

The only items exposed to you are the USB port and the micro-SD card slot. There is no HDMI connection available here, nor removable battery.

SIZE & WEIGHT COMPARISONS:



When it comes to size, the Hero4 is identical to that of the Hero3, so there's no changes there. It'll fit into all the same mounts, cases and locations that the Hero3 did. This is particularly interesting even in the case of the touch-screen display included on the Hero4 Silver. Of course, if you add a touch/display screen to the Hero4 Black then it'll increase the size accordingly.





When it comes to weight, there are small differences between the Black/Silver units within the cases, as weighed by me:

Hero4 Black with Underwater Case: 150.6g
Hero4 Silver with Underwater Case: 142.1g
Hero Base (2014) with Underwater Case: 111.1g

Case included the solid-door backing, and the semi-flexible backing for the Silver case. It includes a single Micro-SD card, as well as the default battery. You can see that the Hero Base is actually a fair bit lighter, interestingly enough.

And outside the cases:

Hero4 Black:87.1g
Hero4 Silver: 82.0g
Hero Base: N/A

Looking at other units on the market, the GoPro remains the smallest unit with the highest quality video. No doubt you can look at something smaller like the new Polaroid cube, but with that comes incredibly rough video (stabilization-wise). While the baseline Polaroid 1080p video isn't horrible when just sitting still, it's not at all awesome with any movement at all. And given the point of an action cam is…action, that's sorta limiting:



Meanwhile, if you compare it to something like the Sony series of action cams, it's sorta a wash. The Sony cams are longer, but thinner. While the GoPro's appear a bit chubbier. Both can go sans-case, though neither should be taken underwater without their respective cases.





Turning to something like the VIRB series, the GoPro is much smaller without the case, though only somewhat smaller with the case. The VIRB doesn't require a case unless going deeper underwater (splashing around in a pool is fine). But, the GoPro is also roughly the size of a Twinkie compared to that of a kiwi fruit (not the bird, nor the New Zealander's) with the Garmin VIRB. Note that both the VIRB and VIRB Elite share the same outer shell.



Things are a bit different with the case and a different perspective – such as the situation with the GoPro Hero base:



Of course, to some degree comparing sizes with the GoPro is somewhat academic. It's well established as a completely acceptable sized unit within the marketplace – with the case. And without the case the options are pretty much unlimited.

THE BASICS – GENERAL USE:

Let's start off with establishing some of the basics, things that are largely common to all units. To begin, you'll turn on the unit by holding down the front-facing button (Mode). This will get the GoPro ready to record, but won't start recording:





Alternatively, on all units you can enable a single button press mode ('Quick Capture') that will automatically turn on the camera in recording mode and start recording video as soon as it has started up.

Each of the units will require a MicroSD card to record to. These are super-cheap though and can be found starting at about $12 for quality 16GB ones. The Hero4 Black and Silver support card sizes up to 64GB, whereas the Hero base only supports 32GB.

Note that when it comes to speed of cards, it'll depend a little bit on how you plan to use the units. For generic 720p/1080p content in the 24-30FPS mode, it's frankly not going to matter too much how fast of a card you have. But if you start recording 2.7K/4K footage at full frame rates you're going to want fast cards to be able to keep up. For those curious, in the Black/Silver I've been using the SanDisk U1 64GB Extreme Plus cards, without any recording issues. Again, for the Hero base, this would be beyond overkill (it couldn't use it if it tried).



With the camera powered on, all units have a front-facing LCD screen. This screen will show you which mode you're in, for example, video, photo, time lapse, etc… You can simply tap the front mode button to iterate to the next mode.





New to the Hero4 lineup though on the Black/Silver models is a direct settings button found on the side. While the button has always been there, it's been for enabling WiFi. Now, it'll do both. If you short-tap it, it'll open up the settings menu for just that particular mode. If you long-hold it, it'll enable/disable WiFi. It's a beautifully elegant solution.



By short-tapping it you'll get the video/photo resolution settings for just the mode you're in. So if you're in Video mode, it'll show you the resolution settings which you can quickly change.



The same is true of photo modes, allowing you to then change how many shots it might take, and the resolutions of those. It's without question one of my favorite features of the Hero4 lineup.

Of course, you can still dive into the traditional settings menu using the mode button, but now those options on the Black/Silver pertain more to whole-camera options.





For example, this is where you would change the orientation of the camera (Black/Silver/Hero), as well as change which mode the camera starts off in, for example, photo instead of video (Black/Silver).



And, you can enable the ability to automatically shut off after a preset time. I like 5 minutes, because that's typically longer than I'd wait around for any action sequence to happen – and usually means that I've forgotten about the camera. Since the GoPro doesn't save too much battery sitting in standby versus recording – I prefer to keep it off as much as I can.



Now, note that on the Hero base, you'll have considerably less options. For example, there is no option to change which mode it starts in, nor the option to automatically shut off. Though, those are hardly deal killers.





Also note that unlike the Black/Silver, the Hero base can't have settings changed via the phone apps, but more on that later.

Next, when it comes to actually record something, you'll start/stop the recording (or photos) by pressing the top button on the GoPro (with the red circle).



And again, to stop it, you'll just press the same button. By default the unit will chirp/beep and then the red recording light will blink. You can change the volume of the chirps. I do that if I plan to use the unit indoors where the chirps can get a bit annoying *(Side Note: I fail to understand why there is a 100% volume, 75% volume, and 0% volume level…but no 25% or 50% level).* Outside of course, it's handy to have the chirps though if mounted on a helmet.

With those basics covered, let's get onto the Silver-only touch screen, and then I'll cover many of the features individually.

THE HERO4 SILVER TOUCH SCREEN:



The GoPro Hero4 Silver sports a new addition to the Hero lineup, a touch screen. While you could in the past attach a LCD screen to the back of units, it always came at the cost of increased space as well as just being sorta clunky.

With the Hero4 Silver though, it's embedded into the back of the unit while remaining exactly the same size as previous models.



The screen is both there to display what the camera is shooting, but also to act as a touch screen to change settings. To do so, you'll press the little red dot and then slide down and hold a few seconds. This ensures that you can't accidentally bump it on, like butt dialing, but for action cameras (which, upon reflection could be really awkward).



Once you have it unlocked, it'll show you a touch menu that you can go into and modify settings for each of the modes. You effectively get all of the modification capabilities of the front LCD + buttons, with the back screen:







Now of course while recording, you can use this to frame your shots ahead of time and then keep an eye on things while recording. By default it'll shut off the screen shortly after recording to save battery.

I've gotta say, when I first saw the marketing images of the screen I figured it'd be like the Garmin VIRB screen. In that while the VIRB screen was marketed to look like a orgasmicly colorful experience, in reality it was like 1930's black and white silent film.

Thankfully, the Hero4 Silver is legit color. Brilliantly colorful and just as crisp and pretty as the marketing shots look. It's a bit tricky to take photos of because of the light differential between foreground and the LCD screen, but, you can get a little bit of a feel for it in some of the below:

