Quick and Easy COMPUTER SCRAPBOOKING

Low cost and lots of fun!

By: Ellen Wardle

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Email

Recommended Resources

- **Web Site Hosting Service**

- **Internet Marketing**

- **Affiliate Program**

Please Read This First

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About the Author

Ellen Wardle has been making scrapbooks for several years.

Ellen started using a computer in her work and bought her first computer just a couple of years ago.

She started using a desktop publishing program for letters and also stationery for a community organization which she belonged to.

Then, she realized that this could also be a great help with producing her scrapbooks as well.

Ellen says that she is not interested in the technical aspects of her computer. She just wants to use her computer to make scrapbooking easier and to improve the results she gets without spending very much money.

This is her first book and she hopes it will introduce many people to the delightful art of scrapbooking and also help many hobbyists, who have some experience with traditional methods, use their computers to improve the results they get.

Introduction

I wrote this ebook to help scrapbookers to get better results from the time and effort they put into their projects.

Scrapbooking is a very enjoyable hobby and useful for recording and sharing the most important and interesting events in our lives.

I will show you how you can use your computer to improve your scrapbook projects while saving time and money.

If you have been making your pages and projects without using your computer, I will show you how you can use your computer to improve your scrapbook projects while saving time and money.

This book will explain that it is easy for almost anyone to use their computer for their scrapbooking even if you don't know much about computers.

I'll answer your questions without any technical language because I am not an expert at all aspects of this hobby and especially not with computers.

I will tell you what works for me. This book gives you the short-cuts and plain explanations based on my own experience and what I have learned from other scrappers I have met face to face or through the Internet.

The results you get will depend, as they do with the traditional methods, on the quality of the materials you use and, above all, the thought and care which you give to your pages.

I have focused on computer programs which work on the Windows operating system because that is what I use.

I will give references for Macintosh users where I got information from people I believe are reliable.

Although most of the explanations are done with my favorite programs, I have looked at several others which might better suit you.

Some are quite expensive but there are some which are very low-cost or even free.

You don't need a very fast modern computer to produce great results. My PC still has the XP operating system because I can do everything that I need to with it.

If you are using Vista, Windows 7 or a different operating system, you will have to adjust the instructions at times.

The different computer programs will often have similar features with different names and the way that their menus and screens are arranged will differ. This can be a nuisance, but I was told that companies can take legal action against other companies which may have copied the layout which they developed.

I've included a range of resources which I either use or have had recommended to me.

Comments about sites, programs and services are just my own opinions. I never make any comments which are negative about the quality or other aspects of any company or its products. I don't mention those programs or companies in the book.

If I don't like the results I get, I take it up with them directly.

You can print out a copy of this book for your own reference.

I hope that it will help you to get the sort of satisfaction and enjoyment which I do from digital scrapbooking.

What is Scrapbooking?

Scrapbooking is a popular way to collect and preserve our family history and other memories. Scrapbooks are records of people and events but they include relevant mementos to enhance and give background to the pictures and words.

Scrapbooks may focus a family's history, a person's life or a special event (such as a journey or a wedding), hobby, pets or other personal interest.

Scrapbooks become family treasures to be shared with relatives and heirlooms which are handed down through generations.

Scrapbooks grew in popularity from the time when it became possible to make multiple copies of photographs and more advanced but cheaper and easier to use cameras were developed.

Computers are becoming more popular with scrapbookers (often called 'scrappers') for preparing and organizing their projects.

One drawback has been that the papers and inks used with computers did not have the durability of the archive grade paper used for traditional scrapbooking.

Some printer companies, such as Epson, have enthusiastically supported scrapbookers. They produce kits of acid-free, lignin-free matte and semi-gloss papers and low-cost Guides to help scrapbookers use their products.

Is Digital Scrapbooking Better?

Digital scrapbooking is a different way to produce parts of your scrapbook projects more quickly and often more cheaply.

You can even use your computer to produce complete projects.

It hasn't replaced traditional methods but it is a valuable addition to any scrapper's tool chest.

Our computers also make it possible for people like myself, with limited artistic ability and limited time, to produce scrapbooks which are much better than we ever could do without them!

Even people that are very good with the traditional methods can use their computer to organize their raw materials, enhance their projects, and save time and money.

Your computer will not remove your personality from a project. It gives you more options for expressing yourself and presenting the information.

Let's get started.

Ellen Wardle 2010

What You Need

You need very little that you probably haven't already got, to get started with your first digital scrapbooking project.

You need:

A computer with an Internet connection. The computer which you used to buy this ebook probably has all the power you need to organize and create your projects.

Photos and other material to make your scrapbooks from.

A camera for taking photos which you will use in projects.

If you have a digital camera, you can easily transfer your new digital pictures into your computer with the cable and program which came with your camera.

Scanning Your Pictures

If you want to use photos which were printed from a developed film and not taken with a digital camera, you will need to either to pay someone to scan them and then save them on to a DVD for you to use or get a scanner and do it yourself.

You might get a scanner or a printer combined with a scanner and perhaps a fax (usually called a multi-function printer).

Your scanner should have the highest resolution and bit depth (check the information provided on the box) which you can get.

You may not always use the maximum settings available because pictures produced at those settings are likely to be much larger computer files but buying a machine which has low values means that you will find yourself restricted from doing more detailed work when you have a project which needs it.

It is also useful if your scanner has the accessory which enables you to scan photo slides and film negatives if you are likely to want to use them in your projects.

Printers and Supplies

If you are going to produce printed versions of your scrapbook projects to the same standard and specifications as traditional scrapbooks, you will need a printer which can print on twelve inch square paper, the traditional size for scrapbook pages.

Many of the printers available cannot handle that width of paper, but you can produce nice scrapbooks with them. A lot of people produce smaller books, including pocket-size "brag" books or others with pages that can be printed on their printers.

The inks supplied for most computers printers are dye inks in four colors which can produce good results and they are getting better all the time. But, they are not likely to last or give the results which can be obtained with the more expensive pigment-based inks

You have to decide if that is worth the higher cost to you.

Paper

You also need to consider whether you will pay the higher cost of the special archive quality paper which is suitable for use with computer printers. Epson has been supplying packs of this type of paper but there may also be other sources.

This paper is expected to be able to be stored for over 100 years where most paper produced for computer printers may only last about twenty years.

With regular computer paper supplies, you might use gloss finish paper where you are producing bright highly-colored pages. Paper with a matt finish is possibly better for softer images.

Some suppliers produce papers with different textures. You might check these out where you are producing commemorative scrapbooks about a particular event such as the first year of your child's life etc.

Computer Programs

There are specialized computer programs available just for producing scrapbook pages. This is probably the easiest way to produce and fill your pages with your content.

These programs vary in price and features. There are even some which are free!

I'll describe some which are currently available later in this ebook. I'll try to give you some general guides which you can use to compare the features and possible limitations of other programs which are currently available or which could be released after this book has been published.

But, you don't have to get one of those dedicated programs.

Start with what You already Have

You can use a program which is designed for desktop publishing or general picture editing (called "graphic editing") to produce a scrapbook.

If you already have an image editing program of any kind on your computer, I suggest that you use that first and see if it has all the features you need for your first few scrapbook projects.

After trying out the programs which you got for other purposes or which were supplied with your scanner, printer or digital camera, you can decide if you need a program with other features or which produces better quality results for your projects.

You will also have a better idea of what features you really need from any program that you decide to buy.

The chapter, "Choosing Your Image Editor" explains some of the features you should look for in the program you use to create and edit your pages and pictures.

The chapter, "Editing Pages and Pictures" has a demonstration where I make a page and fill it with sample content of various kinds.

Download a Trial of a Commercial Program

Most suppliers of commercial programs offer trial versions which will work for a set period, usually from ten to thirty days. You can download these trials from the suppliers' web sites on the Internet.

This can be very helpful.

You can test a program which you are interested in without buying it first. Returning a computer program to a store or a refund after you have opened and perhaps installed it may not be as straight-forward as returning a physical item such as a toaster.

One drawback to these free trials is that the files you have to download are often very large. They take time to download to your computer and use up part of the bandwidth which your Internet Service Provider allows you before applying an extra charge. You need a good broadband connection to handle them.

I only use trial versions where I have seen good, preferably independent, reports about the program and am seriously considering buying it because there are other factors which may limit their usefulness.

If you decide to buy that program, you may have to download a different version which can be unlocked with the serial number which the supplier sends to you after getting your payment. With some trial programs, you can use that serial number to unlock the full features of the paid version and you don't have to download the program twice.

Many trial versions have fewer features than the full packages. This lets you experiment and see whether the program is one you are comfortable using, while encouraging you to invest in the full version.

Some trial programs limit your ability to print the pages you produce and some put watermarks on pages which are printed from trial versions. Otherwise some people would try to use the free trials to produce commercial products and sell them without paying anything to the provider of the program.

You can also get trial versions or even full, superceded versions of some programs on the CDs or DVDs which are attached to computer magazines which you buy.

You pay a few dollars for a program that was probably selling a few months ago for maybe more than a hundred dollars. Another point is that the disc will usually have a variety of programs on it.

You may also get a special offer to upgrade to the current version of the program over the Internet for significantly less than the store price for the full boxed version.

Start with What You Already Have

If you have a digital camera, you may have got an image editing program on the CD or DVD which came with it. That program may have enough features to get you started with your first few projects or, at least allow you to become familiar with how to manipulate your pictures so that you know how to decide which more advanced program to get later on.

Or, you may already have an image editing program which you bought for another purpose. You may have got one as part of the deal when you bought your computer.

Give it a good try before buying a program or even downloading one from the Internet. You may be pleasantly surprised.

Please be careful! Always scan any file which you download from the Internet or get from any other source. Even if you know the supplier, their files may have been infected without them knowing.

Use your anti-virus and anti-spy ware programs before you open the program.

If you get an illegal copy of a commercial program, there is a good chance it will be corrupted or could corrupt your computer by installing viruses or programs which could steal your personal information.

Download a Free Program from the Internet

If you don't want to buy any new programs, you can download and install one or more free programs from the Internet.

I will include information about some good free programs and some commercial programs in this book.

I am amazed by the quality and variety of image editing and other programs which are available legally for free on the Internet.

You don't get the pretty boxes and cannot expect personal help with any problems that you have with the programs. But, you can save money over the cost of buying equivalent commercial programs.

Some of the better programs are produced in their own time by highly paid programmers or expert hobbyists who want to produce programs that are different from those which they work on for their employers.

They sometimes share their personal projects without commercializing them.

Many free programs have Terms of Use which should always be followed. Some may not be used for any commercial purpose.

Some may not be shared but you can tell your friends about the suppliers' website where they can download the program like you did.

This may seem strange but there are two major reasons:

1) Because the programmer only permits downloading from their web site, they get some recognition and maybe some donations for their work.

2) If there is only one web site where the program may be downloaded, there is less chance of virus-infected versions being distributed.

I've listed some which I have used or had good reports about in the resources section later in my book.

Benefits of Digital Scrapbooking

While some people are firm believers in the superiority of either traditional or digital scrapbooking over the other, I do both.

I produce some traditional scrapbooks with real buttons, newspaper clippings and other materials for sharing with and handing on to other family members.

I also produce some scrapbooks in digital form so that I can send them to other family members and friends over the Internet.

This lets me share information and images much more widely than would be possible if I only had the printed and bound scrapbooks. The people I send the digital scrapbooks to can keep them and read them as many times as they want to.

I don't risk losing any original documents or the scrapbooks when I share digital copies.

I also use my computer to organize the materials, notes, resources and sources of information and supplies for my Scrapbooking. This saves me hours of time and reduces the chance that I will buy some supplies but forget that I have them.

Re-using clippings, pictures and other items which have been glued into paper scrapbooks is difficult and, of course, ruins the project I take them from. Digital images of those items can be copied and use for as many projects as you want.

When you use real pages to assemble a project, you have to be careful not to damage any of the supplies – they can all only be used once. Most computer-based supplies can be used over and again.

Real pictures, clippings, tickets etc cannot always be fitted into a page together because of their original size. When you prepare a digital version you can usually adjust the size of each item so they will fit.

When you use a memento in a paper scrapbook, you cannot use it for anything else and you may forget where it is after a while.

If you put an image of it in a digital scrapbook, you can store the original item away safely or give it to another family member who has a special reason for wanting to have it.

Despite the reasons for making scrapbooks on your computer, you will find that making traditional scrapbooks has unique appeal. You can read them with other family members and discuss their contents and the people or events which they are about more comfortably with other people than you would if you had to both read the same computer screen.

There is something wonderful about handling and reading a lovingly prepared traditional scrapbook with original mementos that you don't get from any kind of computer simulation.

Making Your Digital Scrapbook

What will you make your first scrapbook about?

This will depend on your current interests and the resources and equipment which you have available.

Decide whether you will use an original layout or save time and effort by getting either a free or a commercial layout from the Internet.

If you don't want to use a prepared page template or if you want to make the pages for your scrapbook a different size to the usual twelve inches square, you can easily create a layout on your computer with a word processing or a graphic design program.

The actual instructions will depend on the program which you use to create your pages and add your content.

I am using the [Paint.Net program](#) for this demonstration.

Many other programs have similar capabilities but the tools and effects may have different labels and the arrangement of the menus will probably be different.

Creating a Page

1. Set the size of the page you want in your program.
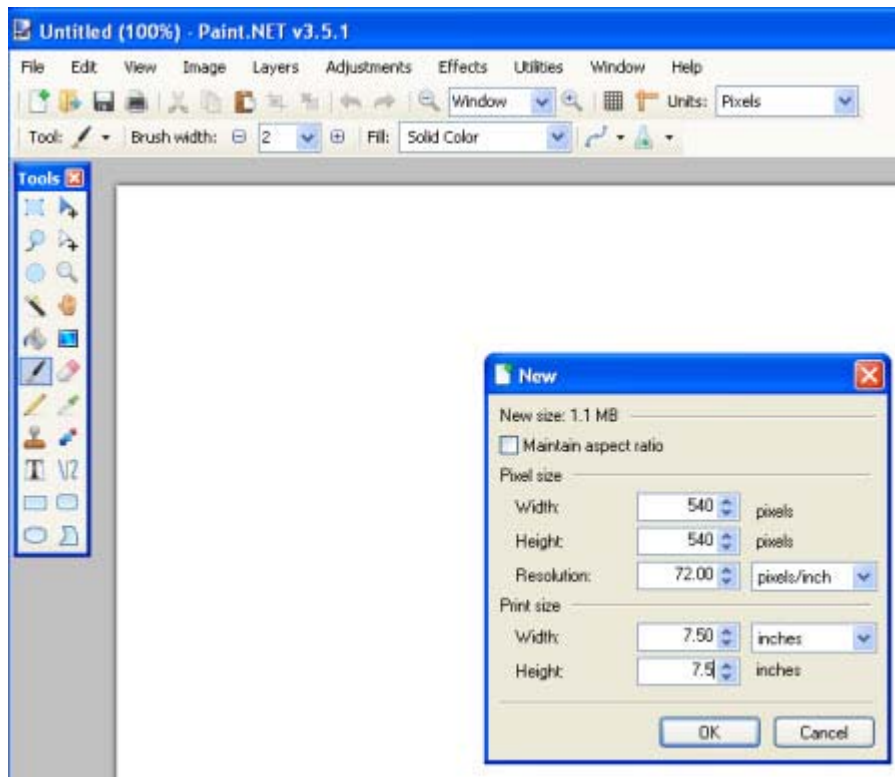
TIP: "Maintain aspect ratio" is important for preserving the look of pictures which you resize before using them in your projects. But, it is not important for creating a page from scratch as I am doing here so I have not ticked it.

2. Add a color and, if desired, a pattern to the background.
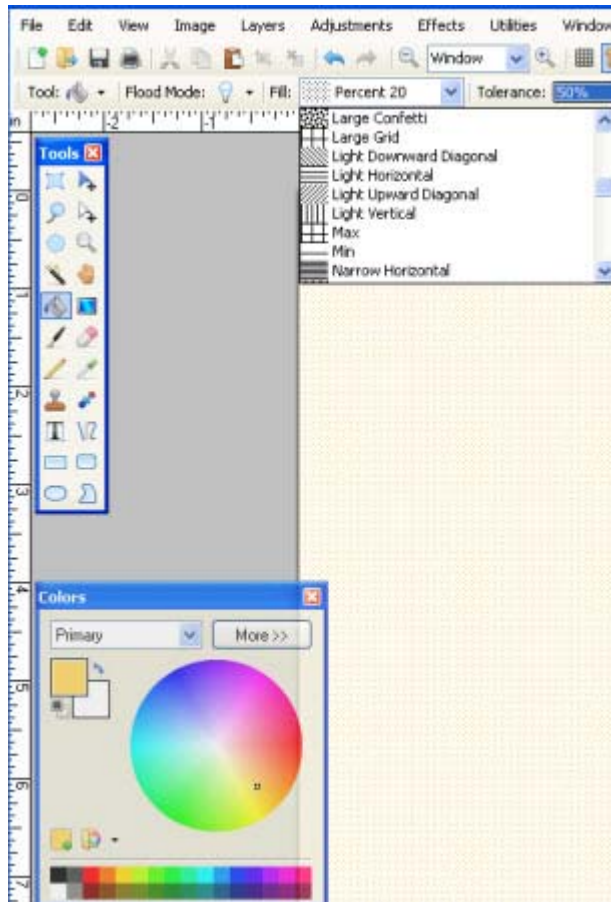
This can be simple, like this example, or as elaborate as you can do with your editing program and the time you have available for it.

3. Add picture frames where you want pictures on the page. Use the tools available in the program you are using to create frames for the pictures you intend to put on the page.
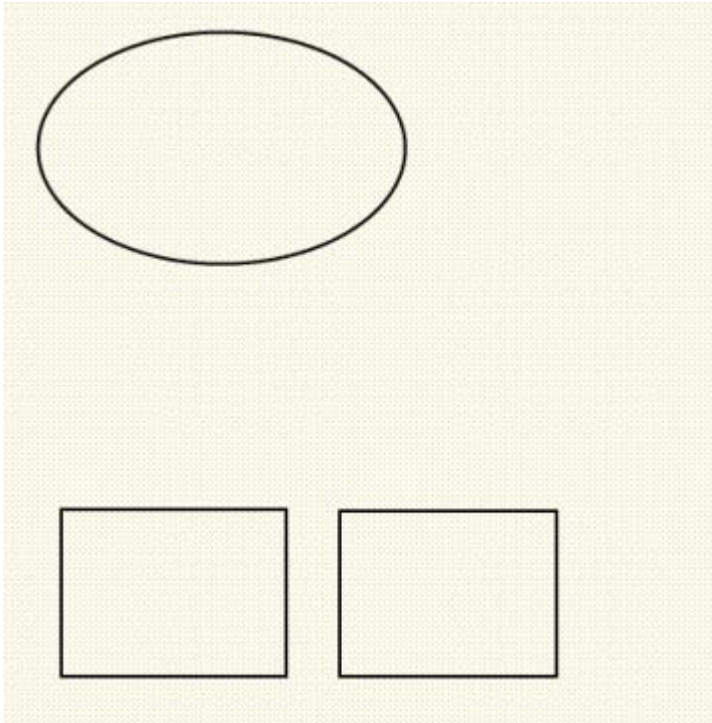

You can create pages with different frames on them at this stage by mixing and matching the frames you set up on them.

3a. Save copies of these pages without any pictures so you can use the layouts with other projects in the future.

4. Optional: Use the Paint Fill tool (looks like a bucket in most programs) to flood the background with color of your choice.
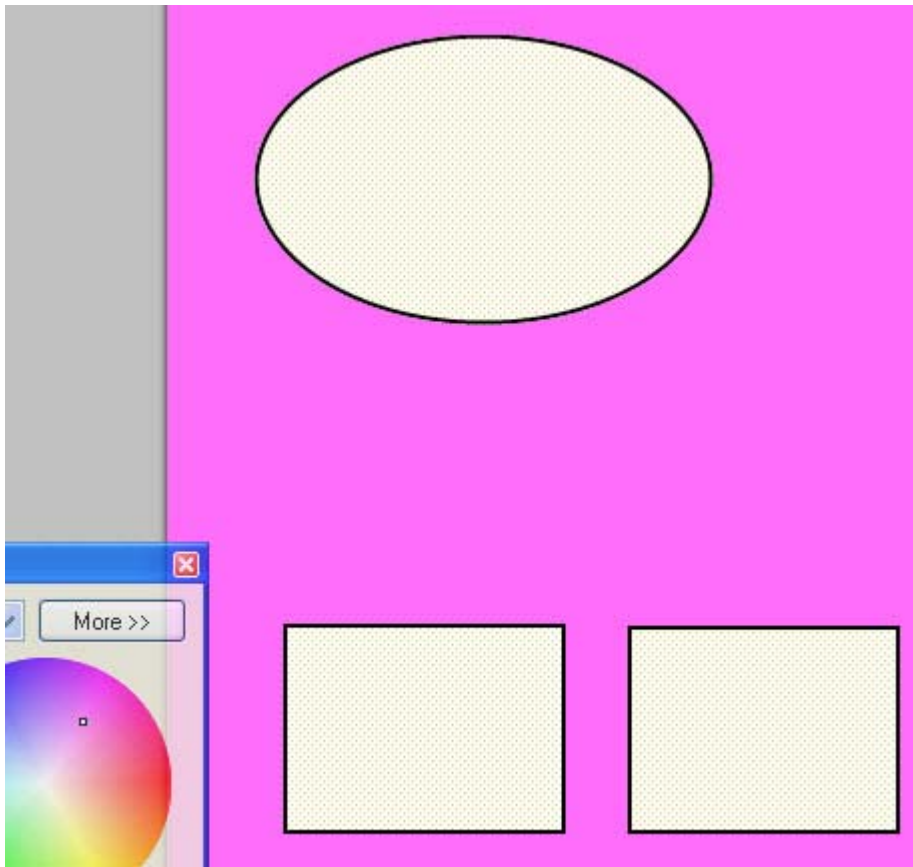
5. Add pictures to frames on the page you have made.

6. Then, add appropriate text to other frames.

Experiment with different colors or textures for backgrounds in the frames.

Add ornamental frames if you have them and they are appropriate for the topic.

Editing Pages and Pictures

I can give you general guidelines for editing your pages and pictures but please remember that the exact steps will depend on the particular program which you use.

First, you have to get pictures of the elements you want into your computer.

Creating Scrapbook Elements

These are the decorations and backgrounds etc., which often make a scrapbook more interesting than the usual diary.

They should be relevant to the time, the people and the events described in the scrapbook.

You can take photographs of three-dimensional objects for use in your projects or put them on your scanner and put a two-dimensional image into your computer.

Careful lighting of the object when you photograph it can give some idea of its 3D appearance but the scanned image is likely to look flat.

Choosing Your Image Editing Program

I've mentioned that you may already have a computer program which you can use to prepare your scrapbook pages and edit the content which you include on them.

This chapter will explain some of the important factors you need to consider when deciding if you will use your current program, the features which you could find very handy and how to use them.

If these features are not available in your current program, check that the programs you get, either by buying them or downloading them for free from the Internet, have as many of them as possible.

Buying an expensive program is no guarantee that you will be able to produce better scrapbooks than you could with less expensive or even free programs.

Most programs will require that you put some time into learning how to use the features it provides. Programs like Adobe Photoshop are very powerful, but learning to get good results from them can take considerable time, especially if you have little experience and no formal training.

Features to Look for

Quality of Output

Whatever program you use has to be able to produce pictures and pages which are of a standard which you are happy with.

You need to test the program with your computer, screen, scanner and printer to ensure that you can get the results you expect.

You cannot just look at what other people produce with their equipment and think that you will get similar results with your setup.

If you don't get good results, it may not be the program which is causing the problem. You may need to upgrade your computer or other hardware or just make adjustments to the settings for viewing graphics on your screen.

Your screen probably won't show the colors of your images exactly the same as your printer will produce them. When you are selecting colors for a project, print small samples to check how the actual colors appear and how well they work together.

Layers

Layers are like transparent sheets which are used to make manipulation of separate parts of a picture easier.

Programs which have this feature allow you to create separate layers on which you can put different parts of a picture.

Instead of having all the elements of a picture on the same layer as you would if you create it in a program which does not offer layers or when you draw it on a sheet of paper, you could have separate layers for:

1) The background of the picture

2) A fisherman

3) The water

4) The fish

5) The land on which the fisherman is standing

This makes it much easier for you to make changes to individual parts and move them about to change their relationship to other items in the picture.

With a page for a scrapbook, you might have the paper on one layer, text on another, then each picture or other embellishment on its own layer.

If the program you use does not support layers, you have fewer options.

Compare this to a traditional scrapbook page where all the items are moved about until you get an arrangement which you like. Then, you glue all the parts of the page together.

With layers, you set up an arrangement which you like, merge the elements and save that for your scrapbook.

Accessories

Many commercial programs have pictures and other useful resources included in the price. You won't know exactly what is included and it may not even be clear until you unpack everything if there are any restrictions on your use of these materials.

Some companies provide pictures and other materials which may be used for your personal projects but which cannot be used for any project which may earn you or someone else any money.

These materials can be handy or completely useless for what you intend to use the program for, so I would ignore them when deciding which program I would get.

Functions

Many computer programs have similar functions and features but the quality and power may vary from program to program.

For instance, one program may let you undo the last seven things which you did to your picture if you find something is not developing the way you want while another program may allow you to undo just the last two steps you did.

Support

The level of support which you get from the supplier is usually tied to the cost of the program. You won't often get one-to-one support with free programs or trial versions of most commercial programs. That's understandable and fair in my opinion.

But, you should search those forums related to commercial programs which you are considering buying for feedback about the quality and speed of support that customers have been getting recently.

Upgrade Policy

With commercial programs, check what the company's policy is when they release a newer, better version of the program which you bought.

Most companies offer discounts for customers that have bought recent earlier versions but the terms vary greatly between different companies.

Editing and Enhancing Your Images.

When you have the image in your computer, you can use features like **bevel** and **emboss** in your image editing program to add shadows to parts of the picture to give the impression of raised edges on the objects.

Another effect I have used is to make a black and white copy of a color photo and use an almost transparent version of the black and white image as the background for the page.

You can use textures which you create yourself or which you download from the Internet to give a realistic look to the embellishments which you draw.

Use shadows to provide an illusion of depth.

The metal effects which are available with some programs can give a realistic appearance to metallic objects you create.

Check forums about the particular program you use for tips about creating special effects which are not available with the program as supplied. Just type something like **Photoshop metallic effects** into Google or whichever search engine you prefer.

You will find it worthwhile to invest some time in experimenting with the features of your image editing program.

When you find an effect which you like, please make the effort to contact the company or individual who provided it and thank them. You might think that is a very small thing but it does provide some encouragement for them.

Cropping is a common technique where you remove a section of the picture which is less relevant to your story or contains material which could distract the reader from the most important elements of the picture.

Saturation is a means of changing the intensity of the colors in a picture. Some pictures benefit from an increase in the intensity and I have also found that more muted or almost colorless versions of some photos can be effective as backgrounds for the originals.

Silhouettes are usually easy to create by painting a single color over a copy of an object or person. You can have silhouettes in any single color, not just black. They are great for backgrounds, decorations and alongside the headings of some pages. This is particularly helpful for people like me that cannot draw but can make an outline and fill it in.

Blur adds an impression of speed to one or more images. It can also be used to obscure some details in a photo.

The **Opacity** of an image can be reduced to give a ghost-like image. This can encourage the reader to focus more on the other images on that page.

Tints can be used to highlight parts of an image or to give a period look to images.

Don't use too many effects on a page. That will be less effective than using just a couple of powerful effects.

How to Write Interesting Journal Entries

The term **journaling** is usually used for writing in a diary.

But, scrapbookers use the term for writing the information which accompanies the pictures and other materials which you include in your scrapbooks.

Please don't become fearful and think that writing this text is difficult because you may not have formal training or good writing skills.

You don't need them. This is <u>not</u> a technical report; it is a personal view about something or someone that is important to you.

The people that read your scrapbook will appreciate the care you put into assembling the materials and your description of the people and events.

You need to give some details of the way they lived because the scrapbook may be read years afterward and those readers will probably have little knowledge or understanding of the way of life or values of their ancestors.

Keep in mind the professional journalist's stock questions and explain the, **who**, **what**, **where**, **when** and **how** of the story you are telling. If you leave any important parts of that information out of your scrapbook, your readers may not get a full understanding of the story you tell.

The combination of words, pictures and additional elements used for decorating the pages of your scrapbook should give any reader a full understanding of the subject, the people (and animals if any), and what life was like when the events occurred.

Because you were close to the people and events shown in your scrapbook, you understand why that man is smiling or that lady has tears streaking her make-up. But, you need to explain the reasons for those expressions to people that read your scrapbook but don't have your close knowledge of the background.

Adding clippings from newspapers or family letters and other material can help make the content more interesting for your readers.

If you were not present when the events you are writing about occurred, try to contact other family members who were. They may have more information or mementos which will make your scrapbook more interesting.

They may even be the source of information which you can create other scrapbooks from in the future.

If you can write the journal entries in your scrapbook, they look more appealing. But, if your penmanship is like mine, you could look for a script font which looks like handwriting to use on your computer.

Be sure that the text is clear enough for people to read whether it is on the computer screen or printed out on an average computer printer.

A Store with More

I found **scrapstreet.com** when I was looking for more ideas for my scrapbooks.

This would be a great way to start if you are new to scrapbooking.

The staff are scrapbookers and their interest in their visitors' scrapbooking aims seems genuine.

The 'flagship' of the site is a free monthly online magazine which seems to be about four years old. It has relevant ideas, articles and examples of good scrapbooking from readers.

They also provide a few free scrapbooking packs on the site. Some free offers on the Internet are unimpressive but the kit I downloaded had several paper colors as full 12 inch by 12 inch pictures and about 20 extra embellishments. That was about 50 Megabytes to download.

There were no instructions but there are examples of how to use the kit in the online magazine.

They have an online store and I'd guess some very loyal customers.

When you complete your first kit, you'll know what to look for when you decide to buy a kit and have some ideas about making your own.

The papers in the free kit I downloaded.

Some of the embellishments included in the kit.

How to Choose and Use Fonts

You probably have many fonts available on your computer and you can find thousands of others, either free or paid, very quickly on the Internet search engines.

Before you get another font to put on your computer, check those you already have to see if any of them would be equally suitable for use with your project.

Adding one extra font should not be a problem but each one increases the number of files which your computer system has to track. Fonts, pictures and other files which collect on your system can reduce the speed at which your computer operates over time.

Some people get carried away with the ease and low-cost of producing highly decorated pages.

Remember the design rule, "less is more". Use no more than three fonts on any page unless you have a very good reason to use more.

Don't drop random fonts into each section; that tends to destroy the consistent look of the project.

Check the rights you will have to use any font that you get. If there is no clear explanation about rights, either contact the site owner or go somewhere else to get your fonts.

When you have set up your page, look how the fonts used work with each other.

Don't use a different font just for the novelty value. The fonts you see many places have become popular because they are easy to read or for some other reason. Don't change without good reason.

You can use any fonts you have available in your pictures but, if you use fonts which are not available on the reader's computer for text, their computer may show that text in similar fonts which are available on that computer. The effect which you used that particular font for will be lost.

You can get programs which will help you to keep your fonts organized.

FontLister ($USD 5 after a 30 day trial period) is recommended for Windows versions up to XP by some designers.

http://www.theill.com/fl/download.asp

You can see many other free font related tools at my favorite software download site, **Snapfiles.com**

http://www.snapfiles.com/Freeware/gmm/fwfont.html

Mac users can find free font tools by putting something like **freeware font tools Mac** into their favorite search engine. That gave me thousands of links but I don't have a Macintosh so I could not check their quality.

Topics for Your Scrapbooks

The reasons why different people start to assemble scrapbooks vary widely.

But, the most common are:

1) Record important events in their lives or those of other family members. They may not be confident that they can write the story in a clear and interesting way.

But, they can put the most important points briefly in the notes they write (called 'journaling") and provide interest and context by including mementos of the events and the time when they happened.

Scrapbooks about your children or your grandparents are likely to become family treasures which will help your descendants to remember them and you will special affection.

2) Tell of a special interest they have; mountain climbing, growing roses, traveling, a beloved pet.

3) Produce a tribute to a special friend or to that friendship, containing pictures and words about fond memories they share. The scrapbooker can then present it to their friend as a unique and personal gift.

Scrapbooks are a good way to organize and protect your important pictures. They also provide a much more enjoyable experience for other people than just going through a box of family photos of people and events which no-one remembers or has any reason to care about.

Forums – Help and be Helped

Forums

Forums are web sites where people that have a common interest, such as scrapbooking or using a particular image editing program share their knowledge, experience and opinions.

You can use these forums to get help with programs and also information about other people's personal experience with the program which can help you when you are considering buying or using a particular program.

Most quality programs attract loyal and enthusiastic users over time. Some of the users of low-cost or free programs offer help to other users from their own web sites or, more often, through these forums which are specifically set up to share information and advice about that particular program.

I find the advice I get from forums is often easier to understand than the official instructions in the manual which comes with a program because the advice comes from users like yourself rather than "experts".

Some experts forget the simple in-between steps which are vital for inexperienced people to get a working understanding of the programs they talk about.

Of course, information in forums can be misleading or even completely wrong at times while the content of the manuals has usually been carefully tested.

To find these forums, just type **forum:** followed by the name of the image editing program which you use or are considering buying into your favorite Internet search engine, eg. **Forum: Photoshop Elements.**

Some Forums are operated by businesses which supply services and/or products related to the subject which is the focus of the Forum. These forums are usually monitored but not censored.

I have been impressed with the sharing and caring shown by the people I have met in all the Forums and the helpfulness of the various businesses I have dealt with so far.

Scrapbooking Forums on the Internet are a great source of ideas and help for all scrappers, whatever level of knowledge we currently have and whether we prefer digital or traditional methods does not matter.

Sharing a common interest and helping each other as our own knowledge and experience grows can lead to lasting friendships even though you may never actually meet many of the people you become friendly with through these contacts.

I'll give you some tips and cautions which will help you get the most enjoyment and help from them while making sure that you earn and keep the respect of other members of those forums which you join and participate in.

Finding forums about scrapbooking on the Internet is easy. Just type **Forums: Scrapbooking,** and be amazed at the number of choices you are offered.

Select a forum from the list after reading the text in each of the entries. You can't tell which will be the most useful for you from the couple of lines in the search engine entry, but you will get a better idea when you visit the forum and read a few posts.

I suggest you do that with at least three forums before you join any unless you get a very strong feeling about one when you first visit it.

Some questions to ask yourself:

- Are there many questions which are not answered?

- Are the answers easy to understand and helpful?

- Do some of the answers just tell the person who posted the question that "she should know that" or put them down in some way?

- Do the posts contain more advertising than helpful information?

- Are there any signs of abusive or other inappropriate language?

You will have to register for most forums before you can post any comments or questions of your own.

Fill in the registration form. Be careful about giving too much personal information.

For instance, I see nothing wrong about using a fictional date of birth in a forum (make it the same year, just a different day or month). That's because many financial services use your real date of birth as one of the questions used to confirm that you are really yourself when you contact them to do business.

Keep that sort of information to yourself.

You will usually have to reply to a confirmation email as part of the registration process. This shows that you have control of the email address you supplied when you registered.

Then, you can use your username (often that is the email address you used) and your password for that forum to log in to the forum with full member privileges.

Although there are several different kinds of forums, they are usually laid out in a similar fashion.

Each page will have navigation links to the various sections at the top of the page, and there will be sections of the forum for comments about particular areas of interest.

Start by reading the Terms of Use and any other rules which are posted for using the forum.

Read the F.A.Q. (Frequently Asked Questions) or other helpful entries which are usually at the top of the first page of the forum.

If you don't understand anything in these sections, send a private message or an email to the administrator of the forum. Don't post that sort of question in the forum.

Asking Questions

One of the most important uses of a forum is to get help.

But, please <u>don't</u> post questions on your first couple of visits.

Many forums see the same beginner questions every few days. It saves your time and that of other members if you do a search before asking questions.

If there is something you want help with, put your question in the search box and check whether it has already been answered before.

Browse a few pages of the forum when you have time so that you can see who are the most helpful members and if there are any who don't contribute much more than links to their own web sites.

Check the rules about signatures (the couple of lines of text you can include with your name when you post something in the forum).

Some forums will let you post a link to your own web site. Do not put a link to any commercial web site (your own or somebody else's) in any post you make or in your signature without checking first whether that is permitted.

Keep to the topic which was raised by the person which started the particular thread you are responding to. Do not make irrelevant comments or respond to any irrelevant comments from other people.

Always start a new thread (Click on "New Post" at the top of the forum page) for any new subject you want to write about or get help with.

Always post your thanks for the help you get from other members.

Never use ALL CAPITAL LETTERS in the subject or content of your post. This is considered shouting – very rude.

Never respond to any insulting or other inappropriate posts in a forum. They will be dealt with by the Administrator or Moderators who control and supervise the forum.

Enjoy yourself but keep a check about the amount of time which you spend in a forum. Make sure that you are getting good value for it. If not, cut back and either go to another forum or do something else more productive with some of that time.

FORUMS ARE USEFUL AND FUN BUT YOU CAN WASTE TOO MUCH TIME VERY EASILY.

I did that deliberately to show you that all capitals are confronting and hard to read.

This is much better, isn't it? Forums are useful and fun but you can waste too much time very easily.

More Scrapbooking Tips

The Importance of Color Combinations

It is important to think about what colors you will use in your scrapbook pages.

The colors you select and the way you combine them on your pages will affect the reader's enjoyment of your scrapbook.

Color Wheels:

The theory of color for web designers:

http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/bb263947%28VS.85%29.aspx

An easy and free to use color wheel, can be downloaded.

http://ficml.org/jemimap/style/color/

http://ficml.org/jemimap/style/color/wheel.html

Here is an explanation of the effects of combining certain colors in a painting with examples from classic paintings:

http://www.writedesignonline.com/resources/design/rules/color.html

Be Creative to Maintain Reader's Interest

Don't make your personal scrapbooks too formal in appearance. Always use a template to ensure that you can fit all the items you want on a particular page but don't set everything out like the items are ready for inspection.

Putting some photos at different angles and in different sizes and using your headlines and other text in creative ways around the pages will add interest for readers.

One advantage of digital scrapbooks is that you can lay text over pictures without damaging the originals. Use that freedom but don't overdo it.

Resources

The resources I've included here are chosen on the basis of my experience.

But, I do not have control of them and changes, good or bad, may be made without my knowledge at any time.

You must accept full responsibility for your use of any resource.

Computer Programs

I focused on programs which can be used by people with limited artistic ability and/or knowledge of using computers but which can be used by experienced people for advanced projects as well.

Scrapbooking Programs

Scrapbook Flair from **http://www.scrapbookflair.com/** is a program

designed to make digital scrapbooks with. It is worth considering as your first scrapbooking program because it provides the basic functions which you need at no cost!

Youscrap at **http://www.youscrap.com/** offer free scrapbooking

software along with images and other embellishments which are free for personal use. They have an active, well-supported Members area and also some great scrapbooking products.

PhotoMix from **http://www.photomix.com/** is a commercial Windows software for digital scrapbooking and photo collage creation which costs $29 at the time of writing..

Art Rage from **http://www.artrage.com/** (Macintosh and Windows) is a painting program with 3 paid versions now available. They also offer a free version based on the basic 2.5 paid version.

Some interesting features:

- Produces paintings and pencil sketches and traced versions of pictures.

- Relatively low-cost.

- Metallic "paints" which can be adjusted and also merged with the other paint effects which the program provides.

The limited free version has been downloaded more than a million times.

Paint.net from **http://www.getpaint.net/** was an independent project, originally supported by Microsoft, which produced a program similar to Microsoft's Paint program. It works only on the Windows operating system. Paint.net is far superior to Paint and well supported through a volunteer forum. The appearance of a plug-in from **http://www.softpedia.com/get/Multimedia/Graphic/Graphic-Plugins/Photoshop-File-Plugin.shtml**, which lets the program handle Photoshop .psd graphic files, has helped to make this free image editing program very useful for scrapbookers and anyone else that needs to create and edit images.

Photoscape from **http://www.photoscape.org/ps/main/index.php** is a free image editing program with many features. You can create a slideshow, animated picture, merge multiple pictures, edit several pictures at

once and even capture pictures off your computer screen. The program is compatible with Microsoft Windows 98/Me/NT/2000/XP/Vista and well is supported so there may be a Windows 7 version later.

Free Office Suite!

Open Office from **openoffice.org** is a set of professional standard programs for doing word processing, spreadsheets, presentations and other tasks. It is a fairly large download but that is offset by the fact that Open Office is free to use!

Powerful Plug-ins

You may have heard the term plug-in and wondered what it is. It is an additional piece of computer code which can add features to a program or make some of those features easier to use.

Scrapping Pro at http:// **www.scrappingpro.com** produce color and black and white plug-ins which you can use to transform your pictures easily even if you have limited knowledge of the program you are using. These plug-ins are reasonably priced and based on the suppliers' own expertise. More examples and information is available on their web site.

Original	**Color transform**	**First B/W Transform**	**2cnd B/W Transform**
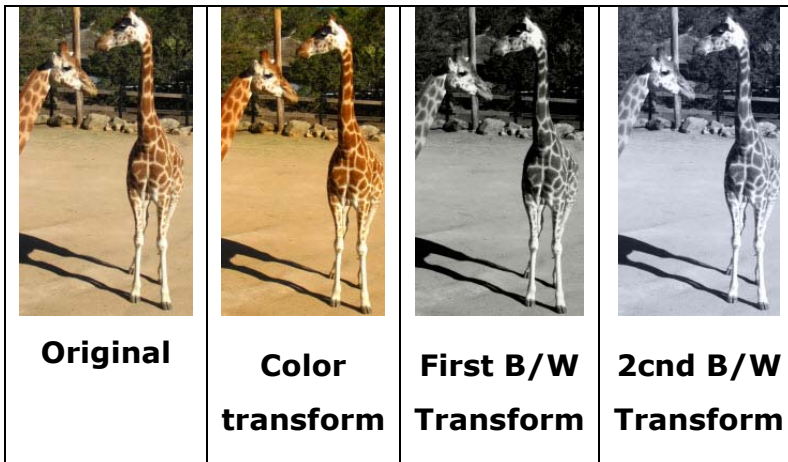
Most current graphic editing programs have the ability to organize the photos on your computer but others do not. The new **KODAK EASYSHARE Software** from **http://www.kodak.com/eknec/PageQuerier.jhtml?pg-**

path=130/2988&pg-locale=en_US is free and powerful. You can also include your own ratings, from one to five stars, for your photos!

I suggest that you carefully read and follow the instructions if you download and install this software. It is common to have to close other programs before installing a new program but Kodak requires that you also disconnect any other equipment such as printers or card readers etc before installing this program!
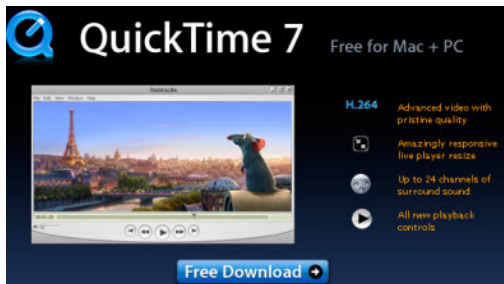
You will also need to download and install the free version of the Quicktime program from Apple at:
http://www.apple.com/quicktime/ to be able to use some features of the Kodak Easyshare software.

Shareware and Freeware programs

Shareware programs can be downloaded from the Internet and used for a specified length of time without charge so that you can decide if the program will do what you want. Then, it stops working. If you want to continue to use it, you must pay the supplier a fee and they will send you a registration key which will enable you to continue to use the program. Some features of the full program may not be available in the trial version.

Freeware programs are supplied for you to use without charge.

There are some very good shareware and free ware programs available. The only two sites which I get mine from, apart from those I download from the programmers' own sites, are **http://www.snapfiles.com/** and **http://www.download.com/**.

I have had no problems with any program from either site though I cannot guarantee that it could not happen. I find the user reviews at Snapfiles are usually reliable and helpful too.

Pictures

You <u>must</u> always check the rights you have to use any picture in any way.

Most sites will require you to put a small link to their site on any document where you use pictures which they provide.

Always be cautious. Some people will offer you pictures which they don't have the right to let you use and you might be liable for significant damages in such circumstances.

I have no connection with the sites I have listed here and your use of them and any material on them must be entirely at your own risk.

Textures

The Texture King web site, **http://www.textureking.com/** offers a wide arrange of pictures of textures (plastic, wood, metal, fabric and more) for your use without charge.

http://www.texturise.com/ offers another range of interesting textures.

This is the Beginning, not the End!

Thankyou for buying and reading my book.

I hope that it helps you to start your digital scrapbooking with more confidence and that you see the sort of results you want sooner because of the information here.

The beauty of digital scrapbooking is that you don't need to spend much money to produce great scrapbooks which you can share with your friends and family around the World.

You will probably meet many good Internet friends and even maybe meet new people in your own area through your interest in digital scrapbooking.

This has been a great interest for me and it has opened doors I never even knew existed.

I hope I have helped to do the same for you.

Ellen Wardle

2010