but it's in this price range due to a big slash in its price after the introduction of its replacement.

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A good burst rate isn't much to talk about without a solid autofocus system. The T6s inherits the autofocus system from a much older camera, but one that was class-leading at its release, the ~~AD~~ (\$749.00 at Amazon). It's a 19-point system, which doesn't sound as impressive as the 39-point system used by the D5500, but each point is the more precise cross-type. The D5500 has 9 cross-type sensors, but they're all grouped at the very center of the frame.

Here, the points cover slightly less surface area than the D5500, but our field tests showed that the T6s does a good job at tracking subjects moving through the frame and away or toward the camera. Very small, fast moving subjects (hummingbirds, for example), proved to be a challenge to photograph, as they quickly moved in and out of the active focus area, but that's the case with any SLR in this class. When you keep your subject within the focus area, however, the T6s does an admirable job keeping focus locked.

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You can let the camera decide which focus point to use, and it does a good job for the most part, although it doesn't always lock onto faces. You can also manually select a single focus point (using the rear directional pad to select a point), or group 9 points together and move them around using the same d-pad.

Focus acquisition when shooting through the viewfinder is very fast, just about 0.1-second. In dim light it slows to about 0.9-second. Live View focus is a strong point. The on-sensor dual-pixel system used by the 70D and 7D Mark II is absent, but the T6s still offers quick, smooth focus, especially when paired with one of Canon's STM lenses. It locks focus and captures an image in about 0.6-second in bright light and 0.8-second in dim light when shooting in Live View. The T6s sets itself apart from the T6i in its ability to track moving subjects when shooting in Live View mode. Even though it's absent when using the viewfinder, Face Detection is supported when using the LCD to compose images.

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We're reviewing the T6s as a body only, but it can be purchased in a kit along with the [EF-S 18-135mm f/3.5-5.6 IS STM \(\\$319.95 at Amazon\)](#) for \$1,199. It's a very good starter lens, with long zoom range, image stabilization, and an STM focus motor, which pairs well with the T6s's Live View focus system. If you're upgrading from an older Rebel model and only have an 18-55mm zoom it makes sense to consider the kit. More serious photographers may opt for a good third-party zoom, like the [Sigma 17-70mm F2.8-4 DC Macro OS HSM Contemporary \(\\$729.00 at Amazon\)](#).

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I used [Imatest](#) to check and see how the T6s performs at high ISO settings, which are used when shooting in dim light. Pushing the ISO too high can result in a noisy, grainy image, and hurt detail. When shooting JPG images at default develop settings, the camera keeps noise under 1.5 percent through ISO 3200, and shows about 1.8 percent at ISO 6400. Detail holds up very well through ISO 3200, but there is a little evidence of



smudging at ISO 6400. Smudging is more of a problem at ISO 12800, and it's worse still at the top ISO 25600 sensitivity. Image quality is very close to that of the Nikon D5500, although the Nikon seems just a little bit more crisp to my eye at ISO 6400 and below. The T6s uses an optical low-pass filter, which adds a slight blur to images to eliminate the possibility of color moiré, while the D5500 doesn't include one. You'll have to examine images at full resolution to spot the differences.

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Shooting in Raw format allows you to get a bit more detail out of high-ISO images, but it will require you to process photos using Raw development software like [Adobe Lightroom \(\\$119.88 Per Year at Adobe\)](#). Details are crisp and noise isn't an issue through ISO 6400 when shooting Raw. At ISO 12800 there's quite a bit of grain, but detail shines through. There's still detail at ISO 25600, but also quite a bit of noise. When examining Raw samples it's very difficult to pick a winner between the D5500 and T6s; the results are just that close. Both JPG and Raw crops from our ISO test scene are included in the slideshow that accompanies this review.

The T6s records video at up to 1080p30 quality in MP4 format. You can also capture cinematic 24p footage at 1080p, or shoot 720p footage at 60fps or 30fps. Standard definition (480p) recording is support at 30fps only. Despite not shooting at 1080p60, the T6s sets itself apart from the crowd when shooting video thanks to its Live View autofocus system. When paired with an STM lens the camera smoothly and automatically adjusts focus as the scene changes; it's not quite the equal of the 70D or 7D Mark II in that regard, but it's pretty close. The camera will automatically adjust focus as the scene changes, but you also have the option of tapping on an area of the frame to select a focus point, or to select a moving target to track. The camera takes care of aperture, shutter speed, and ISO when rolling video, but you can adjust exposure compensation. A number of picture styles—including standard, vivid, and monochrome—are available for video. And there's a miniature effect movie setting, but it can only record footage at a slower frame rate for playback at 5x real time speed—it's a neat effect if you want to shoot a faux time lapse of a city scape with the diorama look that the miniature effect creates.

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The internal microphone does a fine job picking up sound closeby, but background noise can be an issue. There's a mic input available if you'd like to get a little more serious about audio. Audio levels can be adjusted manually as well. There's also a port for a wired remote control, as well as a standard mini USB connector and a mini HDMI port. The camera supports a SD, SDHC, and SDXC memory cards; the slot for that is on the left side, separate from the battery compartment. Canon includes an external wall charger with integrated plug to charge the battery; in-camera charging is not supported.

Conclusion

The Canon EOS Rebel T6s is a strong performer that should appeal to consumers and budding enthusiasts alike. It delivers an excellent value of image quality, speed, and ergonomics, making it one of the better-balanced SLRs in its class. It's especially strong compared with its peers when it comes to focus when recording video or capturing stills in Live View, and its Wi-Fi system allows you to copy images over to your smartphone, control the camera remotely, and geotag photos. There are some things that other cameras in this price range do a little bit better; the Nikon D5500's focus system covers a little bit more of the frame, and it records 1080p60 video, but it lacks depth of field preview, only has a single control dial, and its Wi-Fi remote control app offers only minimal control. And there's the Pentax K-3, which is a solid option for still photographers as long as it's still available for purchase, but its video functions lag well behind the T6s.

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The \$850 price point may be a little off-putting to first-time SLR buyers who need to purchase a lens along with the camera. If you're looking to spend less, the T6i is there, and can be had in a kit with an 18-55mm lens the same price as the T6s sans lens. We don't recommend the entry-level Canon EOS Rebel T5 highly, but the Canon SL1 is selling at an attractive price these days, and the ~~Nikon D3300 (\$695.00 at Amazon)~~ is an especially strong performer in the budget SLR space. And if you don't put a high emphasis on video recording,



the Pentax K-50 is another exceptional value. On the other end of the scale, Canon shooters with aging Rebels may want to consider moving up to the 70D, as it is a bit more advanced, but it also comes at a higher cost and is a half-pound heavier. If you're not in need of the features offered by a high-end SLR, the T6s will satisfy your needs quite nicely, and earns our Editors' Choice recommendation for consumer SLRs in the process.

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Canon EOS Rebel T6s

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✓

19-point cross-type AF system.

✓

5fps continuous shooting.

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24-megapixel image sensor.

CONS

✗

Pentamirror viewfinder.

✗

Limited buffer when shooting Raw.

✗

Full HD video tops out at 30fps.

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Lead Analyst, Cameras

Images, and the devices that capture them, are my focus. I've covered cameras at PCMag for the past 13 years, which has given me a front row seat for the DSLR to mirrorless transition, the smartphone camera revolution, and the mainstream adoption of drones for aerial imaging. I have extensive experience with every major mirrorless and SLR system. As a Part 107 Certified drone pilot, I'm licensed to fly unmanned aircraft

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systems (UAS) for commercial and editorial purposes, and am knowledgeable about federal rules and regulations regarding drones. You can find me on Instagram [@jamespfisher](#).

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