Advice from Middle Aged Female Tech
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I have been in the industry with my own company since 1994.   The entire time I have worked in this field there have been very few times any two techs ever agree completely.   The advice I give here is based on my experiences, testing, and what I know works.

I am always about saving money and not spending it on things you don't need to.

My topic for this article - web cameras, more specifically; comfort cameras.   Why do I call them comfort cameras?   I am vehemently opposed to the word security when talking about home monitoring systems. 'Security' implies prevention, not recording for viewing after the fact.   The word 'comfort' on the other hand, is closer to the service these cameras actually prove.   You have comfort knowing it is there. View your subject matter now, or later for curiousity, monitoring, and for entertainment.   You can find software for ANY of the methods listed below to send an email to you as a photo of an alert event (or recorded movement).   This allows the data to not just be stored on your computer, but sent to a source that can be retrieved anywhere.

There are different types of cameras and price ranges that are suitable for comfort camera use.   I would like to focus on 2 today.   IP cameras and USB cameras.

An IP camera is a networked digital video camera that transmits data over a Fast Ethernet link or wireless network. IP cameras are sometimes also called "network cameras" or "wireless cameras"   These are cameras you plug into a power outlet and configure like you do your wireless printer.   These types of cameras range in price with the brand you buy.   MOST of these cameras come with "monitoring" software that is just a plug and play.   I have 5 cameras around the house.   All the cameras I have and use regularly as a comfort camera range in price from $65 to $100.   Each comes with its own monitoring software.   You can see them on http://hollyecho.com/cam.   If you can't see the cameras come up on the page, pay attention to the "disadvantages" listed below.

Advantages of using an IP camera over a store bought or agency provided Security System include lower cost, and more configuration options.   If you go to a   "security" system (and I hate that word for these types of products), you can see prices from 2-10 thousand   dollars, whereas IP and web cams can be added one by one, or just one, or as small or as large as you want, and at an affordable price.   I use a software that can see and monitor (for recording) all brands of the cameras.   This way I don't have to run each camera's individual software at the same time. Of course, I choose the very least expensive one - there are several out ther. Remember, Google is your friend, and so is your local, trusted Computer Consulting Specialist.   There is a free "APP" you can download to your smart phone to see all your cameras (no matter who made them), at once.   For just a few examples you can see:
1.	Your babysitter/nanny
2.	Your pet (this is fun to show co-workers and friends)
3.	Your yard (this is convenient when you are away on vacation, knowing all is ok)
4.	What and how your child and/or elderly parents are doing
5.	And of course the famous "many, many more"

Disadvantages of using an IP camera over a store bought or agency provided Security System include power fluctuations, internet provider reliability, limitations to the software itself, and limitations in your computers capability to run the cameras and save the data.

Outages. Once the electric goes out, so does your computer which tells these cameras to record, and broadcast to a hosted web site (such as the one listed above).   Now most (like mine) will restart the open (not recorded) broadcast as soon as the electric and internet come back on, but will not till your computer comes back on, and the software is told to run (start) again.   Another disadvantage is storage space, if you don't have a very large hard drive and you have it record to your hard drive you can be filling up your hard

drive completely. It has to be monitored, maintained, and unneccessary files must be deleted to prevent this from happening. Motion sensors can't tell the difference (this is also true with the highest of priced systems) between a branch waving and a person walking by. Rain also has a tendency to cause the cameras to record for the entire duration because the motion detection sensor that triggers the system to record is seeing movement. Another disadvantage is that some camera brands when you set them to view night vision, the daytime images have altered color interpretation. Black can sometimes look purple, while green grass and trees may have a pinkish hue. But that same camera may have very high detailed night vision ability. Also, sometimes when you put an Infrared (night vision) camera looking out of a window, it tends to see nothing but the lights (IR lights) of the camera in the window reflection. My cameras installed outdoors do not have this problem.

USB cameras can be used as a comfort camera, but are limited to being in close proximity to the home computer, and typically don't have a long range for viewing in focus. However, they can be used the same as the wireless ones, with 1/8 the cost. Any 5 dollar camera can be pointed outside or inside your house and you have an inexpensive monitor/recorder, as long as your computer is on, and the software is running.

No matter how you set it up, it is kinda fun. Show your puppy to friends and co-workers. Look on your phone or work computer to see if your child is doing the homework he or she is supposed to. Keep an eye on your home while your away on vacation. So you can enjoy your vacation... comfortably.

Remember ANYquestions, email me at: Montgomery@Hollyecho.com. If possible, I will include the answer to your questions in my next article.