



MINOLTA 16mm CAMERAS

From their modest beginnings after World War Two, the Minolta subminiature format rose to become the most popular Japanese 16mm, still-picture manufacturer and helped Minolta establish itself as a major player in the photographic industry. The revolutionary Minolta cassette is the closest the subminiature market ever came to a "standard" 16mm film format and it was copied by many other camera companies, even outside of Japan. With the exception of the Minox cassette, it is the long-distance runner of the submini world; Minolta manufactured and sold its film cassettes until 1995, and replicas are still being made in the Ukraine and China (?), today. Fortunately, even the older cameras are still very useable since the Minolta cassette used 16mm film (which is still readily available), and they did not require perforations in the film to advance the film. They are very easy to reload. Check out [The Darkroom](#) for details.

The original Minolta 16mm camera was designed by the [Konan](#) Institute and used the original Konan cassette. This cassette will not fit in any of the Minolta cameras -- or at least cameras with the Minolta name, since Minolta ended up making many cameras with the Konan name.

Basically, Minolta bought-out Konan. When Minolta took over, they redesigned the cassette using black felt for the light trap. There were actually several versions, nearly identical. The first was metal, but this was soon replaced with the more standard plastic type -- of which there were several versions. Minolta made two plastic models, identical except that on the second version a notch or indentation was cut into the cassette bridge to make it easier to break off the film take-up lobe for processing purposes. (If you have the newer version it's a good idea to fill in the notch with a little epoxy to make it last longer.) To complicate matters even more, similar cassettes were made by other companies, such as Yashica (which sold a camera that used the Minolta cassette), a company called FR (which sold the film and offered processing), and others. The Minolta cassettes are fairly easy to find today, and will fit in all of the cameras on this list. They will NOT fit in Mica and Konan cameras.

To top it all off, there are even bogus Minolta cassettes being sold. For more information check out the [NEWSTAND](#).

- **16 Automat**

(1955) -- 25mm (f3.5-11); B, 1/50-1/200. This was the first Konan-type camera with the Minolta name, although it was not the first Konan-type camera made by Minolta. The biggest difference in this model with the earlier Konan-type cameras made by Minolta was that Minolta added a mini-exposure guide to the top of the camera. It was etched into the metal, next to the shutter speed and aperture wheels. It indicated f3.5 for rainy, f5.6 for hazy, etc. This was the first model to use the newly redesigned Minolta cassette.

- [16](#)

- [16 II](#)

(1960) -- 22mm (f2.8-16); B, 1/30-1/500. This updated version of the Minolta 16 that had several improvements. First, the shutter speed range was increased substantially. It now had a B setting for long exposures, and all speeds from 1/30 through 1/500. In addition, the f-stop range was increased at both the high and low ends. With the increased aperture, the lens was changed from a three-element to a four-element optic. Finally, a "distance" lens, actually a slight negative diopter lens, was added to the list of accessory lenses to allow infinity focus at all apertures. This meant sharper pictures of distant scenes at any aperture. Overall, these refinements make the camera more useful in more situations. William White considers the lens on this model to be one of the [top ten performers in submini history](#). The camera was available in six colors -- chrome, black, gold/yellow, blue, red, and green. Filters (18x18mm -- are not interchangeable with the filters for the 16I): 1A, UV, 80A, Y48(Yellow), 81B. Auxilliary lenses: #0 (for focusing at infinity with the lens at wide apertures), Closeup #1, #2. Accessories: bracket to hold electronic flash and tripod socket. Although the lens was fixed-focus at about 9 feet (6 feet closer than the 16I), it's [depth-of-field](#) was adequate and controllable with the aperture and auxilliary lens selection. Actually two versions of this camera exist. The first says 'Chiyoda Kogaku Minolta-16 (II)' and the second 'Minolta Minolta-16 II.' This is due to Chiyoko becoming The Minolta Camera Company in 1962.

- [16 P](#)

(1960-1965) -- 25mm (f3.5-16). A simplified model that sold very well since it was inexpensive and easy to use. There were several features (or lack thereof) that made the camera inexpensive. First, it had just one shutter speed (1/100) -- exposure is completely controlled by the aperture. The camera did come with a clever, manual exposure system, however. To use, the film speed was dialed in (ASA 10 - 160). Then the photographer rotated the f-stop dial to match up the appropriate idiot-weather symbol (or f-stop). A mini-exposure guide was etched on the back of the camera for quick reference. The second design feature to reduce cost was that the body was rigid and did not collapse. As a result, it was larger than the previous models -- the push-pull film advance feature was replaced with a thumb wheel.

Fortunately, the three element lens was good quality. It's a great camera for scenics and group shots, and much sharper than you would expect -- when used in this capacity. Built-in PC contact and tripod socket. Combination flash bracket/tripod adapter was available. Although the lens was fixed-focus at 16 feet, it's [depth-of-field](#) was adequate and controllable with the aperture and auxilliary lens selection. Two close-up lenses were made. The #1 was for focusing at about 4 feet, while the #2 was aimed at 2.5 feet. Filters included a UV, Y48 (yellow), 80A, 81B, ND (4x) and 1A. The filters used a bayonet system and were rotated, or twisted, into place.

- [Sonocon 16 MB-ZA](#)

- **16 EE**

(1962-1964) -- 25mm (f2.8-16); 1/30-1/400. This model was quite a change for the 16mm Minolta series. For the first time, Minolta offered a 16mm camera with a built-in meter -- AND automatic exposure (shutter-preferred). The size and weight of this model was increased substantially, since it had a meter (selenium) and several other new features. The camera used a "manual-programmed/shutter preferred" exposure method. First, the camera is loaded with film and the film speed is dialed in (ISO 25 to 400). Setting the film speed also sets the shutter speed, as follows: with 25 film, 1/30 second was set, with 50 film, 1/60 second was set, with 100 film, 1/125 second was set, with 200 film, 1/250 second was set, with 400 film, 1/400 second was set. Then a dial on the back of the camera is set to "AUTO". The camera's meter set the correct f-stop (f2.8-16). A green "LED" in the upper right-hand corner of the viewfinder will indicate if there is enough light for the exposure. It worked; quite a convenience feature back then. No manual settings -- unfortunately. For flash, the film speed dial was set at 25 or 50 (which set the shutter speed). Then a dial on the back of the camera was set to "flash", which set the aperture to f11.0. The guide number of the flash would be used to determine the correct distance to the subject. The lens provides for zone focusing (near or far). The lens had two focus settings -- 7 feet (for close-ups) or 16 feet (for distance shots). Closeup lenses were also available. The #1 focuses to 4 feet, while the #2 moves in to 2.3 feet -- with the primary lens set to the 7 foot position. Tripod socket, cable release socket and PC contact built in. Case, wrist strap and tripod/flash shoe adapter available. Comes with built-in, removeable UV filter. Also available were 1A, 81A and 80A. Filters are interchangeable with 16EE II and 16 CDS models. To change filters, the built-in filter frame is pushed upward with the thumb and the bottom automatically pops out. Then the filter is switched.

- **16 EE2**

Just one year after coming out with the revolutionary 16EE, Minolta produced an updated version in 1963 -- the EE2. It is typically listed as just a 16EE with a Cds meter (instead of the original selenium meter), but there were more changes than just the meter. Sure, it had the same body styling, and even the same lens (25mm f2.8), but on this model, the shutter speed was not pre-selected by dialing in the film speed. After dialing in the film speed (25 - 320), the photographer manually selects the shutter speed, either H (High -- 1/200) or L (Low -- 1/50). In the high speed setting, a green "LED" in the upper right-hand corner of the viewfinder will indicate if there is enough light for the exposure. If not, just switch to the low speed. The meter then automatically sets the correct aperture setting from f2.8 to f11. There is no manual setting of the f-stop, but there is a third shutter speed setting -- F (1/30) -- for flash use. Selecting this setting sets the f-stop at f11 and is not variable. Like the EE, the camera is substantially larger and heavier than the Minolta 16, but offers easy exposure controls. The lens provides for zone focusing (near or far). The near setting is 7 feet, while the far setting is 16 feet. Closeup lenses were also available. The #1 focuses to 4 feet, while the #2 moves in to 2.3 feet. A PC terminal, tripod socket and cable release socket were all built-in and the camera came with a UV filter. Also available were 1A, 81A and 80A filters that are interchangeable with the 16EE and 16 CDS models. To change the filters, the built-in filter frame is pushed upward with the thumb and the bottom automatically pops out. Then the filter is switched. A case, wrist strap and tripod/flash shoe adapter were available. The camera produced 10mmx14mm images on 16mm film (double-perforated, single-perforated or unperforated film can be used). Uses one 625 battery.

- **16 Cds**

(1963-1965) -- Same as Minolta 16 EE2, but sold with different name.