Great photo editor for intermediate users
Kim Komando 1/4/15

In the age of the smartphone where there's a camera in every pocket, have you ever stopped and wondered what you're going to do with all of those photos? So many great photos go unshared because they sit on your phone or your computer with nowhere to go.

Probably because they're not dressed up. Great photos without the right editing can really only be good photos. And the good news is that you don't have to be a photo-editing wizard to do that. If you've ever used any kind of photo editor before, then you know how simple it can be to tidy up your photos. A bit of color correction here, red-eye removal there, and your photos are good to go.

But for those of you that are looking for a more in-depth way to edit your photos and add your own flair, you need something a little more comprehensive than Windows Media Gallery.

For you photo editors that have a good grasp of the basics, you might appreciate Paint.net. It's like a cross between Photoshop and Windows' built-in MS Paint. In fact, it was originally created as a free replacement for MS Paint. Paint.net lets you add text, paint, patterns, shapes and gradients to any photo using layers. It also includes tons of helpful special effects that let you sharpen, blur or remove grain and noise.

You can make photos look like old paintings, add motion blur for excitement, or just remove red eye. But perhaps the best part is that Paint.net keeps an unlimited history, so you'll always be able to undo every change.

Note: Paint.NET requires the .NET framework and the Windows 7 Support Package 1 as minimum requirements. Paint.NET is not compatible with Windows Vista.

Link: http://www.getpaint.net/download.html

Powerful all-in-one photo program that's easy to use
Kim Komando 12/30/14

The holiday season is nearly over, and many folks are sadly packing away the festive decorations until next year. With the holiday season comes friends, family and fun, and that usually means lots of photos to remember the festivities when the season is gone. Of course, that also means that you need a photo editing program to make your photos the best quality possible. But when was the last time you used a photo editor?

Windows has a basic photo editor, but what if you have an image format that's not supported? Many of the more powerful photo editors out there that handle any image type have a steep learning curve.
That doesn't mean you have to resort to sharing photos that haven't reached their full potential.
There's a way you can edit your photos, turn them into slideshows and do so much more from just one program. You'll wonder how you adjusted your photos without it.

XnView is a simple program that supports over 500 image formats to make your photos more manageable. It can also organize and edit photos, as well as convert your photos to a more manageable format.
It's simple enough to view a file or thumbnail. Just click on a thumbnail to see the basic info about the photo. To edit your photo, double-click the thumbnail to open the photo in a new tab in XnView.

From here you can crop, resize, color-correct, eliminate red-eye and do so much more to perfect your favorite photos. You can also save and print your photos from XnView.

Want to spice things up a bit? You can turn your family vacation or holiday get-together into a slide-show of your favorite photos. Just click the slideshow icon and select your photos to display. You can even set music to your brand-new slideshow.

Download Instructions

To download the program, navigate to the XnView download page and click the small blue "Download" button in the center of the page. Then click the blue button in the center of the page labeled "XnView Std. Setup softonic" to begin the standard download.

Note: This is a free program and will not prompt you for payment information. If you are asked for your payment information or to install third-party toolbars, you have clicked on the wrong download button.

Your download should begin immediately. When the download is complete, open and run the installation file. Choose your language to continue. Be sure to read the License Agreement before continuing. Remember, you should always read the fine print before downloading anything to your computer!

The full installation comes with a few extra features that the minimum installation doesn't have. You can customize which components of XnView you want to download, but I recommend the full installation. When the installation is complete you can access XnView through the new desktop icon. You will need to set the configuration wizard before proceeding. I recommend checking the first box labeled "Display all image file types" and changing the "Check update" drop-down bar to "Weekly." Click "OK" to continue.

Link: http://www.xnview.com/en/xnview/

An amazing free alternative to Photoshop

Kim Komando 11/12/14

There's no question about it: Most photography and graphics professionals use Adobe Photoshop. It's been the go-to photo editing program for graphic designers, photographers, editors and artists for many years. Unfortunately, it's also quite expensive. The latest version of Photoshop costs anywhere from $10-$50 a month. Isn't there an alternative that has similar features but won't break the bank? It turns out there is: It's called GIMP. That's an acronym for GNU Image Manipulation Program. It began in 1995 as a project at UC Berkeley, but it's come a long way since then! In fact, it has many of the same capabilities as Photoshop.

There are plenty of filters, brush tools, gradients and more. GIMP even lets you use layers like Photoshop. In the past, GIMP was criticized for being difficult to learn, but the latest version has an easier interface. Even so, if you're used to Photoshop, GIMP may seem unfamiliar. Happily, GIMP it isn't too hard to learn.

There are dozens of tutorial videos for using GIMP. You can also find plug-ins on the GIMP website, including a bevy of added tools.

Download Instructions
To download the program, navigate to the GIMP download page and click the large orange text link labeled "Download GIMP 2.8.14". If the torrent download doesn't work, you can click the smaller orange text link labeled "this link" for a more compatible download.

Note: The website will update the software and the name will change accordingly. Some newer versions of GIMP will be different than noted in this article. This version is compatible for Macs; previous versions of GIMP were available for Windows only.

After the download is complete, open and run the installation package. Be sure to read the Terms and Conditions before agreeing to them. Remember, you should always read the fine print before downloading anything to your computer! Choose your language to continue, and click "Install." GIMP will install without any bloatware or extra add-ons. Once you've installed GIMP, I recommend checking out the Help tab in the top right of the toolbar. Select "User Manual" to view seven helpful guides to the basic features. You can also read daily tips that can unlock very useful features in GIMP. Even though the process is different from Photoshop, many of the same results are achievable. If you're having trouble figuring out how to do something, I suggest looking for helpful tutorials on YouTube.

Link for Windows and Mac versions: http://www.gimp.org/downloads/