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# Nikon® D3400

for  
**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
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all your camera's features

Follow simple steps to  
start taking better photos

Get pro tips for shooting  
action shots and portraits

**Julie Adair King**

*Author of Digital Photography For Dummies*



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**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
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# Nikon<sup>®</sup> D3400

by Julie Adair King

for  
**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
A Wiley Brand

## Nikon® D3400 For Dummies®

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# Introduction

**N**ikon. The name has been associated with top-flight photography equipment for generations. And the introduction of the D3400 has only enriched Nikon's well-deserved reputation, offering all a terrific blend of features for capturing both still photos and high-definition digital movies. You even get tools for cropping, resizing, and enhancing pictures right in the camera. The D3400 even has built-in Bluetooth technology, which enables you to transfer photos wirelessly to certain smartphones, tablets, and other devices.

In fact, the D3400 offers so *many* features that sorting them all out can be more than a little confusing, especially if you're new to digital photography, SLR photography, or both. For starters, you may not even be sure what SLR means or how it affects your picture-taking, let alone have a clue about all the other techie terms you encounter in your camera manual — *resolution, aperture, white balance*, and so on. And if you're like many people, you may be so overwhelmed by all the controls on your camera that you haven't yet ventured beyond fully automatic picture-taking mode.

Therein lies the point of *Nikon D3400 For Dummies*. With the help of this book, you can take full advantage of everything the D3400 has to offer.

## About This Book

Unlike many photography books, this one doesn't require any previous knowledge of photography or digital imaging to make sense of things. In classic *For Dummies* style, everything is explained in easy-to-understand language, with lots of illustrations to help clear up any confusion.

Even if you have some photography experience — or quite a bit of experience, for that matter — this book has plenty to offer, however. I provide detailed information about all the camera's advanced exposure, focus, and color controls, explaining not just what each feature does but why and how to put it to best use.

In short, what you have in your hands is the paperback version of an in-depth photography workshop tailored specifically to your Nikon picture-taking powerhouse.

# How This Book Is Organized

This book is organized into four parts, each devoted to a different aspect of using your camera. Although chapters flow in a sequence that's designed to take you from absolute beginner to experienced user, I've also made each chapter as self-standing as possible so that you can explore the topics that interest you in any order you please. Here's a brief preview of what you can find in each part of the book:

- » **Part 1: Fast Track to Super Snaps:** Part 1 contains three chapters to help you get up and running. Chapter 1 guides you through initial camera setup and shows you how to view and adjust camera settings. Chapter 2 introduces you to basic picture options such as Exposure mode, Release mode, Image Size (resolution), and Image Quality (JPEG or Raw) and also provides information on flash photography with the D3400. Chapter 3 walks you through the steps of taking your first pictures using the Auto and Auto Flash Off exposure modes as well as the Scene modes (Portrait, Landscape, Sports, and so on).
- » **Part 2: Beyond the Basics:** Chapters in this part help you unleash the full creative power of your camera by detailing the advanced shooting modes (P, S, A, and M). Chapter 4 covers the critical topic of exposure; Chapter 5 explains how to manipulate focus; and Chapter 6 discusses color controls. Chapter 7 summarizes techniques explained in earlier chapters, providing a quick-reference guide to the camera settings and shooting strategies that produce the best results for portraits, action shots, landscape scenes, and close-ups. Chapter 8 shifts gears, moving from still photography to HD movie recording.
- » **Part 3: After the Shot:** This part offers two chapters, both dedicated to tasks you do after you press the shutter button. Chapter 9 explains how to review your pictures on the camera monitor and connect your camera to a TV for large-screen playback. Chapter 10 topics include rating, deleting, and protecting photos, downloading images to your computer, processing Raw files, and preparing pictures for online sharing. Chapter 10 also introduces you to two free Nikon photo programs, Nikon ViewNX-i and Capture NX-D.
- » **Part 4: The Part of Tens:** In keeping with *For Dummies* tradition, this book concludes with two top-ten lists containing additional bits of information and advice. Chapter 11 covers the photo-editing and effects tools found on the camera's Retouch menu and also shows you how to use the Effects exposure mode to add special effects to movies and photos as you record them. Chapter 12 wraps up the book by detailing some features that, although not found on most "Top Ten Reasons I Bought My D3400" lists, are nonetheless interesting, useful on occasion, or a bit of both.

- » **Appendix: Intro to Nikon SnapBridge:** Nikon SnapBridge is an app that you can install on certain Android- and Apple iOS smartphones, tablets, and other smart devices. It's this app that enables you to use the camera's Bluetooth wireless technology to connect your D3400 to your smart device. After making the connection, you can transfer photos to the device for viewing or easy uploading to your favorite social media site. Check out the appendix for an overview of the app, an explanation of camera menu options related to it, and details on how to access the online SnapBridge help site, which provides full information about using the app on various devices.
- » **Glossary:** If you're new to digital photography or to Nikon, the glossary is a handy reference to look up terms you might not be familiar with.
- » **Cheat sheet:** When you have a minute or two, visit [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com) and enter the name of this book in the search box. You'll find a link to a cheat sheet, which provides a handy reference guide to important camera settings and terms.

## Icons and Other Stuff to Note

If this isn't your first *For Dummies* book, you may be familiar with the large, round icons that decorate its margins. If not, here's your very own icon-decoder ring:



TIP

The Tip icon flags information that will save you time, effort, money, or some other valuable resource, including your sanity. Tips also point out techniques that help you get the best results from specific camera features.



WARNING

When you see this icon, look alive. It indicates a potential danger zone that can result in much wailing and teeth-gnashing if ignored. In other words, this is stuff that you really don't want to learn the hard way.



TECHNICAL  
STUFF

Lots of information in this book is of a technical nature — digital photography is a technical animal, after all. But when I present a detail that is useful mainly for impressing your tech-geek friends, I mark it with this icon.



REMEMBER

I apply this icon either to introduce information that is especially worth storing in your brain's long-term memory or to remind you of a fact that may have been displaced from that memory by another pressing fact.

Additionally, replicas of some of your camera's buttons and onscreen graphics appear in the margins and in some tables. I include these images to provide quick reminders of the appearance of the button or option being discussed.

# Where to Go from Here

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To wrap up this preamble, I want to stress that if you initially think that digital photography is too confusing or too technical for you, you're in very good company. *Everyone* finds this stuff mind-boggling at first. So take it slowly, experimenting with just one or two new camera settings or techniques at first. Then, every time you go on a photo outing, make it a point to add one or two more shooting skills to your repertoire.

I know that it's hard to believe when you're just starting out, but it really won't be long before everything starts to come together. With some time, patience, and practice, you'll soon wield your camera like a pro, dialing in the necessary settings to capture your creative vision almost instinctively.

So without further ado, I invite you to grab your camera, a cup of whatever it is you prefer to sip while you read, and start exploring the rest of this book. Your D3400 is the perfect partner for your photographic journey, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to act as your tour guide.

# 1

## **Fast Track to Super Snaps**

## IN THIS PART . . .

Familiarize yourself with the basics of using your camera, from attaching lenses to navigating menus.

Find out how to select the exposure mode, Release mode, Image Size (resolution), and Image Quality (JPEG or Raw file type).

Discover options available for flash photography.

Get step-by-step help with shooting your first pictures in Auto Mode, Flash Off Mode, and the Scene modes.

- » Preparing the camera for its first outing
- » Getting acquainted with camera features
- » Viewing and adjusting camera settings
- » Setting a few basic preferences
- » Restoring original camera settings

# Chapter **1**

# Getting Up and Running

**S**hooting for the first time with a camera as sophisticated as the Nikon D3400 can produce a blend of excitement and anxiety. On one hand, you can't wait to start using your new equipment, but on the other, you're a little intimidated by all its buttons, dials, and menu options.

Well, fear not: This chapter provides the information you need to start getting comfortable with your D3400. The first section walks you through initial camera setup; following that, you can get an overview of camera controls, discover how to view and adjust camera settings, and get my take on some basic setup options.

## Preparing the Camera for Initial Use

After unpacking your camera, you have to assemble a few parts. In addition to the camera body and the supplied battery (be sure to charge it before the first use), you need a lens and a memory card. Later sections in this chapter provide details about working with lenses and memory cards, but here's what you need to know up front:

- » **Lens:** You can mount a wide range of lenses on your D3400, but some aren't compatible with all camera features. For example, to enjoy autofocus, you



need an AF-P or AF-S lens. (The 18-55mm lens featured in this book and sold in a kit with the D3400 body is an AF-P lens.) Your camera manual offers details about lens compatibility.

The *AF* in AF-S and AF-P stands for *autofocus*. The *S* in AF-S stands for a *silent wave* focusing motor; the *P* refers to an autofocus technology known as a “stepping motor.” Both are designed to deliver faster and quieter autofocusing. How you implement autofocus differs between the two types, however. Read more about this issue later in this chapter, in the section “Familiarizing Yourself with the Lens.”

- » **SD (Secure Digital) memory card:** Your camera accepts only this type of card. A card with the simple SD designation is an older, lower capacity card that holds a maximum of 4GB of data. Newer SD cards carry the designation SDHC (for *High Capacity*) or SDXC (for *eXtended Capacity*), depending on how many gigabytes (GB) of data they hold. SDHC cards hold from 4GB to 32GB of data; the SDXC moniker is assigned to cards with capacities greater than 32GB.

With camera, lens, battery, and card within reach, take these steps:

1. **Turn off the camera.**
2. **Install the battery into the compartment on the bottom of the camera.**
3. **Attach a lens.**

First, remove the caps that cover the front of the camera and the back of the lens. Then align the *mounting index* (white dot) on the lens with the one on the camera body, as shown in Figure 1-1. After placing the lens on the camera mount, rotate the lens toward the shutter-button side of the camera. You should feel a solid click as the lens locks into place.

4. **Insert a memory card.**

Open the card-slot cover on the right side of the camera and orient the card, as shown in Figure 1-2. (The label faces the back of the camera.) Push the card gently into the slot and close the cover. The memory-card access light, labeled in the figure, illuminates briefly to let you know that the camera recognizes the card.

5. **Turn on the camera.**
6. **If using a retractable lens, unlock and extend the lens.**

The lens barrels of AF-P kit lenses, as well as some AF-S lenses, extend and retract. When you're not shooting, you can retract the lens so that it takes up less space in your camera bag. But before you can take a picture or even access most camera menu items, you must unlock and extend the lens.

A message appears on the camera monitor to remind you of this step.



**FIGURE 1-1:** Align the white dot on the lens with the one on the camera body.



REMEMBER

To extend the lens, press the retractable-lens barrel button, highlighted in Figure 1-3, while rotating the lens barrel toward the shutter-button side of the camera. To retract the lens, press the button while rotating the lens in the other direction.

## 7. Set the camera language, time zone, date, and time.

When you power up the camera for the first time, the monitor displays a message asking you to select the menu language and set the time zone, date, and time. Navigate the screens and adjust the settings by using the Multi Selector and the OK button (refer to Figure 1-2):

- Press the edge of the Multi Selector up and down to move the highlight cursor vertically; press right/left to travel horizontally. Press OK or press the Multi Selector right to reveal options related to the highlighted setting.
- When a value box is highlighted, press the Multi Selector up/down to change the value. Press left/right to jump to the next value box.
- After making your selections on a screen, press OK.

(The later section “Ordering from camera menus” provides more help with using menus.)

The date/time information is included as *metadata* (hidden data) in the picture file. You can view metadata in some playback display modes (see Chapter 9) and in certain photo programs, including Nikon ViewNX-i and Nikon Capture NX-D. (Refer to Chapter 10.)

## 8. Adjust the viewfinder to your eyesight.

Tucked behind the right side of the rubber eyepiece that surrounds the viewfinder is a dial that enables you to adjust the viewfinder focus to accommodate your eyesight. I highlighted the dial in Figure 1-4.

This step is critical: If you don't adjust the viewfinder to your eyesight, subjects may appear sharp in the viewfinder when they aren't actually in focus, and vice versa.



**WARNING**



Memory-card access light

Multi Selector/OK button

**FIGURE 1-2:**

Insert the memory card with the label facing the back of the camera.

Retractable-lens barrel button



**FIGURE 1-3:**

Press this button while rotating the lens barrel to extend and retract the lens.

To set the viewfinder focus, remove the lens cap, look through the viewfinder, and then press the shutter button halfway to display data at the bottom of the viewfinder. (In dim lighting, the flash may pop up; ignore it for now and close the unit after you adjust the viewfinder.) Now rotate the dial until the data appears sharpest. The markings in the center of the viewfinder, which relate to autofocus, also become more or less sharp.

Rotate dial to adjust viewfinder



That's all there is to it — the camera is now ready to go. From here, my recommendation is that you keep reading the rest of this chapter to familiarize yourself with the main camera features. But if you're anxious to take a picture right away, I won't think any less of you if you skip to Chapter 3, which guides you through the process of using the camera's automatic shooting modes. Just promise that at some point, you'll read the pages in between, because they actually do contain important information.

**FIGURE 1-4:**

Rotate this dial to set the viewfinder focus for your eyesight.

## Exploring Basic Camera Features

If you're new to dSLR photography, some aspects of using your camera, such as working with the lens, may be unfamiliar to you. But even if this isn't your first dSLR, it pays to take some time before your first shoot to get familiar with its controls. To that end, the upcoming pages provide an overview of the D3400's main features and also offer a primer on working with lenses and memory cards.

### Checking out external controls

Scattered across your camera's exterior are numerous controls that you use to change picture-taking settings, review your photos, and perform various other operations. In later chapters, I discuss all camera functions in detail and provide the exact steps to follow to access them. This section provides just a basic "what's this thing do?" guide to each control. (Don't worry about memorizing the button names; throughout the book, I show pictures of buttons in the page margins to help you know exactly which one to press.)

## Topside controls

Your virtual tour begins with the bird's-eye view shown in Figure 1-5. There are a number of features of note here:



» **On/Off switch and shutter button:** Okay, I'm pretty sure you've already figured out this combo button. But you may not be aware that you need to press the shutter button in two stages: Press and hold the button halfway and wait for the camera to initiate exposure metering and, if you're using autofo-cusing, to set the focusing distance. Then press the button the rest of the way to take the picture.



» **Exposure Compensation button:** This button activates Exposure Compensation, a feature that enables you to tweak exposure when working in the P (programmed autoexposure), A (aperture-priority autoexposure), or S (shutter-priority autoexposure) modes. I cover this feature in Chapter 4. To set the amount of Exposure Compensation, press the button while rotating the Command dial (the black dial on the upper-right corner of the camera back). In M (manual exposure) mode, press this button while rotating the Command dial to adjust the aperture setting, another exposure control explained in Chapter 4.



TIP

» **Info button:** This button performs two functions depending on whether you're using the viewfinder to frame shots or taking advantage of Live View, the feature that enables you to see the live scene on the monitor.

- *Viewfinder photography:* Press the Info button to display the Information screen, which displays the most critical picture-taking settings. To turn off the screen, press the Info button again.

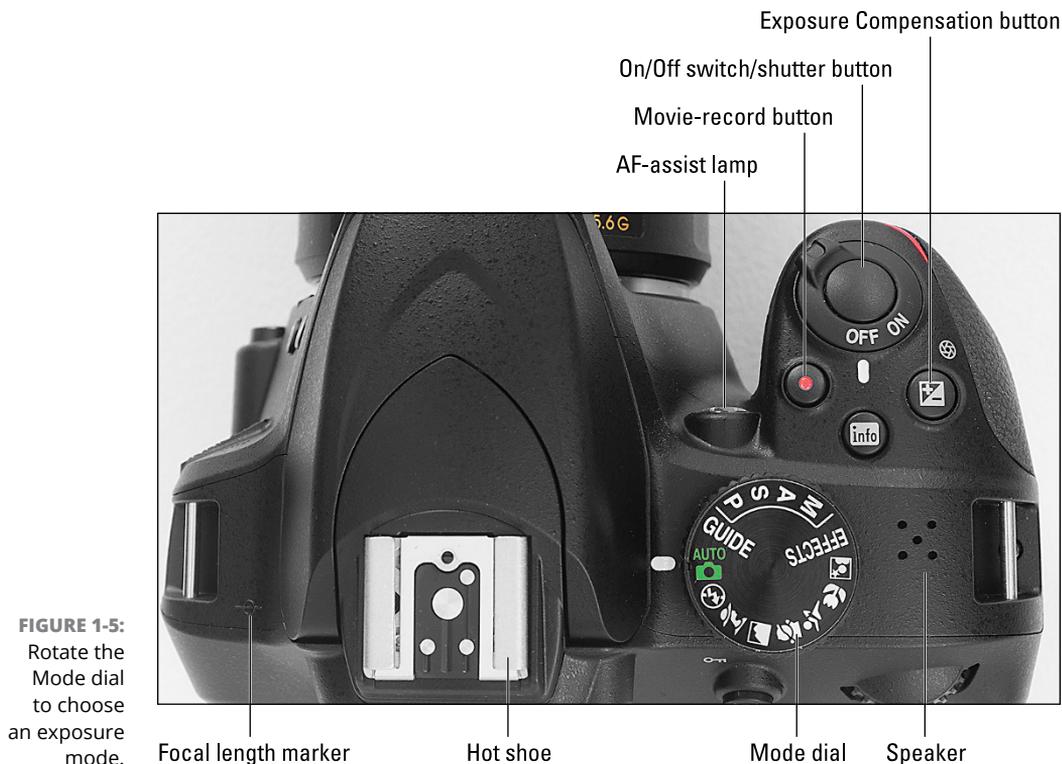
You also can display the screen by pressing the shutter button halfway and releasing it.

- *Live View photography:* After you press the LV (Live View) button on the back of the camera, the viewfinder goes dark, and the live scene appears on the monitor. During Live View photography, press the Info button to change the amount and type of data displayed along with the live scene. You can turn the monitor off only by exiting Live View mode (press the LV button again).



» **Movie-Record button:** After shifting to Live View mode, press this button to start recording a movie. Press again to stop recording. (You can't use the viewfinder when recording movies.)

» **Mode dial:** With this dial, you choose the *exposure mode*, which determines how much control you have over camera settings. For normal shooting, you can choose from fully automatic, semiautomatic, or manual exposure control; I introduce you to the auto modes in Chapter 3 and cover the semiautomatic and manual modes (P, S, A, and M) in Chapter 4.



**FIGURE 1-5:** Rotate the Mode dial to choose an exposure mode.

By turning the dial to Effects, you can apply special effects as the image or movie is captured, a feature you can explore in Chapter 11.

Select the Guide setting to access guided menus, covered later in this chapter.

- » **AF-assist lamp:** When you use autofocus, the camera may emit a beam of light from this lamp in dim lighting; the light helps the camera find its focus target. The lamp also lights when you use Red-Eye Reduction flash and the Self-Timer shutter-release mode, both covered in Chapter 2.
- » **Flash hot shoe:** A *hot shoe* is a connection for attaching an external flash head. See Chapter 2 for an introduction to flash photography.
- » **Speaker:** When you play a movie, the sound comes wafting out of these holes.
- » **Focal plane indicator:** If you need to document the exact distance that exists between your subject and the camera, the focal plane mark is the key. The mark indicates the plane at which light coming through the lens is focused onto the camera's image sensor. Basing your measurement on this mark produces a more accurate camera-to-subject distance than using the end of the lens or another external point on the camera body as your reference point.



TIP

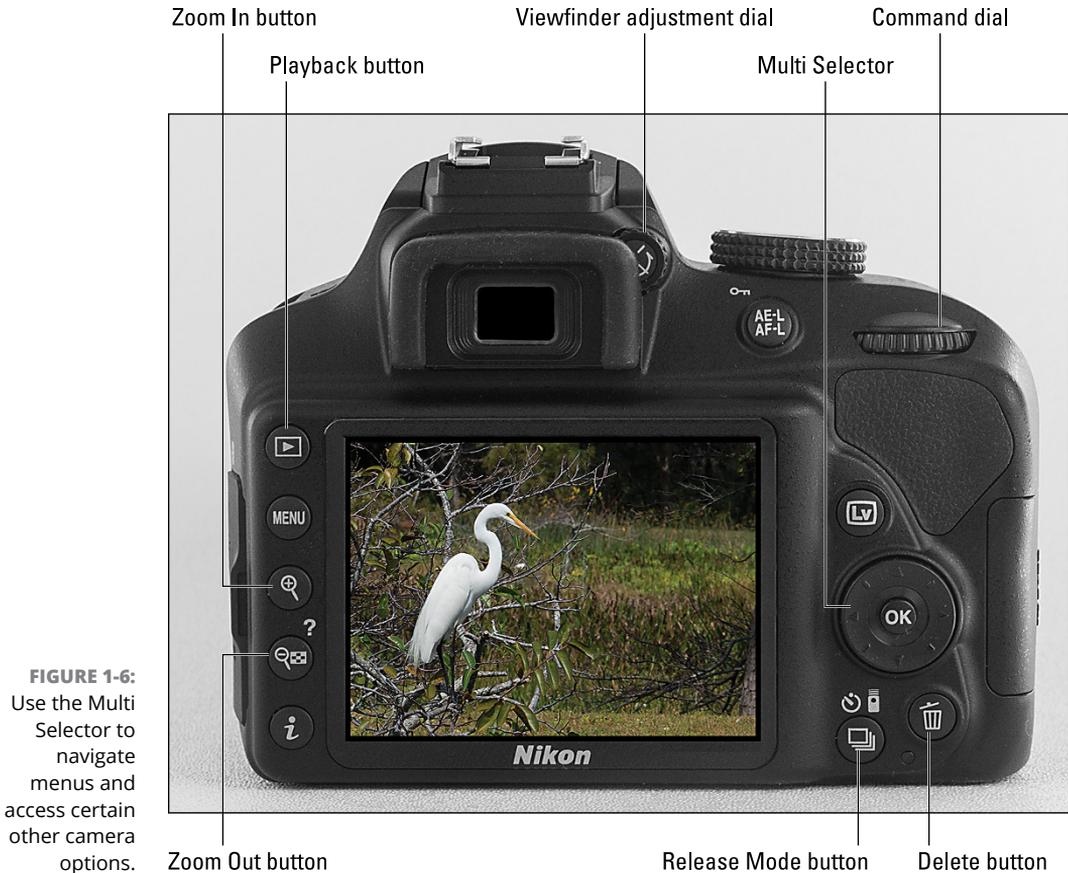
## Back-of-the-body controls

On the back of the camera, shown in Figure 1-6, you find these features:



- » **Viewfinder adjustment dial:** Rotate this dial to adjust the viewfinder focus to your eyesight; see the first section of this chapter for details.
- » **AE-L/AF-L button:** Pressing this button initiates autoexposure lock (AE-L) and autofocus lock (AF-L). Chapter 4 explains autoexposure lock; Chapter 5 talks about autofocus lock.

In playback mode, pressing the button activates the Protect feature, which locks the picture file — hence the little key symbol that appears above the button — so that it isn't erased if you use the picture-delete functions. See Chapter 10 for details. (The picture *is* erased if you format the memory card, however.)





» **Command dial:** After you activate certain camera features, you rotate this dial to select a setting. For example, to choose a shutter speed when shooting in shutter-priority (S) mode, you rotate the Command dial.



» **Playback button:** Press this button to switch the camera into picture review mode. Chapter 9 details playback features.

» **Menu button:** Press this button to access menus of camera options. See “Ordering from camera menus,” later in this chapter, for details.



» **Zoom In button:** In playback mode, pressing this button magnifies the currently displayed image. Note the plus sign in the middle of the magnifying glass — plus means enlarge.

» **Zoom Out button:** As you can probably deduce from the three symbols that mark this button, it has not one, but three primary functions:

- *Reduce image magnification during playback:* If you magnify an image during playback, pressing the button reduces the magnification amount. The magnifying glass with the minus sign tips you off to this function.
- *Display thumbnails during playback:* After you press the Playback button to shift to playback mode, pressing the Zoom Out button enables you to switch from single-image view, which shows one photo or movie at a time, to thumbnails view, which displays multiple images on the screen. Press once to display 4 thumbnails; press again to display 9 thumbnails; and press a third time to see 72 itty-bitty thumbnails. A fourth press shifts the display to Calendar playback, which makes it easy for you to locate pictures taken on a particular day.  
  
To cycle back to thumbnails view, press the Zoom In button; keep pressing to reduce the number of thumbnails until you get to single-image view.
- *Display help screens:* The question mark symbol above the button is a reminder that you can press this button to display helpful information about certain menu options. See the section “Displaying Help Screens,” later in this chapter, for details.



» **i button:** During shooting, pressing this button activates a control strip on the Information and Live View displays, enabling quick access to certain picture settings. See the upcoming section “Adjusting settings via the control strip” for details.



» **LV (Live View) button:** As its name implies, this button turns Live View on and off. In Live View mode, the scene in front of the lens appears on the monitor, and you can't see anything through the viewfinder. You then can compose a still photo using the monitor or begin recording a movie. I provide additional guidelines about using Live View later in this chapter.

» **Multi Selector/OK button:** This dual-natured control plays a role in many camera functions. You press the outer edges of the Multi Selector left, right,



REMEMBER



up, or down to navigate camera menus and access certain other options. At the center of the control is the OK button, which you press to finalize a menu selection or another camera adjustment.

In this book, the instruction “Press the Multi Selector left” simply means to press the left edge of the control. “Press the Multi Selector right” means to press the right edge, and so on.

- » **Release Mode button:** Press this button to display a screen where you can select the shutter-release mode. By default, the option is set to Single Frame, which results in one picture each time you press the shutter button. You can explore other settings in Chapter 2.
- » **Delete button:** Sporting a trash can icon, the universal symbol for delete, this button enables you to erase pictures from your memory card. Chapter 10 explains the steps.

## Front-left features

The front-left side of the camera, shown in Figure 1-7, sports these features:



- » **Flash button:** In the advanced exposure modes (P, S, A, and M), pressing this button raises the built-in flash. In other modes, the camera controls whether flash is enabled.

By holding the Flash button down and rotating the Command dial, you can adjust the Flash mode (Fill Flash, Red-Eye Reduction, and so on). In advanced exposure modes, you also can adjust the flash power by pressing the button while simultaneously pressing the Exposure Compensation button and rotating the Command dial. The little plus/minus symbol that appears below the Flash button — the same symbol that’s on the Exposure Compensation button — is a reminder of the button’s role in flash-power adjustment.



**FIGURE 1-7:** Press the Flash button to use the built-in flash in P, S, A, or M mode.