

Microsoft®

Picture It!

PHOTO PREMIUM



User's Manual

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*Picture It® Photo Premium
User's Manual*

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Contents at a Glance

Chapter 1: Installation	1
Chapter 2: Welcome to Microsoft Picture It! Photo Premium	5
Chapter 3: Opening and Importing Pictures	7
Chapter 4: Picture It! Basics	19
Chapter 5: Basic Touchup.....	31
Chapter 6: Advanced Photo Editing	37
Chapter 7: Batch Editing in Mini Lab	53
Chapter 8: Adding Edges, Mats, and Frames	55
Chapter 9: Creating Projects.....	57
Chapter 10: Saving and Printing Pictures	61
Chapter 11: Taking Great Pictures	73
Index	111

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Installation	1
Starting Setup.....	1
Completing the Installation Wizard.....	2
Installation Folder Dialog Box.....	2
Installation Options Dialog Box.....	2
Special Circumstances.....	3
Upgrading from a Different Picture It! Product.....	3
Reinstalling or Removing Picture It!.....	3
Chapter 2: Welcome to Microsoft Picture It! Photo Premium	5
What's New?.....	5
Other Helpful Resources.....	6
Chapter 3: Opening and Importing Pictures	7
Importing Pictures.....	7
Launching the Import Pictures Wizard automatically.....	7
Starting the Import Pictures Wizard manually.....	8
Opening Pictures for Editing.....	9
Using the file browser.....	9
Opening pictures from other cameras.....	12
Troubleshooting tips for opening pictures from a camera.....	14
Opening from a scanner.....	15
Opening a Photo Sent Through E-mail.....	16
Opening a Picture from a Web Page.....	17
Chapter 4: Picture It! Basics	19
Startup Window.....	19
Examining the Work Area.....	21
Image Formatting.....	23
Changing picture size.....	23
Applying Text.....	25
Help Resources.....	26
Online Help.....	26
Using the table of contents.....	27
Using the index.....	27
Using the search.....	28

Product Tour	28
Instructional Videos	29
Technical Support	29
Chapter 5: Basic Touchup.....	31
Adjusting Brightness and Contrast	31
Adjusting Tint.....	32
Fixing Red Eye	33
Straightening a Picture.....	34
Cropping	35
Using the rule of thirds	36
Chapter 6: Advanced Photo Editing.....	37
Understanding Objects	37
Working with Composites.....	37
Locked Objects.....	38
Selecting Objects with the Object Tool.....	39
Multiple Selection, Grouping, and Flattening Objects	40
Multiple Selection	40
Grouping Objects	41
Flattening Objects	42
Automatic Flattening	42
Flattening Objects During Saving	42
Using Selection Tools	43
The Marquee Tool	44
The Freehand Tool.....	45
The Edge Finder	46
The Magic Wand	47
Editing and Copying Selected Areas	48
Copying, Cutting, and Pasting Selections	48
Filters	49
Color Effects	50
Paint Effects	51

Chapter 7: Batch Editing in Mini Lab	53
Chapter 8: Adding Edges, Mats, and Frames	55
Edge Effects.....	55
Mats and Frames	56
Chapter 9: Creating Projects	57
Creating Photo Cards	57
Creating Calendars	59
Chapter 10: Saving and Printing Pictures.....	61
Saving Pictures.....	61
Saving Multiple Versions	62
Choosing a File Format	63
Setting PNG Plus Options.....	64
Saving for E-mail and the Web.....	65
Printing Pictures.....	66
Printing Single Pictures	66
Printing Multiple Pictures.....	66
Selecting Print Quality.....	68
Selecting a Print Size	69
Choosing Photo Paper	69
Creating Long-lasting Prints.....	70
Ordering Prints and Gifts on MSN Photos	71
Chapter 11: Taking Great Pictures	73
About Digital Cameras.....	74
Photo Quality	74
Resolution.....	75
Compression	77
File Formats.....	78
Using Zoom Features	79
Memory Cards, Disks, and Sticks.....	80
Battery Life	81

Using the Flash	82
Automatic Flash	82
Red-Eye Reduction Flash.....	83
Fill Flash.....	84
Using Your Camera’s Manual Settings	85
Exposure.....	85
Understanding automatic exposure	86
Exposure Compensation	87
Aperture	87
Shutter Speed	89
ISO Setting or Equivalent	91
Setting the White Balance	92
Using Automatic Modes on Your Camera	93
Macro Mode	94
Action Mode	95
Burst Mode.....	97
Portrait Mode	98
Panoramic Mode	99
Using the Self-Timer	100
Getting Yourself into a Photo.....	100
Taking Long Exposure Shots	100
Ten Tips for Great Pictures	101
1. Know Your Gear.....	101
2. Nail the Exposure.....	102
3. Capture a Moment in the Story	103
4. Look for the Light	104
5. Follow the Rule of Thirds.....	105
6. Find a Unique Perspective.....	106
7. Bracket.....	107
8. Analyze and Shoot Again	108
9. Shoot Every Single Day.....	109
10. Show Your Photos to Other People	110

Index.....	111
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Starting Setup

To install Picture It!, you must be running Windows 98, Windows Me, Windows 2000, or Windows XP or later. On Windows 2000 and Windows XP systems, you must have administrative privileges. For information regarding privileges, please refer to the operating system Help.

On most computers, Picture It! setup will begin automatically when you insert the Picture It! CD into your disk drive.

To begin automatic setup:

- 1 Turn off any antivirus software that you're using, and close any programs that are running.
 - 2 Insert the Picture It! CD into your disk drive. The Installation Wizard begins automatically.
-

If the above procedure does not start the setup process, you can start it manually.

To begin setup manually:

- 1 Turn off any antivirus software that you're using, and close any programs that are running.
 - 2 Insert the Picture It! CD into your disk drive.
 - 3 Click **Start**, and then click **Run**.
 - 4 If your CD-ROM drive is listed as letter D, type *d:\setup.exe*.
If your CD-ROM drive has a letter other than D, replace D with the correct letter when you type the path.
 - 5 Click **OK**.
The Installation Wizard begins.
-

Completing the Installation Wizard

The Installation Wizard will show you a series of dialog boxes that provide setup status and some installation preference options. For most users, the default preferences will be appropriate. Information about the different setup options is provided below.

Installation Folder Dialog Box

The Installation Folder dialog box allows you to choose where the program will be installed on your computer. To install the program to a folder other than the folder in the Installation folder box, do one of the following:

- Type a different path in the **Installation folder** box.
- Click **Change**, select a folder in the **Change Installation Folder** dialog box, and then click **OK**.

Note that some files will be installed to the Program Files drive even if you choose to install the program to a different drive.

Installation Options Dialog Box

The Installation Options dialog box allows you to choose between Typical installation and Full installation.

- **Typical installation** takes up less space on your hard drive, and is recommended for most users. With Typical installation, you will have to insert the Picture It! CD in your CD-ROM drive to use some of the projects and clip art while you are using the program.
- **Full installation** copies all of the Picture It! projects and clip art to your hard drive, so you will not have to reinsert a Picture It! CD while you are using the program. Look under **Description** for the disk space required for this option.

Special Circumstances

Upgrading from a Different Picture It! Product

If you already have a Picture It! product installed on your machine, any of several scenarios may occur when you try to install another Picture It! product:

- **Previous versions** If you have a Picture It! product previous to version 9 already installed, installing a version 9 product will make both programs available on your computer.
- **Upgrade from another version 9 product** You can install a Picture It! version 9 product that has more features than a version 9 product already installed. The version of Picture It! with fewer features will be uninstalled automatically before the new installation begins. Your pictures and projects will not be deleted.
- **Blocked downgrade** If you have a Picture It! version 9 product installed, you will not be able to automatically install a version 9 product with fewer features. To install the version with fewer features, you must first uninstall the version with more features.

Reinstalling or Removing Picture It!

If you are having problems running Picture It!, reinstalling the program may help it to run better on your computer.

You should not attempt to remove Picture It! by deleting the program files from your hard disk. Instead, use the Picture It! Installation Wizard to properly uninstall the program.

To remove or reinstall Picture It! from Windows XP:

- 1 Log on to the computer as an administrator.
 - 2 From the Windows **Start** menu, click **Control Panel**.
 - 3 Click **Add or Remove Programs**.
 - 4 From the list of installed programs, click the version of Picture It! you want to remove or reinstall.
 - 5 Click **Change/Remove**.
The Installation Wizard opens.
 - 6 Follow the instructions on the screen.
-

Other Picture It! Products

The family of Picture It! products includes programs with the following brands:

- Digital Image
- Greetings
- Greetings Workshop
- Home Publishing
- Picture It!
- Picture It! Express
- Picture It! Photo
- Picture It! Publishing

To remove or reinstall Picture It! from Windows 98, Windows 2000, or Windows Me:

- 1 From the Windows **Start** menu, point to **Settings**, and then click **Control Panel**.
 - 2 Click **Add/Remove Programs**.
 - 3 From the list of installed programs, click the version of Picture It! you want to remove or reinstall.
 - 4 Click **Add/Remove**.
The Installation Wizard opens.
 - 5 Follow the instructions on the screen.
-

2 Welcome to Microsoft Picture It! Photo Premium

Congratulations on your purchase of Microsoft Picture It! Photo Premium, a unique combination of robust photo-editing tools and high-quality photo projects. While easy to use, Picture It! offers powerful imaging technology that helps you improve your photos.

What's New?

Since the release of Picture It! 1.0 in 1996, Microsoft has repeatedly updated Picture It! with new features, improved design, and innovative projects. Its current version Picture It! has been updated and improved once again, built on a strong imaging foundation from years of research and feedback from users. Improvements for Picture It! version 9 include:

- New **selection tools** make it easier to be more precise when editing and applying effects.
- New **Unsharp Mask** and **Gaussian blur** tools let you apply more realistic-looking sharpening and blurring effects.
- The new **straighten picture** feature can fix photos taken while the camera wasn't straight.
- New **rule of thirds guidelines** in the crop task help you improve the composition of your pictures.

Other Helpful Resources

This User's Manual is not an exhaustive resource for everything you can do with Picture It!. For step-by-step instructions about using all of the program's features, check out the online Help system, available from the Startup Window or the Help menu. Or, for a demonstration of some key Picture It! features, watch one of the Instructional Videos.

Digital photography is fun and exciting, and Picture It! makes it easy to get great results.

Picture It! makes it easy to import and open your pictures quickly. To transfer pictures from your camera or storage media to your computer, use the new Import Pictures Wizard. This wizard is designed to streamline the file transfer process, allowing you to name the picture files and destination folder. To open pictures for editing, use the file browser. The file browser displays thumbnails of all your pictures, so you can quickly choose the ones you want.

Importing Pictures

The Import Pictures Wizard is a convenient way to transfer pictures and video clips from your digital camera or other storage location to your computer. The Import Pictures Wizard helps you rename the files so that they have recognizable file names.

Launching the Import Pictures Wizard automatically

Windows Me and Windows XP can automatically detect compatible cameras and other photo media such as photo CDs. This detection should occur when you:

- Connect a compatible camera to the computer and turn on the camera.
- Connect a compatible card reader to the computer and insert media.
- Insert a photo CD, DVD, or other storage media into a drive on the computer.

This automatic detection feature is only available on Windows Me and Windows XP and with WIA and USB Mass Storage class devices.

To set Windows to launch the Import Pictures Wizard automatically:

- 1 Connect your compatible camera or device to the computer, and then turn on the camera or device.
- or -
Insert the storage media into a drive on the computer.
 - 2 When Windows detects the picture files, Windows will ask you what you want to do with the pictures.
 - 3 Click **Import pictures using Microsoft Picture It! Import Wizard**.
 - 4 Check **Always do the selected action**.
 - 5 Click **OK**.
 - 6 Click the device you want to use, and then click **OK**.
-

Starting the Import Pictures Wizard manually

If Windows does not automatically detect your device or other media, you can start the Import Pictures Wizard manually.

To start the Import Pictures Wizard manually:

- 1 On the **File** menu, click **Import Pictures**.
 - 2 Click the device you want to use, and then click **OK**.
-

Opening Pictures for Editing

With Picture It!, you can open pictures for editing from a variety of sources, including your computer, storage media, and most cameras and scanners.

Using the file browser

You can use the file browser to locate your photos and open them for editing. The file browser can be used to open photos from:

- The hard drive on a computer.
- A digital camera that is a USB Mass Storage Class device. (A USB Mass Storage Class device works as a “virtual drive,” letting you browse and open photos from the device as you would from a hard disk or floppy disk.)
- A digital photo card reader.
- A photo CD or DVD.
- A floppy disk.

This picture identifies the main features of the file browser:



- 1 **All Files tab** Click the **All Files** tab to view the folder structure on your computer. Click a folder to display its contents and subfolders. The folder structure includes internal and external drives on your computer, including disk drives, card readers, and USB Mass Storage Class digital cameras.
- 2 **MSN Groups tab** Click the **MSN Groups** tab to open pictures that you have stored on MSN Groups.
- 3 **Look in box** Displays the name of the current folder selected on the **All Files** tab.
- 4 **View menu** Use this menu to change the way the image files are displayed.
- 5 **Thumbnail size slider** Move the slider to change the size of the thumbnails.
- 6 **File name box** Displays the file name of a selected thumbnail.
- 7 **Files of type menu** Use this menu to change the types of image files to be displayed.
- 8 **Thumbnails** Small versions of your photos stored in the current folder.
- 9 **OK** Opens the selected thumbnails.
- 10 **Cancel** Closes the file browser without opening any photos.

To open pictures with the file browser:

- 1 If opening pictures from a USB Mass Storage Class camera, read your camera's documentation and make sure that you have installed the camera's software and drivers properly. Make sure your camera is turned on and connected to your computer.
 - 2 On the **File** menu, click **Open**.
 - 3 Click the **All Files** tab.
 - 4 In the **Look in** list, click the drive, folder, or network location that contains the picture you want to open.
 - 5 In the folder list, locate and open the folder or location that contains the pictures.
Thumbnails of pictures in that folder appear in the right pane.
 - 6 Select the picture you want to open. To select multiple pictures, press CTRL as you click the thumbnails.
 - 7 Click **Open**.
-

File formats compatible with Picture It!

Picture It! can open photo files in any of the following formats:

- Adobe Photoshop (.psd)
- AutoCAD (.dxf)
- CorelDraw (.cdr)
- Enhanced Metafile (.emf)
- EPS (.eps)
- FlashPix (.fpx)
- GIF (.gif)
- Home Publishing (.php)
- JPEG (.jpg)
- Kodak Photo CD (.pcd)
- Macintosh PICT (.pct)
- Micrografx Designer (.drw)
- PC Paintbrush (.pcx)
- Picture It!/Digital Image (.png, .php, .mix, .fpx)
- PNG (.png)
- TIFF (.tif)
- Targa (.tga)
- Windows Bitmap (.bmp)
- Windows Metafile (.wmf)

Using your camera's software

Some digital cameras—especially older models—may not function as a virtual drive or be TWAIN or WIA compliant. For these cameras, use the software provided by the camera to download the photos to a folder your computer. Then open them with the file browser.

Opening pictures from other cameras

If your camera does not show up as a drive in the file browser, it is probably designed to work using TWAIN or WIA support. For many cameras, Picture It! works with TWAIN and WIA and your camera's software so that you can open photos directly into Picture It!.

To open photos from a camera that uses WIA support:

- 1 Make sure that you have installed all the drivers and software that came with your camera.
 - 2 Connect your digital camera to your computer, and then turn on the camera.
 - 3 On the **File** menu, point to **Get Picture From**, and then click **Digital Camera**.
 - 4 Under **Select a camera or drive**, click a camera.
 - 5 To launch the Mini Lab after opening the pictures, click **Yes** under **After downloading your pictures, do you want to edit them in Mini Lab**.
 - 6 Click **Automatic Download**.
 - 7 Click **Download**.
The pictures stored on the camera are appear in the workspace.
 - 8 Click **Download all pictures**.
- or -
To download an individual picture, drag the picture from the workspace to the **Files** palette.
 - 9 Click **Done**.
-

To open photos from a camera that uses TWAIN support:

- 1 Make sure that you have installed all the drivers and software that came with your camera.
 - 2 Connect your digital camera to your computer, and then turn on the camera.
 - 3 On the **File** menu, point to **Get Picture From**, and then click **Digital Camera**.
 - 4 Under **Select a camera or drive**, click a camera.
 - 5 Click **Automatic Download**.
 - 6 Click **Download**.
The pictures stored on the camera appear in the workspace.
 - 7 Click **Download all pictures**.
- or -
To download an individual picture, drag the picture from the workspace to the **Files** palette.
 - 8 Click **Done**.
-

Troubleshooting tips for opening pictures from a camera

- Your camera must be connected and turned on before you start the digital camera task, or it will not appear in the list of cameras and drives.
- If you've connected your digital camera to your computer, but can't see your pictures, make sure the connections are secure, the camera is turned on, and the batteries are charged. The camera might not start downloading unless its batteries are fully charged. Some cameras are equipped with an A/C adapter that you can use instead of batteries.
- If your camera does not appear in the list of cameras and drives, or if you receive an error message when you click **Download**, start your camera software from the operating system **Start** menu.
- For more information about downloading photos using the software included with your camera, consult your camera's manual.

Opening from a scanner

Picture It! supports two types of scanner formats: TWAIN and WIA. If your scanner doesn't use a TWAIN or WIA interface, you need to use the software designed specifically for the make and model of your scanner. Many scanner manufacturers provide free updates to their drivers on the Web.

Before you attempt to scan a picture, make sure your scanner is connected properly. The first time you connect your scanner, the **Identify Scanner Type** dialog box will open, asking you to identify the type of scanner.

To connect your scanner

- 1 Install the software that came with your scanner.
 - 2 Turn off your scanner and computer.
 - 3 Attach the connector cable from your scanner to your computer.
 - 4 Turn on your scanner and computer.
-

Once the scanner is connected and recognized by your computer, you're ready to scan.

To scan a photo with a flatbed TWAIN or WIA scanner:

- 1 Connect your scanner to your computer, and then turn on the scanner.
 - 2 On the **File** menu, point to **Get Picture From**, and then click **Scanner**.
 - 3 Under **Select a scanner**, select a scanner.
 - 4 Place your picture on the scanner.
 - 5 Select **Automatic Scan**.
 - 6 To automatically correct brightness and contrast during the scanning process, select the **Correct brightness and contrast** check box.
 - 7 Click **Scan**.
 - 8 Click **Done**.
-

About TWAIN and WIA

TWAIN is interface software that allows communication between a camera and your computer. Many digital cameras come with a TWAIN driver.

WIA is a newer interface that works similarly to TWAIN, but often provides more control over the device. WIA is compatible with TWAIN, but is only available on some computer operating systems.

Opening a Photo Sent Through E-mail

Many friends and family members enjoy sending photos through e-mail. When you receive photos through e-mail, you can save them to your computer and then work on them with Picture It!.

Many photos sent through e-mail are low-resolution photos, which are not suitable for large prints. But low-resolution photos may be fine for online viewing or printing at small sizes.

To open a photo sent through e-mail:

Use your e-mail program to save the photo to a folder on your computer. Save the photo to a folder that will be easy for you to locate later, such as the My Pictures folder.

- 1 In Picture It!, click **Open** on the **File** menu.
 - 2 The **File Browser** dialog box opens.
 - 3 Click the **All Files** tab.
 - 4 On the **All Files** tab, browse to the folder containing the photo, and then click the folder.
 - 5 Select the photo, and then click **Open**.
-

Opening a Picture from a Web Page

When you surf the Internet, you may come across photos and other images that you would like to use in your photo projects. You might find photos of celebrities, vacation spots that you want to visit, or graphics that would look good as part of one of your photo projects. Unless the Web site uses image protection, you can capture these images and use them for your own projects. Web images are usually low resolution, so they may not be suitable for printing. But you could still use the images in a project to be viewed online.

To capture an image from a Web page, you can drag it from the Web page to the Picture It! Files palette.

To open a photo from a Web page:

- 1 Make sure that both Picture It! and your Web browser (either Microsoft Internet Explorer or MSN Explorer) are open and running on your computer.
A button for each program appears in the taskbar at the edge of your screen.
- 2 On the Picture It! **File** menu, click **New**.
- 3 Select a canvas size, and then click **Done**.
A blank canvas opens in the workspace.
- 4 On the taskbar, click the button for your Web browser program.
- 5 In your Web browser, locate the Web page that contains the picture you want.
- 6 Right-click the picture, and then click **Copy**.
- 7 On the taskbar, click the button for Picture It!.
- 8 On the Picture It! **Edit** menu, click **Paste**.
The new picture appears on the canvas.

Once the photo is opened in Picture It!, you can edit it as you would any other photo and save it to your computer.

Watch for copyrights

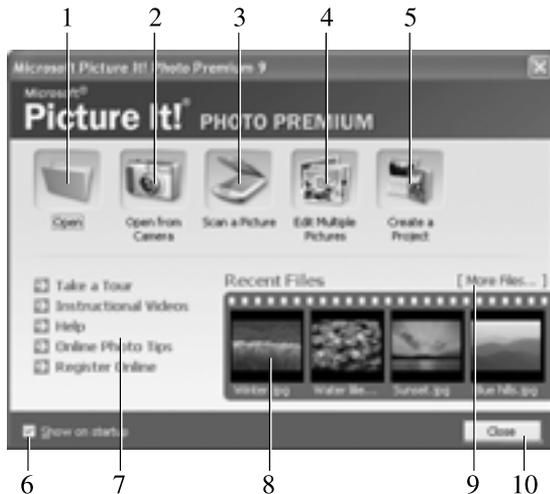
Pictures you see on the Web may be copyrighted, so be sure to read the site's legal information before you use an image.

This chapter covers some of the fundamental aspects of Picture It! that you'll need to get started. You'll find information on the Startup Window, the work area, basic image manipulation, applying text, and Help resources.

Startup Window

The Startup Window is a quick launching point to photos, Mini Lab, projects, recently opened files, and Help.

By default, the Startup Window opens every time you start Picture It!. After closing the Startup Window, you can open it at any time from the main work area by clicking the Startup Window button in the Common Tasks list. This diagram points out the main features of the Startup Window.

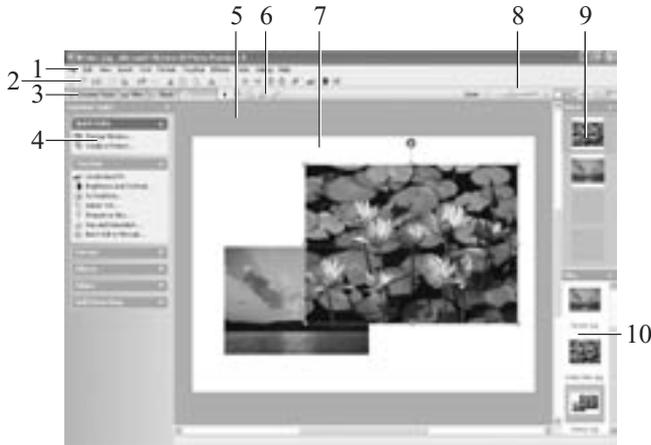


- 1 **Open** Click the Open button to open the file browser, where you can open photos from your hard drive, a network drive, a digital photo card reader, a CD or DVD, or a floppy disk.
- 2 **Open from Camera** Click this button to launch the digital camera task, so you can open photos from a digital camera using Picture It! or your camera's software.
- 3 **Scan a Picture** Click this button to launch the Scan Picture task, where you can scan a picture directly into Picture It!.
- 4 **Edit Multiple Pictures** Click this button to open the Mini Lab. The Mini Lab helps you perform routine editing task—such as rotating, levels auto fix, cropping, and saving—on multiple pictures at the same time.

- 5 **Create a Project** Click this button to pick a project design. You'll find a variety of projects—such as calendars, greeting cards, and album pages—designed to work with your photos. Projects are organized by type and by theme.
- 6 **Show on startup** Check this box to have the Startup Window open every time you start Picture It!.
- 7 **Help links** Click these links to go directly to resources that can help you get the most out of Picture It! and digital imaging.
 - **Take a Tour** launches the product Tour.
 - **Instructional Videos** displays links to the different videos available.
 - **Help** opens the online Help window.
 - **Online Photo Tips** links you directly to the Tips & Tricks section of the MSN Photos Web site.
 - **Register Online** links you to the registration page of the Microsoft Web site.
- 8 **Recent Files** See thumbnails of the last four pictures that you have edited. Click on one of the thumbnails to open that file.
- 9 **More Files** Click **More Files** to open the file browser, where you can open photos from your hard drive, a network drive, a digital photo card reader, a CD or DVD, or a floppy disk.
- 10 **Close** Click to close the Startup Window and go to the main work area.

Examining the Work Area

Most of the photo-editing tasks you perform in Picture It! will be in the main work area. When you open Picture It! and close the Startup Window, you see the main work area. The picture below identifies the key elements of the Picture It! work area.



1 **Menus**

Menus provide access to all of the Picture It! features. The Help menu gives you access to the Help window, the Instructional Videos, and the Picture It! Tour.

2 **Toolbar**

The toolbar contains shortcut buttons for single-click access to some of the most common commands. To see the name of a toolbar button, hover the mouse pointer over the button.

3 **Workspace Toolbar**

This toolbar contains buttons for the Tasks list, Stack, and Files palette. You can create more room in the workspace by hiding any of these tools.

4 **Common Tasks list**

The Common Tasks list is an easy way to locate features. This list provides convenient access to some of the most common tasks, as well as single-click access to the Mini Lab, project selector, and the Startup Window. All of the features found in the Common Tasks list—as well as some additional features—are also available in the menus.

5 **Workspace**

The gray area represents the workspace, the area that the canvas sits within. You can use the zoom controls to magnify or reduce the canvas so that it covers more or less of the workspace.

6 **Selection Tools**

The selection tools allow you to work on a very specific area of an object.

7 **The canvas**

The white area is called the canvas, and it represents the printable area of the page. When you open a photo, the canvas is often not visible since it is covered entirely by the picture. You can use the zoom controls to magnify or reduce the canvas so that it covers more or less of the workspace.

8 **Zoom controls**

The zoom controls magnify or reduce your photo so that you can see it in more or less detail.

9 **Stack**

The Stack displays a thumbnail of each object in your picture. You can rearrange the order of the objects by dragging a thumbnail up or down within the Stack.

10 **Files palette**

The Files palette displays a thumbnail of all of the currently open pictures. You can switch your active picture by clicking a thumbnail in the Files palette. You can also add a picture to the one you're working on by dragging the thumbnail from the Files palette to the canvas.

Image Formatting

When you have a picture open on the canvas, there are a number of ways to re-size it.

Changing picture size

When you open an image onto the canvas, the image is automatically sized so that it fills the workspace. As a result, a high-resolution image, such as 1600 x 1200 pixels, will look as large as a low-resolution image that's only 640 x 480 pixels. For this reason, viewing a picture on the canvas is not a reliable way of judging an image's resolution.

Whenever you resize an image, consider these three factors:

- *Image size*, which is the size of the printed image.
- *Pixel dimensions*, which is how many colored dots (pixels) make up the picture.
- *Resolution*, which is the density of the pixels in the picture.

The pixel dimensions are the product of the image size multiplied by the resolution. For example, if you have a picture that is 4" x 6", and its resolution is 300 pixels per inch, its pixel dimensions would be 1200 x 1800. Given this relationship, if you change one of the three settings, one of the other settings will also have to change to keep the mathematical relationship equal. So if you enlarged the picture in the previous example from 4" x 6" to 8" x 12"—and you kept the pixel dimensions the same—then the resolution would decrease from 300 pixels per inch to 150 pixels per inch.

When you resize a picture, it is generally not a good idea to try to increase or decrease the pixel dimensions since this reduces image quality. In most cases, it's not necessary to adjust the image size, since that can be handled automatically during printing. For high-quality prints, it's generally good to keep the picture's resolution at least 300 pixels per inch. But depending on your printer model and the image quality you desire, you may be satisfied with prints at only 150 pixels per inch. For Web use, 72 pixels per inch is usually considered sufficient.

To resize a picture:

- 1 On the **Format** menu, click **Resize Image**.
 - 2 Click one of the following to lock the setting:
 - **Image size**
 - **Pixel dimensions**
 - **Resolution**
 - 3 Enter amounts for the settings you want to change.
 - 4 Click **Done**.
-

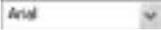
Applying Text

You can add text to any picture and easily change the text font, font color, font size, alignment, and emphasis. You start by adding a text box, and then you edit the text in the box. A text box is its own layer on the Stack.

To add text:

- 1 On the **Text** menu, click **Insert Text**.
A text box appears.
 - 2 Type your text. As you add text, the text box will automatically expand vertically to fit all of your text.
 - 3 To change the width of the text box, select the text box and drag one of the side resize handles.
 - 4 To move the text box, select it, hover the mouse pointer over the edge of the text box until the move handle appears, and then drag the move handle.
-

Once you've added the text, you can select the text to edit it. You can also select the text and use the toolbar buttons to change formatting. When text is selected, the following tools are available on the toolbar for formatting:

- The font menu  lets you choose between 140 different fonts.
- The font size menu  lets you choose font sizes from 8 to 620 points.
- The font color button  lets you choose from a standard palette of colors or choose a custom color.
- The Bold button  adds bold formatting to the text.
- The Italic button  adds italic formatting to the text.
- The Underline button  underlines the text.
- The Alignment button  has menu choices for Left, Right, Center, and Justify.
- The Bullets and Numbers button  lets you apply or cancel formatting for bulleted or numbered lists.

Accessing Help from the keyboard

You can access the online Help system at any time by pressing F1 on the keyboard.

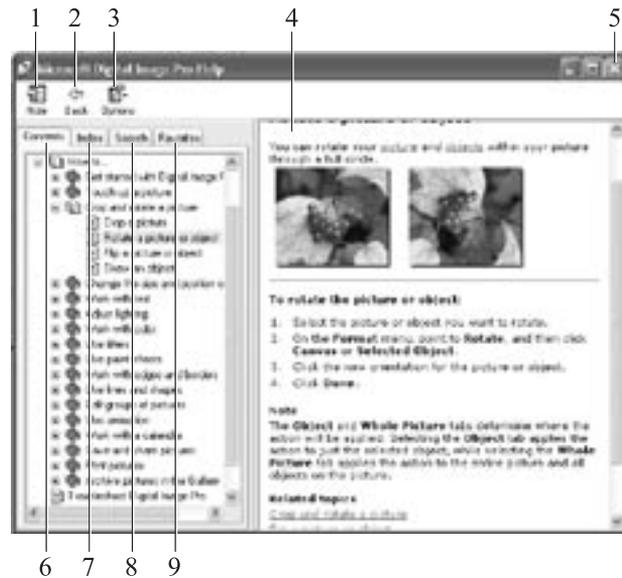
Help Resources

There are multiple ways that you can learn more about using Picture It!. In addition to this User's Manual, there is the online Help system, the product Tour, and Instructional Videos. The following sections describe the types of information available.

Online Help

Picture It! online Help is the most comprehensive of the Help resources. It provides step-by-step instructions, overviews, troubleshooting topics, technical support, and the “What’s wrong with this picture” diagnostic tool. Help includes several ways to find information, including a table of contents, a keyword index, and a full-text search.

This diagram identifies the main features of the Help window.



- 1 **The Show/Hide button** Click this button to expand or collapse the left pane of the Help window.
- 2 **The Back button** Click this button to go back to the last Help topic.
- 3 **The Options menu** This menu has options to print a topic or to set options such as **Internet Options**, where you can change the font size in the Help window.
- 4 **The content pane** Displays the current Help topic.

- 5 **The close button** closes the Help window.
 - 6 **The Contents tab** displays the Help table of contents.
 - 7 **The Index tab** lets you find keywords in the index list.
 - 8 **The Search tab** finds topics that contain words that you enter.
 - 9 **The Favorites tab** lets you save topics for quick access later.
-

To access online Help:

- 1 On the **Help** menu, click **Microsoft Picture It! Photo Premium 9 Help**.
-

Using the table of contents

You can use the table of contents to locate information by subject. The table of contents is a useful way to see all of the features available in each category of features.

To use the table of contents:

- 1 In the left pane of the Help window, click the **Contents** tab.
 - 2 To expand a book in the contents, click the plus sign next to it.
 - 3 To display a topic, in the contents list, click the topic title.
-

Using the index

You can use the index when you are looking for information about a specific term or keyword.

To use the index:

- 1 In the left pane of the Help window, click the **Index** tab.
 - 2 In the **Type in the keyword to find** box, type the word you want to find.
 - 3 In the results list, select the word you want to find, and then click **Display**.
-

Using the search

You can use the search function to find all the topics in Help that contain a word or combination of words.

To use the search:

- 1 In the left pane of the Help window, click the **Search** tab.
 - 2 In the **Type in the keyword to find** box, type the word for which you want to search, and then click **List Topics**.
 - 3 In the **Select Topic to display** list, select the topic you want to view, and then click **Display**.
-

Product Tour

The Picture It! Tour uses pictures and text to demonstrate popular features and new features of the program.

To take the product tour:

- 1 On the **Help** menu, click **Take A Tour**.
The Tour opens, displaying icons to represent different categories of features.
 - 2 Click an icon.
A feature list appears on the left side of the window.
 - 3 Click a feature.
Graphics and text appear that explain the feature.
 - 4 Repeat steps 2–4 to learn about more features.
 - 5 To close the Tour, click **Close**.
-

Instructional Videos

Instructional Videos use animation and narration to show you how to use a variety of image editing features on your photos.

To watch an Instructional Video:

- 1 On the **Help** menu, click **Instructional Videos**.
The Help window opens to a topic about Instructional Videos.
 - 2 Click a video title link.
The Video player opens and the Video begins.
-

The Instructional Videos are accompanied by complete, online tutorials that let you walk through the tasks at your own pace. To open the online tutorial, click the Written Tutorial button on the Video player.

Technical Support

The type of Technical Support resources available vary based on where you live and how you obtained your Picture It! product.

To view Technical Support information:

- 1 On the **Help** menu, click **About Microsoft Picture It! 9**.
 - 2 Click **Tech Support**.
-

Almost all photos can be improved with basic touchup tools. Picture It! touchup tools can be used to correct common photo problems such as red eye, crooked pictures, lighting problems or similar distractions that can ruin a photo. In many cases, Picture It! helps you eliminate basic problems with just a few clicks.

Adjusting Brightness and Contrast

When you take a photo with an automatic camera, the camera's automatic exposure feature measures the available light and determines how much light is required to take the photo. Sometimes, the exposure meter's measurement is slightly too low or too high, creating problems with brightness and contrast in the photo. Picture It! provides tools to fix the levels of brightness and contrast.

To correct brightness and contrast:

- 1 On the **Touchup** menu, click **Brightness and Contrast**.
- 2 Click **Levels auto fix**.
- 3 If you are not satisfied with the result of the levels auto fix, click **Contrast auto fix**.
- 4 If you are not satisfied with the results, fine-tune the settings with the **Brightness and Contrast** sliders.
- 5 Click **Done**.



The picture on the left is both too dark and too low contrast. The Levels auto fix tool was applied to the version on the right, correcting both the brightness and contrast levels.

Making a copy to touch up

Never edit an original photo. Always make a copy and edit only the copy. If you aren't satisfied with the results, you can always start again by making another copy from the original.

Setting the white balance on a digital camera

Many digital cameras allow you to set the white balance for specific types of light, such as sunlight, incandescent, and flash. Using this feature can help reduce tint problems in your photos.

Zooming in to find white

If there are no significant areas of white in your photo, use the zoom controls to magnify the picture on the screen. When you zoom in, you may be able to use a very small area of white, such as the whites of a person's eyes.

Adjusting Tint

When you take photographs, the source of the light can create a colored cast in the photo. We tend to think of light being white, but nearly every light source has its own unique color. For example, natural sunlight has more blue in it, while incandescent (tungsten) lights—including most household light bulbs—give off a reddish or yellowish cast.

When taking a photo, you can compensate for these different colors of light by setting the white balance (with a digital camera), or using special filters (on a film camera). But if you still end up with a cast in your photos, use the adjust tint task to correct the balance of colors to make the lighting look more natural. In this task, you locate a point that should be white, and then Picture It! balances all of the colors in the picture based on the white point you set.

If you have already used the Levels auto fix tool, the tint problems in the picture may already be corrected. Use the adjust tint task to make additional adjustments to the tint.

To adjust tint:

- 1 On the **Touchup** menu, click **Adjust Tint**.
The mouse pointer becomes an eyedropper.
 - 2 With the eyedropper, click an area in the picture that should be white. Picture It! automatically corrects the colors.
 - 3 If you are not satisfied with the results, use the sliders for fine-tuning. Set the **Color** slider to the color of the cast in the photo, and then use the Amount slider to lower the amount of that color in the photo.
 - 4 Click **Done**.
-

Fixing Red Eye

Using your flash in low light situations can give your subjects red, unnatural-looking eyes. The Fix Red Eye tool darkens the red spots in the eyes to reduce or eliminate the redness.

To fix red eye:

- 1 On the **Touchup** menu, click **Fix Red Eye**.
 - 2 Use the pan and zoom controls to magnify your picture and focus on the red eyes in the photo.
 - 3 Click the red part of the eyes. You can click up to two eyes at once.
 - 4 Click **Red-eye auto fix**.
The redness in the eyes is removed.
 - 5 Repeat steps 3 and 4 as necessary.
 - 6 Click **Done**.
-

Straightening a Picture

If you took a photograph while unintentionally holding the camera at an angle, the horizon or other straight lines will appear tilted. This tilt can be a distraction in the picture, but is easily fixed with the Straighten Picture tool.



The Straighten Picture tool rotates the picture to make the horizon level.

To make the horizon level, the Straighten Picture tool rotates the picture on the canvas. When rotated, part of the picture overlaps the edge of the canvas, and these areas would be removed during printing. The rotation also creates empty areas at the corners of the canvas. Fortunately, these problems are solved by the Auto Crop feature which is part of the Straighten Picture tool. After you straighten the picture, Auto Crop trims the edges of the picture so that it becomes aligned with the canvas.

To straighten a picture with Auto Crop:

- 1 On the **Format** menu, point to **Straighten Picture**, and then click **Canvas**.
 - 2 Identify a line in the picture that should be straight (such as the horizon), and then click one end of the line.
 - 3 Click the other end of the line.
The picture is automatically straightened.
 - 4 Make sure the **Auto Crop** check box is selected.
The area of the picture that will be cropped is shown in lightened color around the edges.
 - 5 Click **Done**.
-

Cropping

Cropping is an easy way to improve the composition of a photograph. For example, if your picture has distracting background elements along the top, bottom, or side, you can crop away these parts of the background to focus the attention on the subject.

When you crop a photo, you are removing pixels, and therefore lowering the effective resolution (although the dots per inch will stay the same). If you crop a significant portion of the original, you're limiting the extent to which you will be able to enlarge the picture for printing. This is why it's better to compose the picture as best you can when you take it, rather than relying on heavy cropping later.



Cropping a picture allows you to eliminate distractions and improve the composition.

Cropping your picture to a specific proportion lets you control exactly where the picture will be cut. Otherwise, if your picture is not the same proportion as the print size, some of the picture may be trimmed during printing to fit into the printable area of the page.

Using the rule of thirds

When composing a photograph, many beginning photographers consistently center their subject directly in the middle of the frame. While this technique may be the easiest way to get the subject in focus with a point-and-shoot camera, it is not always the most interesting way to present the subject.

Most advanced photographers follow the *rule of thirds* when composing the space inside a picture frame. The rule of thirds is used throughout the graphic design world, because it helps to create balance between the subject and the background. When you compose a picture according to the rule of thirds, you mentally divide the frame into thirds both horizontally and vertically (imagine a tic-tac-toe grid), and place the point of interest on one of the four spots where the lines intersect.

If the photo includes a person or animal, you can place the face on one of the four points, looking toward the center of the scene. If the photo includes the horizon, it should run about one-third from the top or one-third from the bottom, depending on whether the terrain or the sky is the center of focus.



The cropped picture is a more interesting composition because it follows the rule of thirds.

To crop a photo using the rule of thirds:

- 1 On the **Format** menu, point to **Crop**, and then click **Canvas**.
 - 2 Under **Select a proportion**, click a proportion.
 - 3 Select the **Show guidelines for the rule of thirds** check box.
 - 4 Click a starting point on your photo, and then drag the outline to the opposite corner of the area to be cropped.
The guidelines show the cropped area divided into thirds vertically and horizontally.
 - 5 Move and resize the cropped area so a focal point in the picture is positioned at one of the intersections of the guidelines.
 - 6 Click **Done**.
-

After you have done general touch ups to your pictures, you may want to use advanced editing tools for more precise editing or to apply special effects. The selection tools and multiple-object composites give you the power to edit very specific areas of your pictures. You'll also be able to transform your pictures with filters, color and edge effects, and specialized editing brushes.

Understanding Objects

For many advanced photo-editing tasks, you'll need to understand the concept of *objects*. An object is a part of a picture that can be edited individually. For example, when you add text to a picture, the text is a separate object from the background image. When you edit the text—say, making the font color red—the background picture remains unchanged because it is a separate object.

Working with Composites

A picture that contains multiple objects is called a *composite*. The Stack helps you work with composites by displaying each object separately. Using the Stack, you can easily select any object. Make sure the Stack is showing in the workspace when you are working with composites.

To show the Stack:

- 1 On the **View** menu, click **Stack**.

On the Stack, you'll see a thumbnail representation of each object in the composite. The top thumbnail represents the object that is the top layer in the composite. The bottom thumbnail represents the background object in the composite. Thus, the object that is lowest in the Stack may be at least partially obscured in the composite by the objects on top of it.

You can change the order of the objects in the composite by dragging thumbnails up and down the Stack. For example, dragging an object's thumbnail from the lowest position on the Stack to the top position will bring it to the foreground of the composite.

Locked Objects

When you open any single-object picture, such as a picture you took with your digital camera, the picture will, by default, be *locked* to its position on the canvas. When an object is locked to the canvas, the lock icon  is shown next to that object's thumbnail on the Stack. This lock icon indicates that you will not be able to drag the object around on the canvas.

To lock or unlock an object:

- 1 Right-click the object's thumbnail on the **Stack**.
 - 2 Click **Lock** or **Unlock**.
-

Selecting Objects with the Object Tool

The *object tool*  allows you to select one or more whole objects at a time. With the object tool, you can move, resize, and rotate selected objects by dragging the object on the canvas or using the resize handles.

Each time you start Picture It!, the object tool will be selected by default. You will be able to accomplish many different editing tasks by using the object tool as your only selection tool. Unlike the other selection tools, the object tool does not have an options palette.

To select an object with the object tool:

- 1 Make sure that the **Stack** appears in the workspace.
- 2 Click the object tool  button on the toolbar.
- 3 On the **Stack**, click the object.

When an object is selected with the object tool and not locked to the canvas, *object handles* are displayed around the perimeter of the selection. Object handles are yellow circles that you can drag to resize and rotate the object.

To move, resize, or rotate an object with the object tool:

- 1 Select the object with the object tool as described above.
- 2 If the selected thumbnail has the lock icon  displayed, right-click the thumbnail, and then click **Unlock**.
- 3 To move the selection, hold the cursor over the object until the move handle  appears, and then drag the object on the canvas.
- 4 To resize the object proportionally, hold the cursor over one of the corner object handles until the resize handle  appears, and then drag the resize handle.
- 5 To stretch the object, hold the cursor over the top, bottom, or side object handles until the resize handle appears, and then drag the resize handle.
- 6 To rotate the object, drag the rotate handle  that is attached to the top of the selection box.

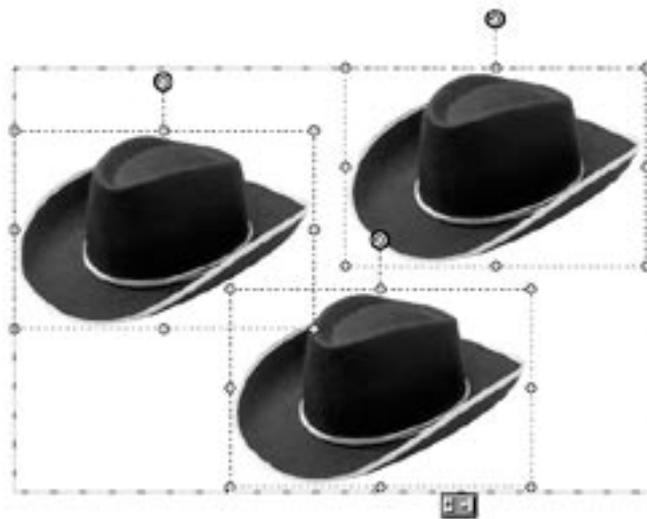
Selecting an object allows you to edit it without affecting other objects on the canvas. You can select an object by clicking it, either on the canvas or on the Stack. If you want to select a small object or one that is hidden behind other objects, it is often easiest to select it on the Stack.

Multiple Selection, Grouping, and Flattening Objects

Picture It! allows you to create composites that contain many objects. While objects are separate, you can edit each one individually. However, sometimes you may want to edit two or more objects at the same time. There are three methods to join objects so that you can edit them together. From least permanent to most permanent, the three methods for combining objects are multiple selection, grouping, and flattening.

Multiple Selection

Multiple selection links objects temporarily. For example, if you wanted to move three objects the same amount to the left, you could select the objects, and then drag them together on the canvas. Then, as soon as you select a different object to work on, the multiple-selected objects are no longer connected.



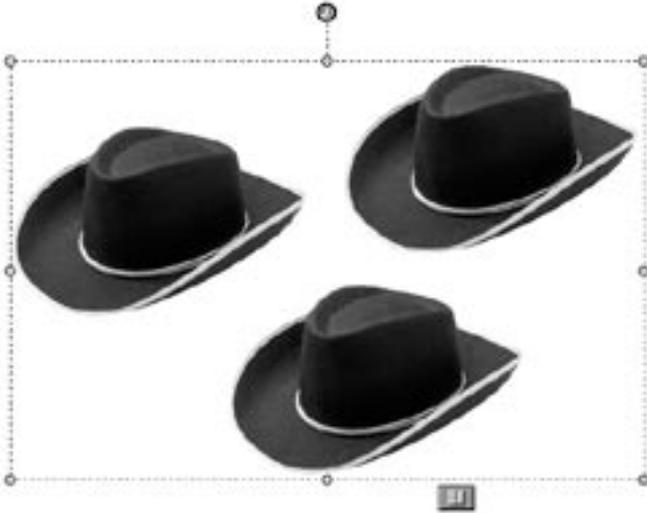
These three objects are a multiple selection, so they can be edited as a set and then separated later.]

To multiple select objects:

- 1 Make sure that the **Stack** is showing.
 - 2 Pressing CTRL, click each thumbnail on the **Stack**.
The objects become multiple selected.
 - 3 To cancel the multiple selection, click any single object in the **Stack**.
-

Grouping Objects

Grouping objects allows you to edit multiple objects and then maintain the grouped relationship while you do other tasks. The grouping relationship is even preserved when you close a picture file saved in PNG Plus format. Grouped objects can later be ungrouped and edited individually.



These three objects have been grouped, as indicated by the group icon at the bottom of the selection box.

To group objects:

- 1 Make sure that the **Stack** appears in the workspace.
 - 2 Pressing CTRL, click each thumbnail on the **Stack**.
The objects become multiple selected.
 - 3 On the **Edit** menu, click **Group**.
 - 4 To cancel the group, click the group on the **Stack**, and then on the **Edit** menu, click **Ungroup**.
-

Flattening Objects

Flattening objects is a permanent action. If you will no longer need to edit objects individually, you can flatten objects into a single object. This allows you to work on the objects together and reduce the number of objects in your composite. Also, many editing tasks cannot be performed on a multiple selection. But if you flatten the objects together, they become a single object, so you will be able to edit them together.

To flatten multiple objects:

- 1 Make sure that the **Stack** appears in the workspace.
 - 2 Pressing CTRL, click each thumbnail on the **Stack**.
 - 3 On the Edit menu, click **Flatten Selected Objects**.
-

Automatic Flattening

When working with objects that are multiple-selected or grouped, some editing tasks—such as using advanced selection tools—will automatically flatten the selected objects into a single object. Picture It! will give you a warning message whenever two or more objects will need to be flattened to perform an editing function. When you see a warning message about flattening, you can click **Cancel** to prevent the objects from being flattened.

Flattening Objects During Saving

When you save a composite picture in the PNG Plus file format, each object is preserved separately. When you open the file again, you can edit each individual object.

However, most file formats for images do not support multiple objects. So if you save a picture in the JPEG format, for example, all the objects will be flattened into a single object. Even if you open such a JPEG file in Picture It!, you will not be able to edit objects individually.

Using Selection Tools

New in this version of Picture It! are the selection tools, which give you more control and more options for editing images. Selection tools allow you to fix problems that exist in only part of the picture. You can also use selection tools to create new objects that can be duplicated or pasted onto other pictures.

Selection tools help you to isolate any part of a larger picture, which enables you to:

- Turn part of a picture into a separate object.
- Apply filters or other effects to a limited area of a picture.
- Duplicate part of an image within a picture.
- Combine parts from two or more pictures.

The selection tools are located on the toolbar next to the **Selection** options button. There are five selection tools available, and each one works well for a specific editing scenario. Select the method that best fits your picture and your intended use. In addition to the object tool mentioned above, the other four selection tools are:

- Marquee tool
- Freehand tool
- Edge Finder
- Magic Wand

Anti-aliasing a selection

Anti-aliasing means that pixels on the edge of the selection can be partially selected. This technique helps to smooth the transition between the selection and the surrounding area. Anti-aliasing is useful when creating composites.

Feathering a selection

Like anti-aliasing, *feathering* a selection helps to smooth its edges. But where anti-aliasing only affects pixels directly on the selection border, you can feather a border of up to 250 pixels around the edge of the selected area.

The Marquee Tool

The **marquee tool**  helps you select part of an object in the shape of a rectangle, circle, or other shape. This tool is useful for cropping objects or pictures to a standard shape.

To make a selection with the marquee tool:

- 1 Make sure that the **Stack** appears in the workspace.
 - 2 On the **Stack**, click the object of which you want to make a partial selection.
 - 3 On the toolbar, click the marquee tool button .
 - 4 If the **Marquee Tool** options palette is not visible in the workspace, click the **Selection** button on the toolbar.
 - 5 To keep the edges of the selection smooth, select the **Anti-aliased** check box on the **Marquee Tool** options palette.
 - 6 On the **Marquee Tool** options palette, click a shape for the marquee selection.
 - 7 To keep the marquee shape in a specific proportion, click **Shape proportions** on the **Marquee Tool** options palette, and then enter a height and width.
 - 8 On the **Marquee Tool** options palette, choose whether you want to make a new selection , add to the current selection , or subtract from the current selection .
 - 9 Drag the marquee pointer diagonally across the area you want to select.
 - 10 To adjust the selection shape, click **Adjust marquee** on the **Marquee Tool** options palette, resize or rotate the marquee shape, and then click **Done**.
 - 11 To feather the selection, click **Feather** on the **Marquee Tool** options palette, enter the number of pixels that you want feathered around the edge, and then click **OK**.
 - 12 To select the opposite area, click **Invert** on the **Marquee Tool** options palette.
-

The Freehand Tool

The **freehand tool**  helps you select part of an object by drawing an irregular shape.

- 1 Make sure that the **Stack** appears in the workspace.
 - 2 On the **Stack**, click the object of which you want to make a partial selection.
 - 3 Click the freehand tool  button on the toolbar.
 - 4 If the **Freehand Tool** options palette is not showing, click the **Selection** button on the toolbar.
 - 5 To keep the edges of the selection smooth, select the **Anti-aliased** check box on the Freehand Tool options palette.
 - 6 On the **Freehand Tool** options palette, click whether you want to make a new selection , add to the current selection , or subtract from the current selection .
 - 7 On the picture, drag the pointer, and then click the starting point to complete the selection.
 - 8 To feather the selection, click **Feather** on the **Freehand Tool** options palette, enter the number of pixels that you want feathered around the edge, and then click **OK**.
 - 9 To select the opposite area, click **Invert** on the **Freehand Tool** options palette.
-

The Edge Finder

The **Edge Finder**  helps you select part of an object by tracing along well-defined edges. This tool is useful for cutting out or copying people or detailed items in a picture.

- 1 Make sure that the **Stack** appears in the workspace.
 - 2 On the **Stack**, click the object of which you want to make a partial selection.
 - 3 Click the Edge Finder  button on the toolbar.
 - 4 If the **Edge Finder** options palette is not showing, click the **Selection** button on the toolbar.
 - 5 To keep the edges of the selection smooth, select the **Anti-aliased** check box on the **Edge Finder** options palette.
 - 6 On the **Edge Finder** options palette, click whether you want to make a new selection , add to the current selection , or subtract from the current selection .
 - 7 On the **Edge Finder** options palette, enter a value in the **Width** box. The Width is the number of pixels away from the pointer that the **Edge Finder** will try to detect an edge.
 - 8 On the picture, click points along the edge of the item you want to select. As you trace, make sure that the edge stays within the zone of the Edge Finder.
 - 9 To close the selection area, click the starting point.
 - 10 To modify the selection, click **Adjust edges**, drag any point in the selection marked by a square, and then click **Done**.
 - 11 To feather the selection, click **Feather** on the **Edge Finder** options palette, enter the number of pixels that you want feathered around the edge, and then click **OK**.
 - 12 To select the opposite area, click **Invert** on the **Edge Finder** options palette.
-

The Magic Wand

The **Magic Wand**  lets you select parts of an object that are the same or similar colors. The Magic Wand is useful for selecting a consistently colored area—a blue sky, for example—without having to trace around it.

- 1 Make sure that the **Stack** appears in the workspace.
 - 2 On the **Stack**, click the object of which you want to make a partial selection.
 - 3 Click the Magic Wand  button on the toolbar.
 - 4 If the **Magic Wand** options palette is not showing, click the **Selection** button on the toolbar.
 - 5 To select only similarly-colored pixels that are connected to each other, select the **Contiguous** check box.
 - 6 On the **Magic Wand** options palette, enter a value in the **Tolerance** box. The Tolerance is the range of colors that will be included in the selection.
 - 7 On the **Magic Wand** options palette, click whether you want to make a new selection , add to the current selection , or subtract from the current selection .
 - 8 On the picture, click the color you want to select.
 - 9 If the selection includes too much or too little of the area you want to select, enter a different value in the **Tolerance** box, and then make another selection.
 - 10 To feather the selection, click **Feather** on the **Magic Wand** options palette, enter the number of pixels that you want feathered around the edge, and then click **OK**.
 - 11 To select the opposite area, click **Invert** on the **Magic Wand** options palette.
-

Editing and Copying Selected Areas

Using the advanced selection tools helps you to isolate a very specific area of a picture for editing or copying. For example, if a picture has generally good lighting levels, but a person's face in the picture is in dark shadows, you can make a selection of just the face, and then adjust the brightness and contrast only in the selected area. And with anti-aliasing and feathering the selection, your edits to the selected area can look natural since the edited area will blend smoothly with the surrounding pixels.

Copying, Cutting, and Pasting Selections

Advanced selection tools also allow you to cut out or copy part of an object to create a new object. These techniques allow you to trim a hole in a picture or create a new object that can be pasted in the same picture or in a different picture.

To cut a hole in an object:

- 1 Make sure that the **Stack** appears in the workspace.
- 2 On the **Stack**, click the object you want to cut a hole in.
- 3 On the toolbar, click a selection tool, and then select part of the object.
- 4 On the **Edit** menu, click **Cut**.

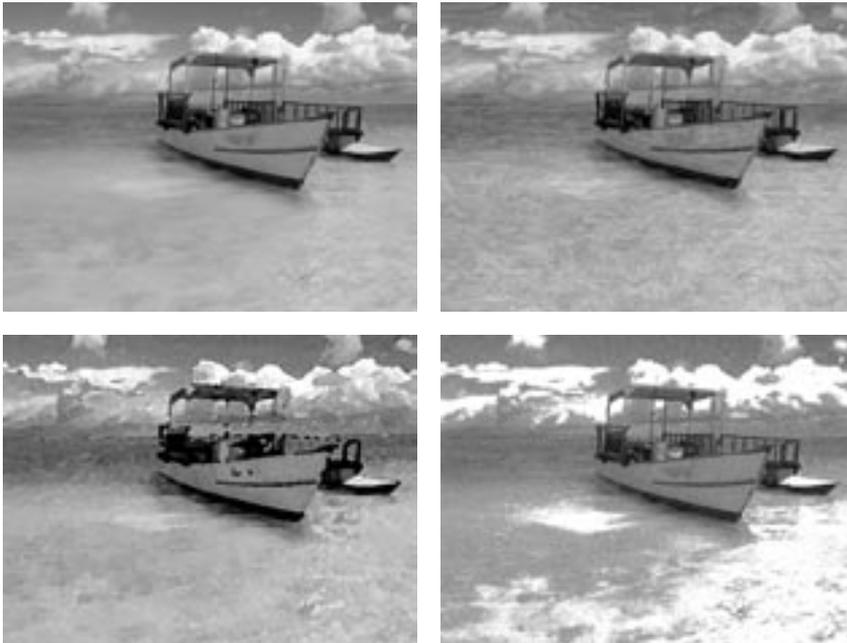
To copy and paste part of an object:

- 1 Make sure that the **Stack** appears in the workspace.
- 2 On the **Stack**, click the object you want to copy part of.
- 3 On the toolbar, click a selection tool, and then select part of the object.
- 4 On the **Edit** menu, click **Copy**.
The selection is copied to the clipboard.
- 5 If you want to paste the selection onto a different picture, open that picture so that it is on the canvas.
- 6 On the **Edit** menu, click **Paste**.
The selection becomes a new object on the Stack.

Note: If you paste the selection onto the same picture that you copied it from, the new object will be in the same position and may not look like a separate object. But the new object will be visible on the Stack, and you can use the object tool to move, resize, or rotate the new object.

Filters

The term *filter* originates from the colored glass covers placed over a camera lens. The first filters in digital imaging sought to mimic the results of these physical camera filters, providing a slight shift in color, or increasing the intensity of colors. But the filters in Picture It! can create many other effects, from sharpening an image to making the picture look like a painting or a mosaic.



Three different filters were used on the original picture (upper left): The colored pencil filter (upper right); the watercolor filter (lower left); and the film grain filter (lower right).

To apply a filter:

- 1 On the **Effects** menu, point to **Filters**, and then click a filter.

Filters create a whole new look for your pictures. Many filters make the image look less like a photograph and more like a drawing, painting, mosaic, or other hand-created artwork. Filter-enhanced pictures can become an attractive focal point of projects such as greeting cards and calendars.

Waiting for filters to be applied

Some filters require your computer to make many calculations, so on a slower computer they may take a few minutes to be applied.

Color Effects

You can give a color picture a new look by applying a color effect. Turn a favorite color picture into an instant classic by changing it to black and white. Or, apply the antique effect, which “ages” your picture by giving it a sepia tone.

To turn a color picture to black and white or antique:

- 1 On the **Effects** menu, click one of the following:
 - Antique
 - Black and White
-

Paint Effects

With the freehand paint brush, you can choose from several painting tools:

- Paint brush
- Airbrush
- Pencil
- Eraser
- Highlighter
- Chalk

Use these tools to add new colors to a picture.

To use the freehand paint brush:

- 1 On the **Effects** menu, point to **Paint Brush**, and then click **Freehand**.
 - 2 Click a painting tool, and then click a color.
 - 3 Click a brush size, and then paint by dragging on the picture.
 - 4 Click **Done**.
-

You can paint with stamps to enliven your pictures with a rubber stamp effect. Choose from a variety of stamp designs or make your own. Paint with a single stamp design, or use multiple stamps on the same picture.



You can choose from a wide variety of stamps to customize any picture.

To paint with stamps:

- 1 On the **Effects** menu, point to **Paint Brush**, and then click **Stamps**.
 - 2 Click a stamping style, and then click a stamp.
 - 3 Click a stamp size, and then apply the stamp by clicking on the picture.
 - 4 Click **Done**.
-

If you take photos regularly, it can become time consuming to perform basic editing to all of your pictures after you download them from your camera. Mini Lab contains tools that can help you save time with routine editing that needs to be done to many or all of the photos in a batch.

If you have a high-capacity storage medium in your camera, you may have dozens or more photos to download at once to your hard disk. Some of these photos may be excellent “keepers” that you will want to spend some time editing carefully later on. But many of the photos only need a few quick edits: changes such as rotation and removal of red eye.

Opening each photo individually, performing basic edits, and then saving each one could take a lot of time. Mini Lab lets you perform these routine editing tasks to many photos at once. Mini Lab lets you select multiple photos to perform the following tasks:

- Levels auto fix
- Contrast auto fix
- Tint auto fix
- Rotate
- Crop
- Brightness and contrast
- Fix red eye
- Save as (to save copies of the originals, change file format, and rename files)
- Print

Mini Lab displays all of your open photos and includes a list of editing options that you can perform on multiple photos. This diagram identifies the main features of Mini Lab.



- 1 The **Open more files** button opens the file browser to let you find more pictures to edit.
- 2 The editing options list shows all of the tasks available for batch editing.
- 3 File options let you save or print multiple photos.
- 4 The **Workspace** in Mini Lab contains thumbnails of all of your opened pictures.
- 5 The **Done** button closes Mini Lab, keeping the photos open and maintaining the changes you have made. To save photos before leaving Mini Lab, select the thumbnails and click **Save** before you click **Done**.
- 6 The **Cancel** button closes Mini Lab, undoing any unsaved changes.

To open Mini Lab from Picture It!:

- 1 On the **Touchup** menu, click **Batch Edit in Mini Lab**.

After you open Mini Lab, select the photos you want to edit, and then click one or more editing tasks. Some of the batch editing tasks (Levels auto fix, contrast auto fix, tint auto fix, rotate clockwise, and rotate counterclockwise) will be performed to all of the selected photos at once. The other editing tasks, such as cropping, let you set your preferences for each picture.

Mini Lab does not automatically save your batch edits. To save your pictures, you can select photos and click **Save**. If you click **Done** to leave Mini Lab without saving, the edits will not be saved.

When you've finished editing a photo, you can add polishing touches by surrounding it with an edge, a border, a mat, or a frame.

Edge Effects

Edge effects alter the outside edge of a photo. For portrait photos, try the soft edge effect. To draw attention to photos that you post on a Web site, try applying one of the highlighted edges.



The photo on the left has highlighted edges applied, which work great for photos on the Web and in e-mail. The photo on the right has been enhanced with soft edges.

To add an edge effect:

- 1 On the **Stack**, click the layer to which you want to add the edge effect.
 - 2 On the **Effects** menu, point to **Edges**, and then click an edge effect or border.
 - 3 If available, click a specific edge or border.
 - 4 Follow the instructions on the screen to customize the size or color of the edge or border.
 - 5 Click **Done**.
-

Shrinking a picture to show the edge effect

Some edge effects appear only behind and outside the picture. So if your picture reaches the edge of the canvas, you might not be able to see the edge effect when you print it or save it to the Web.

To make sure you can see an edge you've added, make sure the object is not locked to the canvas, and then press the CTRL key while you drag in one of the photo's corner resize handles. This will shrink the photo proportionally on the canvas, so that the border lies within the printable area.

Choosing the right mat

When choosing a mat, consider the colors in your photo and the colors of your frame. A mat should not overpower the subject of the photo. Try selecting a soft-colored mat that matches one of the photo's secondary colors.

Mats and Frames

If you plan to put a photo in a traditional photo frame, you can add a Picture It! mat to your photo before you print it. Mats create an elegant effect, and can also help to fit an oddly-proportioned print to a standard size frame.

If you don't plan to mount a photo in a traditional frame, but would like to print and display it, use a Picture It! frame instead. You can choose from a variety of frame themes to complement the subject of your photo. You can even add both a mat and a frame to the same photo.



Picture It! has a wide variety of mats and frames to finish your favorite photos.

To add a mat or a frame:

- 1 Select the picture or object to which you want to add a mat or frame.
 - 2 On the **Effects** menu, point to **Edges**, and then click **Frames and Mats**.
 - 3 Click a theme, click a design, and then click **Open**.
 - 4 Drag your photo from the **Files** palette into the frame or mat, and then click **Next**.
 - 5 Move or resize the photo so that it fits within the frame, and then click **Done**.
-

A great way to present your pictures and share them with friends and family is to create photo projects. Picture It! offers a range of designs that you can use to showcase your pictures. Choose from greeting cards, calendars, business cards, and more.

Creating Photo Cards

Use your own photo to personalize a greeting card for a holiday, a party invitation, or any other occasion.

To open a photo card design:

- 1 Open a photo and check to see that it appears on the **Files** palette.
 - 2 On the **File** menu, click **Create a Project**.
 - 3 On the **All Types of Designs** page, click **Cards**.
 - 4 Click **Photo Frame Cards**.
 - 5 Click a theme, click a design, and then click **Open**.
 - 6 Follow the instructions on the screen.
 - 7 To edit the inside pages, on the **View** menu, click **Front of Card**, **Inside of Card**, or **Back of Card**.
-

Once your card project is open, you can add your own text, photos, and clip art. Since most printers cannot print to the edge of the page, the purple margins on the edges of a card project represent the unprintable areas of the card.

Working with a multi-page project

When working with a project that has more than one page, such as a greeting card, the multi-page palette appears on the bottom of the screen. This palette lets you switch between pages in the project.

Photo cards are either half-fold cards, which are larger cards printed on both sides of the paper, or quarter-fold cards, which are smaller cards printed on only one side of the paper.



A favorite golfing photo was used to create this half-fold card.

To change the fold style of a card:

- 1 On the **Format** menu, click **Change Card Fold**.
-

Creating Calendars

Calendars are a great way to showcase your favorite photos. Calendar projects are available in the following formats:



A one-week calendar



A one-year calendar



A month calendar



The first three months of a 12-month calendar

To create a calendar project:

- 1 On the **File** menu, click **Create a Project**.
 - 2 Click **Calendars**.
 - 3 Click a calendar type.
 - 4 Click a theme, click a design, and then click **Open**.
 - 5 Set the start date for the calendar, and then click **Next**.
 - 6 Follow the instructions on the screen to add a photo to your calendar, and then click **Next**.
 - 7 Move or resize your photo on the calendar. Use the corner resize handles to resize the photo proportionally.
 - 8 Click **Done**.
-

When you create a 12-month calendar, you can add different photos to each of the 12 month pages.

To complete a 12-month calendar:

- 1 Complete the instructions above to create a 12-month calendar.
 - 2 Open the photos you want so that they appear in the **Files** palette.
 - 3 Use the multi-page palette to switch between pages in the project.
 - 4 Drag photos from the **Files** palette into each of the 12 month pages.
-

Saving Pictures

If you're like most people, you can't stand to throw photos away, even if they're imperfect. You probably have a large box or two filled with envelopes of old negatives and photographic prints. Keeping track of all of your old prints and negatives can be a formidable task.

Fortunately, digital photography makes saving, storing, and organizing photos much easier. However, there are some important things you should know about saving your photos to make sure they'll be in good condition whenever you want to enjoy them.

Saving Multiple Versions

Once you've downloaded a photo to your computer and erased it from your camera, your computer's hard disk contains the only copy of that photo. This original version should be treated like a film negative: You don't want to do anything to it that will alter the original content. Except rotation to correct orientation or renaming the file, the original version should be left alone.

When you want to edit a photo or add it to a project, you should always make a copy of the original and work with the copy. That way, if you make some editing changes that you regret later, you can always go back to the original, make a new copy, and start over.

To make a copy of a photo:

- 1 Open the picture.
 - 2 On the **File** menu, click **Save As**.
The Save As dialog box opens.
 - 3 Click the folder where you want to save the copy of the original.
 - 4 In the **File name** box, enter a name for the copy.
 - 5 Click **Save**.
The Save As dialog box closes, with the new copy of the picture open in the workspace.
-

Choosing a File Format

Picture It! allows you to save photos in a number of image file formats. You can determine the best format for saving your photos based on what you will use the photos for, compatibility with other computers, and file size. To help you understand the difference between file formats, here are some important characteristics of three common image formats:

- **Picture It! PNG Plus (.png)** saves the individual objects in your photo projects so you can edit them later. PNG offers lossless compression, but not all computers have the software to open PNG files.
 - **TIFF (.tif)** is a common format for cameras that produce lossless images. TIFF does not support layers, but is a good format for saving important photos, although the files are relatively large.
 - **JPEG (.jpg)** is the most common format for images, since the files can be opened on practically any computer. JPEG does not support layers. Too much JPEG compression can reduce image quality, but JPEG is a format that makes relatively small files that work well for most purposes, especially for e-mail and the Web.
-

To save a photo in a specific file format:

- 1 On the **File** menu, click **Save As**.
The Save As dialog box opens.
 - 2 In the **Save as type** box, click a file type.
 - 3 Click **Save**.
-

Setting PNG Plus Options

Only Picture It! and Digital Image can read individual objects saved in PNG Plus files. However, a PNG Plus file contains a flattened PNG version of the picture that can be read by many other programs, including Internet Explorer. By default, Picture It! saves the flattened version of the picture at the same size as the original, multi-object picture. But while this flattened version of the picture allows the file to be opened by other programs, it does increase overall file size.

If you don't need to have a full-size, flattened version of the picture embedded in each PNG Plus file, you can choose to have the flattened version of picture be saved at a smaller size. Limiting the dimensions of the embedded file can decrease the overall file size.

To limit the size of the embedded, flattened PNG file:

- 1 On the **Tools** menu, click **Options**.
 - 2 Click **PNG Plus options**.
 - 3 Click **No Larger Than**, and then enter values to limit the width and height.
 - 4 Click **OK**, and then click **OK**.
-

Saving for E-mail and the Web

Unlike photos for printing, photos for e-mail and the Web work best if they are relatively low resolution. Low-resolution photos, such as one that is 440 x 330 pixels, move faster through dial-up modems, and they are the right dimensions for viewing on most computer monitors.

To save a photo for e-mail or the Web:

- 1 On the **File** menu, point to **Save a Copy For**, and then click **Save for E-mail or Web**.
 - 2 Do one of the following:
 - Click a picture size
 - Set maximum dimensions
 - 3 Click **Save As**.
The Save As dialog box opens.
 - 4 Click the folder to which you want to save the photo.
 - 5 In the **File name** box, type a file name, and then click **Save**.
-

Avoid sending large photos in e-mail

Sending high-resolution photos in e-mail may cause problems for your recipients. For example, a single 5-megabyte (MB), high-resolution image will take over 20 minutes to download on a 28.8-Kbps modem. Also, some e-mail programs limit the size of attachments, and may, for example, block e-mail with attachments larger than 1 MB.

Installing printer drivers

When adding a new printer, make sure that you install all the printer software and drivers.

If you're installing an older printer, you may be able to find updated printer drivers on the manufacturer's Web site.

Printing Pictures

Printing Single Pictures

Picture It! has a simple process for printing single images. When using the single-picture printing task, one copy of the picture will print on the page, and the picture will be centered on the paper.

To print a single picture:

- 1 Make sure your printer is turned on and connected to your computer.
 - 2 On the **File** menu, click **Print**.
 - 3 Under **Select a printer**, click a printer.
 - 4 To specify printer settings, click **Change printer settings**.
 - 5 Select the number of copies, and then select a print size.
 - 6 Click an orientation, and then click **Print**.
-

Printing Multiple Pictures

Picture It! has a wide variety of templates that allow you to print multiple pictures on a page. You can print multiple copies of the same picture or multiple pictures together at the same time.



Printing on a multi-photo sheet saves paper and is a convenient way to create prints to give to family and friends.

To print multiple photos on the same page:

- 1 Make sure your printer is turned on and connected to your computer.
 - 2 Open all the pictures that you want to print so that they are on the **Files** palette.
 - 3 On the **File** menu, click **Print**.
 - 4 Under **You can also**, click **Print multiple pictures or special paper**.
 - 5 Under **Select a printer**, click a printer.
 - 6 To specify printer settings, click **Change printer settings**.
 - 7 Select a category of page layout, and then click an orientation.
 - 8 Click a layout in the right pane, and then click **Next**.
 - 9 Drag pictures from the **Files** palette onto the layout.
 - 10 Click an option for fitting the selected picture to the area, and then click **Next**.
 - 11 Preview the page layout, and then enter the number of copies you want to print.
 - 12 Click **Print**.
-

Turning on color management

Check your printer's manual to see if it offers color management. Color management can help your printer to produce colors that match the ones on your monitor. If your printer offers color management, click **Change picture settings** while performing the Print task. Your printer's dialog box will open, and you can adjust the settings for color management.

Selecting Print Quality

Most desktop printers are capable of printing in a range of qualities, from a low-quality draft mode to a high-quality setting that requires more time and uses more ink. Printer settings for quality and color vary, but you may be able to specify your paper type, ink type, dots per inch required, and color management preferences. Some printers have simplified printing options such as “Good,” “Better,” and “Best.” Make sure to read your printer's manual to find out how to take advantage of these different settings.

To select print quality for your printer:

- 1 On the **File** menu, click **Print**.
 - 2 Click **Change printer settings**.
Your printer's dialog box opens.
 - 3 Adjust your printer's quality settings, and then click **OK**.
-

Selecting a Print Size

The quality of photo prints is directly related to the number of pixels in the picture. A high-resolution picture contains a lot of detailed visual information, and can be printed at larger sizes. For example, a picture whose dimensions are 2048 x 1536 pixels (3.1-megapixel) would look good even when printed as large as 8" x 10" on most printers.

A low-resolution picture has less detailed visual information, and therefore cannot be printed in larger sizes. A picture with pixel dimensions of 1280 x 960, for example, lacks the detail needed to fill an 8" x 10" print. The result would be a grainy, pixelated image. But printing this picture at a smaller size, such as 4" x 6", would give you a sharp, detailed print.

Choosing Photo Paper

If you want your images to look like traditional photographs, choose paper that is clearly labeled as photo paper. Photo paper comes in a range of thicknesses and textures. Paper weight ranges from ordinary office-document weight to fairly heavy watercolor paper. If you choose a heavyweight paper, check your printer's manual to make sure that your printer can handle it.

The quality of the image will be affected by the kind of paper stock you choose. As a rule, you'll see the widest range of colors and get the deepest blacks from paper that has been specially coated to accept inkjet inks. The range of colors appears to be widest on the whitest papers. Glossy surfaces also create the illusion of deeper blacks. However, if you're going to display your prints, glossy surfaces can cheapen the look of the work, and surface glare can make the images more difficult to view.

Paper formulations also contribute greatly to resisting fading and color shifting. If you're using "fade-resistant" or "archival" inks, look for coated, acid-free papers that are also advertised as fade-resistant or archival.

Creating Long-lasting Prints

How long can you expect a print to last? With some inkjet prints, you can only expect a fade-free lifespan of two months to two years. All of the major printer manufacturers are beginning to advertise greater image stability for the output of certain printer/ink combinations, but few of these manufacturers claim that prints will last more than about four years.

When buying supplies for your printer, check which types of ink and paper are recommended by the manufacturer of your printer, and find out about the ink's lifespan rating. Some six-color printers use inks specially formulated for long life. When printed on high-quality heavyweight matte paper, photos from these printers can last approximately 40 years before perceptible fading occurs.

Fade ratings are given as the amount of time before any color shift in the print can be seen by the naked eye. The actual time it would take for the print to become unacceptably discolored would be several times that. These ratings are based on indoor exhibition under glass in an atmosphere that is not chemically polluted. Ozone is especially harmful to dye-based printing inks. Do not display these prints in rooms where oxygen tanks or electric air fresheners are used—both produce high levels of ozone.

Ordering Prints and Gifts on MSN Photos

Order prints of your photos online at MSN Photos and have the prints sent to you or your family and friends. On MSN Photos, you can also use your photos to create a variety of photo gifts.

To order prints and enlargements:

- 1 On the **File** menu in Picture It!, point to **Print Professionally Online**, and then click **Prints and Enlargements**.
 - 2 Choose to print either the current picture or all opened pictures in the Files palette.
 - 3 To open additional photos for ordering prints and enlargements, click **Add or remove pictures**, and then follow the instructions on the screen.
 - 4 Click **Next**.
 - 5 Follow the instructions on the screen to order the prints and enlargements you want.
 - 6 Click **Done**.
-

To order photo gifts:

- 1 On the **File** menu in Picture It!, point to **Print Professionally Online**, and then click **Photo Gifts**.
 - 2 Choose to print either the current picture or all opened pictures in the Files palette.
 - 3 To open additional photos for ordering prints and enlargements, click **Add or remove pictures**, and then follow the instructions on the screen.
 - 4 Click **Next**.
 - 5 Order the photo gifts you want.
 - 6 Click **Done**.
-

No matter how polished and creative you are as a photographer, Picture It! is a valuable tool for helping you get the most out of your photos. With Picture It! features, you can easily correct common photo problems such as red eye and overexposure. And you can use features like filters and layers to create photos strikingly different from your originals.

Although Picture It! is a powerful photo-editing program, it's important to get the best photo you can at the time you take it. Picture It! can do a lot to correct minor problems with the originals, but certain problems, such as severely blurred or underexposed photos, cannot easily be fixed with computer software. And if you can develop your photography skills to take higher-quality photos, you can spend your time doing creative photo editing with Picture It!, rather than fixing mistakes that can be avoided.

Many cameras available today offer a high degree of automation: just turn the camera on and press the shutter, and the camera does the rest. While this approach is quick and easy, it isn't perfect in all situations. As a photographer, you can learn to fine-tune the settings on your camera to gain greater control of the camera to get the best possible photo for each situation.

With the range of cameras available—from basic point-and-shoot models to professional SLR (single-lens reflex) cameras—this chapter cannot cover specifics for all features available on all cameras. But this chapter does provide a foundation of photography concepts that are vital to taking consistently good photographs.

The first section of this chapter contains information specific to digital cameras: concepts such as resolution and compression that don't have direct counterparts in film photography. Later sections cover universal photography concepts that apply to both film and digital cameras.

Opening photos from your digital camera

For information on opening photos from your camera in Picture It!, see the digital camera section in the "Opening Photos in Picture It!" chapter.

About Digital Cameras

If you're new to using digital cameras, several camera features may seem foreign to you. Some of these features, such as digital zoom and compression, did not exist with film cameras because the technology did not exist. But it's important to understand what these features do and when it's appropriate to use them (or, in some cases, not use them).

Photo Quality

A digital photograph is composed of tiny colored squares called *pixels* (short for *picture elements*). Like a mosaic, the pixels blend together to form a picture. Each digital photo consists of a set number of pixels, ranging from a few thousand to millions. When a digital camera takes a photo, it creates a digital file that specifies the number of pixels and the precise color of each pixel.

Pixels are not a set size, so they can shrink or enlarge if photo size changes. When a photo is enlarged too much, the individual pixels become visible, making a poor-quality photo.



The original photo on the left was saved at high resolution, and you can see sharp detail. The photo on the right has been saved at such low resolution that you can see the individual pixels.

The number of pixels that make up a photo is the photo's *resolution*. Resolution and *compression* are key factors in determining the quality of a digital photo. The following sections explain resolution and compression.

Resolution

Resolution is one of the main determinants of photo quality since it is a measure of the total number of pixels that make up a photograph. Resolution is sometimes expressed as the total number of pixels, such as 3 megapixels (3 million pixels), or in pixel dimensions, such as 320 x 240 (which equals 76,800 total pixels).

Resolution is important primarily because it determines how much you can enlarge and print a photo. Everything else being equal, a 3-megapixel photo and a 320 pixel x 240 pixel photo look the same in a wallet-size print. But if you enlarge those two photos to 5" x 7" prints, the quality of the 320 x 240 photo is very low: you can see the individual pixels. The 3-megapixel photo still looks sharp at the larger size, since its pixels are too small to be seen.

Resolution is also important because it determines file size. High-resolution photos contain color information for many more pixels than low-resolution photos, so the files for high-resolution photos can be significantly larger. File size becomes an issue if you have limited storage on your camera or hard disk, or if you need to send the photos through e-mail.

The following chart gives an estimate of file size and maximum print size for various resolutions. The chart lists file sizes for JPEG format, which is a common (but not the only) format for photos.

Dimensions	Total pixels	Approx. JPEG file size (with slight compression*)	Maximum print size
320 x 240	76,800	23 KB	Wallet size
640 x 480	307,200	91 KB	4" x 6"
1280 x 960	1,228,800 (1.2 megapixels)	363 KB	5" x 7"
1600 x 1200	1,920,000 (1.9 megapixels)	576 KB	8" x 10"
2,048 x 1,536	3,145,728 (3.1 megapixels)	970 MB	11" x 14" and larger

* Compression, which is explained in the following section, varies by camera, so you may find different file size results.

Instead of film, a digital camera uses an *image sensor*—usually a CCD (charge-coupled device) or CMOS (complementary metal oxide semiconductor) chip—to capture the visual information when you take a photo. The image sensor on a simple, low-resolution camera might capture just over 76,000 pixels. The image sensor on a high-quality digital camera might capture more than

Megapixel rating

One of the main factors in the price of a digital camera is its megapixel rating. The megapixel rating indicates the maximum number of pixels (in millions) that are captured by the camera's image sensor.

6 megapixels. As you can imagine, the 6-megapixel camera can produce very large, high-quality photos (with very large files). The 76,000-pixel camera can capture a relatively small number of pixels, so photo quality would be fair to poor, even at small print sizes.

On many cameras, you can set the resolution at which the image sensor captures the photo. As a rule of thumb, always shoot at the highest resolution possible—you'll get higher-resolution photos that you can print in larger sizes. However, in some cases you may want to lower the resolution so that the files will be smaller. This allows you to store more photos on the camera's storage media, but you must sacrifice some quality for quantity.

Make sure to check your camera's manual to find out what resolution you will get from the photo-quality settings on your camera. Beware of settings that offer "enhanced" or "interpolated" resolution. These features add extra pixels not found in the original photo to produce a higher-resolution photo, which may reduce overall sharpness or quality.

Compression

You've seen one way to reduce photo file size: lower the resolution at which you shoot the photo. You can also reduce file size by having the camera compress the photo file as it saves the file to the camera's memory. Compression consolidates similar information in the photo, and discards some information. With JPEG compression, for example, series of similarly colored pixels are grouped together and considered to be the same color. In the code that makes up the file, the color information for these grouped pixels only has to be listed once instead of hundreds, or even thousands, of times. This shortcut can reduce file size considerably. Taken to extremes, a photo in highly compressed JPEG format might be 95 percent smaller than the same photo in an uncompressed format.

Although compression does reduce file size, it also reduces photo quality. Slight to moderate compression might not noticeably reduce photo quality, but high compression produces visible areas of splotchy color called *artifacts*. Even with slight compression, artifacts become more pronounced each time the photo is saved and compression is applied.



The left photo has been saved with lossless compression, so all of the image quality is retained. The photo on the right was saved with heavy JPEG compression—which is not lossless—and the compression significantly reduced the image quality.

For important photos that you want to make into prints, it's good practice to use little or no compression. Or, if your camera offers it, you can take your photos in a format, such as TIFF, that offers *lossless* compression. Lossless compression reduces file size, but retains all of the photo quality once the photo is restored.

File size and photo quality

Lowering resolution and increasing compression both reduce file size and photo quality.

Bearing this in mind, you can use file size as a rough way to judge photo quality.

File formats compatible with Picture It!

Picture It! can open photo files in any of the following formats:

- Adobe Photoshop (.psd)
- AutoCAD (.dxf)
- CorelDraw (.cdr)
- Enhanced Metafile (.emf)
- EPS (.eps)
- FlashPix (.fpx)
- GIF (.gif)
- Home Publishing (.php)
- JPEG (.jpg)
- Kodak Photo CD (.pcd)
- Macintosh PICT (.pct)
- Micrografx Designer (.drw)
- PC Paintbrush (.pcx)
- Picture It!/Digital Image (.php, .mix, .fpx)
- PNG (.png)
- TIFF (.tif)
- Targa (.tga)
- Windows Bitmap (.bmp)
- Windows Metafile (.wmf)

File Formats

There are many file formats designed for photos or other digital images. Picture It! can work with JPEG, TIFF, and many other file formats. If your camera allows you to choose file formats for your photos, you can decide which format to use based on your particular criteria: photo quality, file size, or compatibility with other programs.

The JPEG format is the most common format for photos. JPEG files are versatile, since they can accommodate over 16 million colors, can be compressed, and can be viewed in any Web browser. To reduce file size, the JPEG format always uses compression, although the degree of compression varies by camera. Experiment with the compression settings on your camera to find a low-compression setting that produces good or excellent results. Because JPEG uses some compression every time a file is saved, many photo purists prefer formats like TIFF over JPEG.

The TIFF format provides an extremely accurate recording of digital-image data. Some cameras can use a lossless compression method with TIFF. But even with some compression, TIFF files are generally larger than JPEG files for photos with the same resolution. For example, a single uncompressed 5-megapixel TIFF image is larger than 10 MB. To work with photos of that size, you need a lot of memory on your computer as well as a high-volume storage disk.

Using Zoom Features

A zoom lens lets you adjust the focal length of the lens, making your subject appear closer to or farther from the camera. Some cameras have built-in adjustable zoom lenses; others accommodate interchangeable zoom lenses of different focal lengths.

Digital cameras may offer *optical zoom* or *digital zoom*. An optical zoom feature uses the same principle as a zoom lens on a film camera: the lens itself moves to change the focal length. In any of the zoom positions, the resulting resolution is the same.

A digital zoom feature does not move the lens. Instead, the software inside the camera crops the photo to make the subject appear closer. Because the pixels are removed from the area that's cropped out, the overall resolution is lower. Many cameras offer a combination of optical and digital zoom. For best results, use only optical zoom. Then, if necessary, use Picture It! to crop the photo.

Both “digital zoom” and “enhanced resolution” features use *interpolation* to add pixels to the original photo, a process that increases the overall size or resolution. Interpolation assigns colors to the added pixels based on the colors of the surrounding pixels. While these features technically do increase resolution, they do not achieve the same photo quality as a photo that has not been interpolated. If your camera has digital zoom or enhanced resolution, test it and make sure you like the results before you use it for important photographs. For true zoom capability and highest image quality, use optical zoom.

Expand your perspective

Zoom lenses are great for capturing objects you can't get close to, such as a ship sailing in water far from the shore. Use a zoom lens to get close-up, candid shots of people without seeming intrusive or conspicuous.

Memory Cards, Disks, and Sticks

After the image sensor captures a photo in your digital camera, the digital information is stored on removable media, such as a CompactFlash or Smart-Media card, a memory stick, a floppy disk, a CD, a microdrive, a miniature storage card, or a secure multimedia card.

Floppy disks and CDs have the advantage of being inexpensive and easy to find, even if you're traveling abroad. Floppy disks, however, have very limited storage capacity.

Memory cards are small, durable, and reusable. And storage technology has been steadily improving, so you can now find cards that store as much as 1 gigabyte (GB). Memory cards can be reused over and over, which, over time, makes them less expensive than film .



Buying additional storage media, like these CompactFlash cards, allows you to take many more photos in a single session.

Storage media size dictates how many photos you can store. The media that is included with some cameras can only hold a few high-resolution photos. This type of low-capacity card can be impractical for situations such as traveling. To give yourself more flexibility, you may want to purchase additional removable storage media.

Battery Life

Compared to film cameras, many digital cameras use batteries at a surprising rate. The LCD preview screen and the flash on the camera both put a heavy drain on the batteries. And unlike some manual film cameras, digital cameras cannot function without batteries or an AC power adapter.

To ensure longer shooting, you can buy rechargeable batteries, which last longer than disposable alkaline batteries. Keep your spares charged so they'll be ready when you need them. If you are running low on power and don't have a spare battery, conserve remaining power by trying the following:

- Turn off your LCD screen and compose through the viewfinder.
- Turn off your flash so that it doesn't fire automatically. Turn the flash on only when you really need it.
- Wait until you're home to preview your photos.

The best rechargeable batteries

Lithium-ion batteries and nickel metal hydride (NiMH) batteries both work very well with cameras, providing excellent power and convenience.

Upgrading your flash

If your camera supports an external flash, consider buying one, especially if you take a lot of indoor photos of people. An external flash will give you much more control and often better results.

The range of your flash

Check your camera's manual to find out the recommended range for your flash. Most on-camera flashes are designed to illuminate a subject that is 10 to 15 feet from the camera. If the flash is too close, your subject may look too bright or washed out in the photo. If you're too far away, the flash doesn't provide enough light.

Using the Flash

Learning to use the flash is one of the easiest ways to get better photos both indoors and outdoors. Especially when you're photographing people, overpowering light from the flash can ruin the shot, often in ways that are difficult to correct with photo-editing software.

Most inexpensive and moderately priced cameras come equipped with a built-in flash. The flash may be programmed to go off automatically when the camera senses that the flash is needed. But relying on the camera's judgment will not always give you the best results. Built-in flashes can create harsh shadows, overexposed areas, and unnatural-looking light.

Read your camera's manual to learn what the recommended flash range is, and to find out how to adjust different flash settings. Three of the most common flash settings are outlined in the following sections.

Automatic Flash

Contrary to what you might think, you may be better off without your flash in many situations. If you think the scene is too dark to take without a flash, try increasing the ambient light by turning on lamps and opening the drapes. On most digital cameras, you can increase the ISO equivalent setting, in effect making the image sensor more sensitive to the available light, which allows you to shoot in low light without a flash.

Many newer cameras offer low-light shooting modes and night-flash settings that improve the quality of low-light photos. If your camera offers these options, use them. Otherwise, always stay within the recommended range of the flash.

Red-Eye Reduction Flash

One of the most common problems with flash photos of people and pets is red eye. This problem is caused by a flash located very close to the camera lens. The light from the flash reflects off the blood vessels in the subject's retina, causing the pupils to look red. This problem occurs frequently in low-light situations, when pupils are likely to be dilated. There are several things you can do to help avoid red eyes in your photos:

- Increase the ambient light in the room. Turning on lights and opening up the drapes reduces the size of your subjects' pupils.
- Use your camera's red-eye reduction setting. This feature fires preflash bursts that help reduce the dilation of the pupils before the exposure.
- If you have an off-camera flash, move it away from the camera lens. Then, even if your subjects' pupils are dilated, the light comes from a different angle and reduces or eliminates the red-eye effect.

Fixing red eye with Picture It!

If you end up with red eyes in your photos, Picture It! makes it very easy to remedy this problem. For more information, see the section on removing red eye in this book's "Basic Touchup" chapter.

Fill Flash

You can use the fill flash setting to fill in deep shadow areas caused by bright overhead sunlight, or in a scene where the light is behind the subject.



In the left photo, the strong backlighting creates a shadow that covers the subject's whole face. For the photo on the right, fill flash was used to counteract the backlighting and keep the shadows off the subject's face.

If your flash is using the automatic setting, bright daylight can prevent it from firing. Turn on the flash manually, or, if your camera has a fill-flash setting, turn it on. If you see shadows on your subjects' faces as you're composing the shot, fill flash is a good idea.

An alternative to using the fill flash is moving to a different place where the light from the sun is diffuse and indirect, which produces a softer, more flattering portrait light.

Using Your Camera's Manual Settings

In today's camera marketplace, the lines between manual and automatic cameras have become blurred. It used to be that manual cameras were 35mm SLR (single-lens reflex) cameras with manual controls for focusing, aperture, shutter speed, and film speed. On the other end of the spectrum were fully automatic cameras with very limited controls, possibly only a shutter button.

For serious camera users, the manual SLR cameras were usually the best option, since they offered so much control. The creative process was not left to the automatic settings of a camera. Automatic point-and-shoot cameras were good for novice photographers who didn't want to worry about setting the camera controls. Many automatic cameras could produce adequate or even excellent photos without requiring knowledge of advanced photography concepts.

While you can still find fully automatic and fully manual cameras, many of today's cameras offer different modes for different degrees of automatic and manual control. For example, some SLR film cameras let you switch to an automatic mode where the camera determines everything from focusing to setting the aperture. Many compact digital cameras are designed to be used primarily in automatic mode, but also allow you to switch to program and manual modes to control exposure settings, like shutter speed and aperture.

With digital cameras, the adjustments that you make are often digital approximations of the equivalent function in film cameras, as with shutter speed or ISO. But the photographic result is the same. The following sections provide an overview of the most important manual camera settings and concepts.

Exposure

Exposure describes the amount of light that comes into your camera when you take a photo. Setting the camera to the correct exposure is crucial to getting the proper tones and colors in your photos. *Overexposure* occurs when too much light has reached the image sensor (or film in a film camera), which decreases detail and causes the photo to look washed out. *Underexposure* occurs when insufficient light has been let into the camera, and the photo looks dim and murky.

Exposure is controlled by three factors: the *aperture*, the *shutter speed*, and the *ISO rating*. Aperture is the size of the opening that lets light into the camera. Shutter speed is how long light is allowed into the camera. ISO rating (the *film speed* in a film camera) is the sensor or film's sensitivity to light.

The water glass analogy

When taking a photograph, your goal is to achieve a perfect exposure. To create the right exposure, you need to understand the relationship between the three exposure factors: aperture, shutter speed, and ISO rating. Achieving perfect exposure can be compared to filling a glass completely without spilling any of the water. For a perfect exposure, the glass should become completely full with no water spilling over. In this analogy, the tap symbolizes the aperture: the wider the tap is open, the faster the glass fills up. The time that the tap is open represents the shutter speed: leaving it open longer lets more water into the glass. To fill the glass to exactly the right level, the rate of flow must be set according to the time the tap is open.

The third factor, ISO rating, can be equated to the size of the water glass. A smaller glass, representing a faster ISO rating, fills up more quickly than a larger glass, representing a slow ISO.

Understanding automatic exposure

As a photographer, you will come across a wide range of lighting conditions, and each condition requires that you adjust your camera to different exposure settings. For example, shooting a photo on a beach on a sunny day calls for different exposure settings than shooting on the same beach on a cloudy day.

For many conditions, the camera's automatic exposure setting gives you good or even excellent results. But for some situations, the automatic exposure does not perform as well.

Automatic exposure assumes that the scene you are photographing has a few bright spots, many midtones, and a few dark areas. As the camera's meter reads the available light in your scene, it averages the light in the bright, middle, and dark areas, and then calculates the exposure necessary to bring the average level to a tone of medium brightness called *middle gray*.

Automatic exposure does not work well if your scene is dominated by large sections of very light or very dark colors. A bright field of snow, for example, has so much bright light that the automatic exposure lowers the brightness until the snow looks gray. To work around this shortcoming, you can use *exposure compensation*.

Exposure Compensation

Some cameras have an exposure compensation feature that lets you manually override the automatic exposure setting. Exposure compensation lets you adjust the exposure with settings such as +2, +1, -1, and -2. A +1 setting, for example, tells the camera's automatic exposure system to make the middle tones brighter. When taking a photo dominated by bright snow, increasing the exposure with the +1 setting might correct the light level for the snow-filled scene. Your actual results will vary according to your camera and the brightness of the day.



With bright snow in a scene, setting your camera's exposure compensation setting to +1 or +2 might help you to get the right exposure.

Aperture

The *aperture* is the opening through which light passes to reach the film, or, in digital cameras, the image sensor. Aperture is measured by *f*-number, where a specific setting is called an *f-stop*. With *f*-stops, a low number, such as $f/4$, represents a wider opening that lets in more light. A small aperture, such as $f/16$, lets in significantly less light.

Some cameras have a fixed aperture that can't be adjusted. If you're adjusting the aperture yourself, a setting of $f/8$ is a good place to start, since it gives you a fairly wide zone of sharpness.

If your camera allows you to adjust the aperture, use the settings to regulate the *depth of field* in your photo. Depth of field refers to the zone in your photo that is in acceptably sharp focus. A wide aperture gives you a shallow depth of field, while a small aperture allows a very deep zone—maybe even everything in the photo—to be in focus.

Increasing your chances with bracketing

If you're not sure what the best exposure setting is, try *bracketing*. Bracketing involves taking multiple photos of the same scene. Start by using the automatic exposure, and then use exposure compensation to take additional frames with increased and decreased exposure levels. With a series of photos taken at different settings, there is a good chance that one has the exposure just right.

Program modes

If your camera offers program modes for specific photos like portraits or action shots, read your camera's manual to find out the aperture settings used for those modes.

Imagine pointing your camera down a set of railroad tracks which go all the way to the horizon. With a wide aperture, like $f/2.8$, if you focus on a railroad tie a short distance away, only a few of the other ties are in sharp focus. With a narrow aperture, like $f/22$, many more of the ties are in focus, even those quite a distance from your main focal point.



A wide aperture will give you a short depth of field, as illustrated in the photo on the left, where only the eagle is in focus. The photo on the right was taken with a small aperture, so almost everything is in focus.

For portrait photography, a wide aperture helps to limit the focus. Your subject's face is clear and sharp, but objects in the background are blurred. But if you're shooting a vacation photo of someone posing in front of a monument, a narrow aperture may be in order. With the narrow aperture, both the person and the monument can be in focus in the same photo.

Of course, adjusting the aperture also affects how much light is let into the camera. But if a specific depth of field is important for your shot, you can switch to manual mode, set the aperture, and then set the shutter speed to get the correct exposure level. Some cameras also offer an *aperture priority mode* that automatically selects the correct shutter speed to produce the correct exposure for the aperture you select.

Shutter Speed

In most cameras, the *shutter* is the curtain in front of the film or image sensor that is retracted for a precise amount of time to let light into the camera. Shutter speed can be adjusted to let light into the camera for a longer or shorter amount of time.

When determining the correct exposure for a photo, both shutter speed and aperture must be considered in relation to each other. An increase in shutter speed, which lessens the time the film is exposed to light, requires that you widen the aperture to let in more light.

Shutter speeds are measured in fractions of seconds. In automatic mode, many cameras will use a shutter speed of about 1/125th of a second. For action photography, a very fast shutter speed, like 1/500th of a second, can help to stop action and reduce blurring caused by movement of your subject.



A fast shutter speed like 1/250th of a second can help you freeze action.

On the other extreme, you might set the shutter to stay open for four seconds, or even more for low-light night photography without a flash. But shutter speeds slower than 1/30th of a second increase the likelihood that slight movements in your hand while you take the shot will cause a blurred photo. To avoid camera shake, mount your camera on a tripod or other firm surface for slow shutter speeds.

Shutterless cameras

Many digital cameras do not even have a true shutter. Instead, the image sensor is programmed to control the exposure time. The effect of shutter speed control is the same as a physical shutter.



To accommodate the low light of this twilight scene, the camera was mounted on a tripod and set to a slow shutter speed.

Some cameras offer a *shutter priority mode* that sets the aperture automatically after you set the shutter speed. This can be useful if you're in a situation where shutter speed is more important than aperture, like when you're shooting a subject in motion.

ISO Setting or Equivalent

When shooting on film, you have the opportunity to select different types of film for specific uses. Films are available in different *speeds* that are more sensitive or less sensitive to light.

The film speed is measured by ISO number. A high-speed film, such as ISO 800, is ideal for low-light situations or action photography, since the film requires less light to properly expose the photo. Slow-speed films, such as ISO 100 or ISO 200, are good for photographing in bright daylight, since they require a lot of light. If you plan on using the same roll of film for shooting in multiple settings and light levels, ISO 400 film is a good compromise and does relatively well in most situations.

Faster films generally produce grainier photos than lower-speed films. Some of the newer varieties of professional grade high-speed films produce a finer grain structure, which is less noticeable.

Since digital cameras use an image sensor instead of film, there is no way to actually change the film speed. However, many digital cameras provide the digital equivalent of an ISO. Sometimes called the *sensitivity setting*, this feature allows you, in effect, to change the ISO setting. For example, if you are shooting in a low-light situation, you can switch from ISO 100 to ISO 400.

With most digital cameras, setting the digital equivalent of the ISO setting to a faster speed can introduce *noise* to the photo. Similar to the graininess from high-ISO film, noise is random pixels in the photo that are slightly off-color or too bright. Cameras vary widely, so it is worthwhile to experiment with your digital camera's ISO settings and examine the results.

In low-light situations, consider turning off the flash and setting the camera to a faster ISO setting. This may produce some noise in the photo. But that result might be preferable to what you'd get by taking the photo at slower ISO setting with the harsh lighting of the on-camera flash.

ASA versus ISO

If you have an older camera, the film speed dial might be labeled ASA instead of ISO. These film speed ratings are the same, and the ratings are interchangeable.

Avoid sharpening a photo with noise

Do not use the sharpen feature in Picture It! on digital photos with noticeable noise; sharpening accentuates the inaccurate pixels.

Correcting tint in Picture It!

If your photo has a colored cast from a light source, correct the problem with the Picture It! Adjust Tint tool.

Setting the white balance manually

Some digital cameras offer manual white balance control. This feature allows you to set the white balance by focusing on a pure white object, such as a piece of paper, and then locking down the white balance before you take the photo.

Setting the White Balance

Most digital cameras are automatically programmed to calculate the proper *white balance* for each exposure. To calculate the white balance, the camera assumes the lightest spot in the picture is white, and adjusts the other colors accordingly. Under most circumstances, this automatic function should prevent an off-color cast in your photos.

However, in some lighting conditions, the camera fails to correctly set the white balance. If you're shooting indoors, for example, incandescent lights give off a yellowish or reddish glow. This color is not really visible to the naked eye, but often shows up in indoor photos. To counteract this problem, most digital cameras have preprogrammed color balance settings that compensate for different kinds of light. Typical settings include cloudy, shade, incandescent, flash, fluorescent, and sunny. These settings compensate for the different colors of light likely to be present in those conditions, and should produce photos that require little or no color correction. Read your camera's manual to find out about specific white balance settings it offers.

With film cameras, there is no way the camera itself can compensate for different lighting conditions. But there are two ways you can compensate for the colored light:

- Use film designed for specific lighting situations. Tungsten-balanced films, for example, help to neutralize the color of tungsten or halogen illumination.
- Use a filter on your camera lens. For example, if you're using daylight-balanced film but want to shoot indoors, you can use a blue-colored filter to absorb the overriding yellows and reds of the indoor incandescent lights.

Using Automatic Modes on Your Camera

Many of the automatic cameras sold today—even some of the less-expensive models—have preprogrammed modes that are designed for special situations. Sometimes called *program modes*, these modes automatically adjust your camera to special settings designed specifically for things like macro photography, action shots, portraits, panoramic mode, or picture series.

If you're a beginning photographer who is not always confident enough to adjust your camera's manual settings, use the automatic modes to help you take better photos.

If your camera does not allow you to adjust settings manually, the automatic modes may be the most likely way for you to take successful photos in these situations.

The following sections describe the most common automatic modes available on many digital and film cameras. Since the type and implementation of automatic modes vary for each camera, read your camera's manual for availability and usage instructions.

Macro Mode

Most cameras in automatic mode have trouble focusing on objects that are less than 12 inches (30 centimeters) away. So when you're shooting close-up photography, like capturing a special piece from your coin collection, you need to set your camera to *macro mode*. Macro mode adjusts the focal length to accommodate the unusually short distance to the subject.

Macro mode usually reduces aperture, which widens the depth of field, and increases the chances that the whole subject is in focus.



The camera's macro mode was used to capture the fine detail of the jewelry.

When using macro mode, make sure to turn off the flash, since the flash does not provide proper illumination at such close range. Tripods are a good way to keep the camera steady for a close-up shot. If you don't have a tripod, set the camera on a firm surface, focus the photo, and then activate the shutter with the self-timer. This way, your hand does not have to touch the camera and accidentally introduce any movement to the shot.

Action Mode

If you're photographing subjects such as athletes, moving cars, or even fast-moving children, a camera's *action mode* helps keep your subject in focus. The most significant characteristic of action mode is the faster shutter speed of at least 1/500th of a second, which helps to freeze the action of your moving subject. The action mode in most cameras also uses a wider aperture setting (to offset the fast shutter speed), and multipattern light metering, which compensates for overly bright and overly dark areas.



Action mode uses a fast shutter speed to freeze the action of a fast-moving subject.

Digital cameras create a unique challenge for shooting action photography: the time lag between when you press the shutter button and the actual exposure. With film cameras, pressing the shutter button causes the shutter to open virtually simultaneously. But with digital cameras, you might have to wait as long as four seconds before the photo is taken. When shooting moving objects, four seconds can seem like an eternity.

One way to compensate for the shutter lag is to anticipate your shot. Imagine you are photographing a runner with a camera that has a four-second shutter lag. (The four-second shutter lag will not be highlighted on the camera's packaging, but you can figure it out through your own experience.) First, focus your camera on a spot that the runner will cross in about 10 seconds. When the runner is only four seconds away from your target spot, press the shutter button. The exposure should occur just as the runner comes into your field of focus.

Another way to shoot a moving subject is to pan your camera with the action. While a stop-action photo freezes everything in the photo, panning your camera keeps your moving subject in focus, but blurs the background. For this effect, you do not want to use the action mode, because you do not want a fast shutter speed. To accomplish this effect, follow your moving subject in the

When the lag is a drag

Some digital cameras have a much shorter shutter lag than others. You may want to consider this factor when buying your next camera.

viewfinder (or LCD screen) as it moves, but pan the camera so that your subject remains in the same position in the frame. Your result won't show the subject in as clear a focus as stop action, but the blurred background helps to pronounce the speed and movement of your subject.



Since the camera panned with the subject, the girl is in fairly sharp focus and the background is blurred. This helps convey movement.

Burst Mode

Burst mode is a feature that allows you to take a series of photos in quick succession. Most cameras' burst modes allow you to take 10 to 15 photos in 5 to 15 seconds.

Even on digital cameras with slow shutter lags, the burst mode still allows you to take many frames in a short time span. The burst feature uses a *buffer* to temporarily hold the information from the image sensor. After the set of 10 to 15 frames is stored in the buffer, the camera processes each frame separately and sends them to the removable storage media.

If your camera has a burst mode feature, you can use it to overcome the slowness of the shutter lag. When photographing a child, for example, it can be hard to get the child to pay attention for the few seconds that it takes to shoot the photo. But with burst mode, you might be able to shoot 10 frames within 10 seconds. During that 10 seconds, you can encourage the child to talk, look at the camera, and make different movements and expressions. It's doubtful that all 10 exposures will turn out to be great photos, but you're much more likely to get at least one good shot than if you'd just taken a single frame.



Another great use of the burst mode feature is to take a photo series of an action sequence. Create a series of photos of a golf swing, a child riding a bike, or a pet moving across the yard. Then you can assemble the whole series in a slide show, or mount the photos together in a frame.

Showing the whole series online

Picture It! offers Flipbook animations as a creative way to present a series of photos in sequence.

Reduces wrinkles and blemishes!

The Diffuse Glow filter available in Picture It! works well when applied to portrait photographs. The filter simulates the effect of using a soft diffusion filter on your camera, softening the photo and minimizing wrinkles or blemishes.

Relaxing your subject

An important aspect of portrait photography is to get your subject relaxed and comfortable for the pose. Try using conversation or other pleasant distractions to get your subject's mind away from the camera.

Portrait Mode

For portraits and candid shots, using your camera's *portrait mode* is a convenient way to get good results. Portrait mode is set to use a relatively wide aperture, creating a shallow depth of field. With only your subject in focus, objects in the background are less distracting, and your subject dominates the frame.

With a shallow depth of field, it's crucial that you get your subject in sharp focus. If your depth of field is so short that you can't focus on every part of your subject at the same time, focus on the subject's eyes, and let hands and feet be less in focus.



For this portrait, the Diffuse Glow filter was applied in Picture It! to soften the focus.

For successful portraits, remember to fill the frame, and use a slightly telephoto lens, such as a 105mm, or a slight zoom setting. Keep the background very simple, unless you are using objects in the background as context for your subject. If shooting indoors, an off-camera flash or other light source works best.

Panoramic Mode

For landscapes, large groups of people, and other long horizontal shots, a camera's *panoramic mode* helps you compose the photo without too much sky or ground in the photo. Panoramic shots have a different *aspect ratio* than standard shots, meaning the width of the frame is proportionally much greater than in a photo with a standard aspect ratio.

Some panoramic cameras take photos with an aspect ratio of 4:11 (four units tall by 11 units wide), compared to the aspect ratio of 3:4 for standard shots on most digital cameras. As with the shape of a movie theater screen versus a television screen, the wider frame gives you some new creative territory when composing your photo.



Switching your camera to panoramic mode gives you new compositional possibilities.

True panoramic cameras use a wide-angle lens to let you capture more width of the scene by staying in the same position. Many cameras, including digital cameras and APS cameras, offer a panoramic mode without a wide-angle lens. Instead, the panoramic effect is achieved by simply cropping off the top and bottom of the frame. This type of panoramic shot does give you a wider aspect ratio, but not a wider angle. On some digital cameras, using the panoramic mode means that each photo has fewer pixels (since the top and bottom are cropped), so each panoramic shot takes up less space on your storage media.

Creating a makeshift tripod

If you're outdoors, try propping the camera on a rock or car roof. Then fine-tune the positioning by putting the camera on a jacket or other object that you can shape to adjust the camera angle.

Using the Self-Timer

Many digital cameras, even inexpensive ones, come with a self-timer feature. Some self-timers open the shutter after a preset amount of time, such as 10 seconds; others allow you to adjust the length of time before the shutter fires. Either way, this fairly simple feature is great for getting yourself into a photo and for taking long exposure shots.

Getting Yourself into a Photo

To get yourself into a photo, plan where you want to position yourself for the shot. Then set up the camera by putting it on a tripod, a table, or any other flat, stable surface. With your camera in position, focus the camera on your subject, which should be close to the position where you will stand for the photo.

If your camera has autofocus, press the shutter halfway down to focus, press the self-timer button, and then press the shutter all the way down. Then you've got about 10 seconds to get yourself in position for the shot.

Taking Long Exposure Shots

Another great use of the self-timer is for exposures with a relatively slow shutter speed. For speeds slower than 1/30th of a second, there is a good chance the slight movements in your hands will cause blurriness in your photo. Even if you have very steady hands, the slight movement of your finger pressing the shutter button can create movement. Using the self-timer will eliminate this problem. By setting the camera on a firm surface and using the timer, your hands don't have to be anywhere near the camera while the shutter is open.

Ten Tips for Great Pictures

The following 10 tips offer suggestions for developing your photography approach, technique, composition, and habits. If you are an inexperienced photographer, some of these tips might be new ideas for you. If you're a photography veteran, these tips might be a good reminder of things you haven't heard in a while. Either way, we hope they inspire you to get out and shoot some great photos!

1. Know Your Gear

Having command of your equipment is an important aspect of enjoying and being successful with photography. As you get to know your gear and gain confidence in a camera's capabilities, the camera can become an extension of yourself. When you have reached this level of competence, you can concentrate more on the creative aspects of photography.

When you get a new camera, first read through the manual. With digital cameras especially, operating the controls may not be intuitive, since many digital cameras' controls must be accessed through menus on the LCD screen.

After you've read the manual, and you understand how and when to use your camera's features, go out and take a variety of photos using the different settings. Take some photos outdoors and indoors, with the flash and without the flash, with automatic settings and with manual settings. As you shoot, take notes to record the settings used for each shot. Later, look at your photos on your computer, and take note of both the settings that worked well and the settings that produced poor results.

Missing a great photo because you get hung up on technical issues is frustrating. Spend time getting to know your gear, and prepare for great photo opportunities.

Planning for the imperfect

Learning to nail the exposure takes a lot of experience, and no one gets it right with every shot. If you suspect the lighting might make it difficult to nail the exposure, you can increase your chances of success by bracketing, as explained in tip #7.

2. Nail the Exposure

In a finished photo, exposure is something that you usually only notice when it is out of adjustment. A perfect exposure is not something that jumps out at you from a photo, but a problem exposure definitely stands out. In an overexposed photo (caused by too much light), the shadow areas are light, and the highlighted areas are almost entirely white. In an underexposed photo, too little light has been let into the camera, creating a photo that lacks detail, with filled-in shadow areas and dull highlighted areas.

Special lighting situations can fool the built-in light meter in your camera. If you want to start with the camera's automatic exposure, use *exposure compensation* to fine-tune the exposure. The following list describes some common lighting problems and the recommended exposure compensation for each:

- For a side-lit subject: Increase exposure by one-half of a stop.
- For a backlit subject: Increase the exposure by one stop. Or step in close and meter directly on the subject, step back and recompose, and then shoot at the reading you took on the subject. You can also switch to spot metering.
- For a small dark subject against a bright background, or any subject in a very bright scene: Use exposure compensation of +1 to +3, or increase exposure by one to two stops, for example, from f/8 to f/5.6 or f/4.5.
- For a small, light subject against a dark background: Use exposure compensation of -1, or decrease exposure by one stop, for example, from f/8 to f/11.

3. Capture a Moment in the Story

Consider driver's license and passport photos. We think of these photos as uninteresting and unrepresentative of how people usually look. Why are these photos dull?

One problem with these photos (but certainly not the only problem) is that they capture people out of their element, without context or a story. There are no interesting details in the background to draw in the viewer, and the subject often looks impatient or uncomfortable.

When you are the photographer, you can strive to capture people, events, and places that tell a story. In addition to having your subject look natural and not posed, details in front of the subject or in the background can stimulate the imagination to re-create the story of the photo.



This photo captures the destruction of an earthquake just hours after the event. Since the photo was taken before the rubble was cleared away, the photographer was able to capture the many details of the scene that tell the story.

With enough of these details, and a strong relationship between your subject and the other elements, the photo can suggest ideas that are not even in the frame. You can take the old cliché “A picture is worth a thousand words,” and make it your goal to paint more than a thousand words with your photographs.

4. Look for the Light

Many of the best photographs are taken early in the morning, late in the afternoon, and at twilight. At these times the lighting is most dramatic.

Many photographs are shot in bright or moderately bright sunlight. This type of light produces photos that closely match the way we remember seeing the scene. That is part of the reason we respond to them with a positive sense of familiarity.

However, colors photographed in the cooler light at twilight or in overcast conditions, or in the warmer light of sunrise and sunset, offer a new perspective on familiar colors and subjects, and provide a more creative backdrop for photographs. Overcast and after-the-rain conditions, in particular, produce richer, more saturated colors. For example, red leaves photographed against a twilight backdrop, instead of in daylight, create a moody interpretation that suggests a sense of mystery or drama.



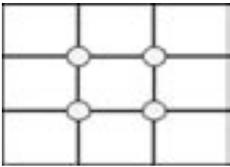
In the dim light of a rainy day, the red leaves in this photo look especially vivid.

For interior photographs, look for strong sources of natural light, as from a window or a skylight. The glow of light coming from one direction can illuminate your subject dramatically.

5. Follow the Rule of Thirds

When composing a photograph, many beginning photographers always center their subject directly in the middle of the frame. While this technique may be the easiest way to get the subject in focus with a point-and-shoot camera, it is not always the most interesting way to present the subject.

Most advanced photographers follow the rule of thirds when composing the space inside a picture frame. The rule of thirds divides the frame into thirds both horizontally and vertically, and places the point of interest on one of the four spots where these dividing lines intersect. The rule of thirds is used throughout the graphic design world, because it helps to create balance between the subject and the background.



To apply the rule of thirds, divide your scene into three sections horizontally and vertically. Place the focal point of your photo on one of the intersections of the dividing lines.



Following the rule of thirds, the bicycle in this photo lies right on the of the points where the dividing lines intersect. The top of the dock also roughly follows the horizontal line that runs one-third down from the top of the frame.

If you have a person or animal in your photo, you can place the subject's face on one of the four points, looking toward the center of the scene. If the horizon is in a photo, it should run about one-third from the top or one-third from the bottom, depending on whether the terrain or the sky is the center of focus.

The rule of thirds is not an absolute law, and there have been many great photographs taken that don't abide by it. But the rule can be a great way to add balance and interest to your photos.

Recomposing a photo with Picture It!

After a photo has been transferred to your computer, use the crop tool in Picture It! to change the composition. By clipping away the edges of the photo, you can reposition your subject to comply with the rule of thirds.

6. Find a Unique Perspective

You can challenge yourself to take original photos that convey unique perspectives. Rather than just pressing your shutter button as soon as you have the urge to capture a scene, take some time to assess your shooting angle, proximity to your subject, and background elements. You may transform your composition by taking one or more of the following simple steps:

- Get closer to your subject, to show more detail and eliminate distractions in the background.
- Include just a portion of your subject in the frame.
- Take your original subject and place it in the background. Find a new subject that adds context to the object in the background.
- Get lower to the ground, and point the camera up toward your subject.
- Move to a higher location, above your subject, so you are pointing down when you take the photo.

For example, if you are traveling, your natural instinct might be to take straightforward photos of local monuments. But with this approach, you might wind up with the same lackluster photos taken by scores of other tourists before you. And there would be a good chance that a nearby souvenir shop would sell superior, professionally photographed prints and slides of the same monuments. For that matter, you could have just stayed home and ordered the professional photos from a catalog.

Use your imagination to compose some original, creative photos that you won't find anywhere else. Capture some of the local color by photographing a lively food vendor stationed near the monument, and the monument can be the backdrop in your frame. Or use the self-timer to capture you and your companion sampling the local fare that you've bought from the food vendor in front of the monument.

7. Bracket

The term *bracket* means to create exposures that are both lighter and darker than the camera or light meter indicates. The idea is to second guess the purely mechanical exposure meter, so that you get the right exposure.

If you're taking photos of a sunset, a scenic vista, or a plant, you have the time to bracket. With these subjects, you're also likely to have a wider range of tones to record than your camera can handle, especially if your subject is brightly lit.

So how do you bracket with an automatic camera? Most digital cameras, and many automatic cameras, have an exposure compensation feature, sometimes called the *EV setting*. If you set the exposure compensation for -1, the shot is one stop underexposed (darker than normal). If you set the camera for +1, the shot is one stop overexposed (lighter than normal). So you can bracket by taking three photos, one each at the -1, 0, and +1 settings.

Some cameras offer an automatic feature, which takes a range of photos, each with a different exposure setting.

Even if your camera doesn't permit you that much control (or if you don't want to take the time to change the exposure settings), another technique will give you results similar to bracketing. To get a lighter exposure, aim your camera at a darker portion of the subject, and then press the shutter button partway down (until you begin to feel a little resistance). Next, without releasing pressure on the shutter button, reframe your photo to include what you want, and then push the shutter button all the way down to take the photo.

Depending on your camera, pressing the shutter button halfway down may lock in the exposure and the focus. If this is the case, you need to set the exposure on an object that is exactly the same distance away from the camera as the subject. Otherwise, your subject will not be in focus when you take the photo.

A quick check with the LCD

One of the benefits of digital photography is that you can get a look at your photos on the LCD preview screen right after you've taken the shot. This feature is great for a quick analysis of the photo's composition, exposure, and color tone. Just be aware that since the preview screen is so small, it often does not reveal problems with focus.

8. Analyze and Shoot Again

Photography takes practice. And you will progress at a faster rate if some of your practice time is focused on developing specific skills. One way to do that is to analyze your photos, and then go shoot them again.

When you get a chance to look at your photos on a computer or as prints, you can assess their quality of composition, lighting, exposure, and white balance. Upon close inspection, you might realize that you placed your subject too close to the center of the frame, or that incandescent lights caused an orange glow. On your next shoot, go out and take this same photo again, and make adjustments for the problems you encountered before.

When you look at the results of your second round of photos, you may find that you got excellent results, or you may find that one of your adjustments disrupted something else in the photo. Or maybe the different lighting conditions of the different day made it more difficult to nail the exposure.

To continue the exercise, shoot the same subject or scene on a regular basis. You must always compensate for the differences in lighting each day, but you can try new approaches to the composition. Learning to shoot the same subject under different conditions or with a different approach gives you valuable experience and ideas when you encounter new situations.

9. Shoot Every Single Day

To become a talented and confident photographer, make photography part of your daily routine. Fortunately, digital cameras have made it much more convenient and inexpensive to shoot lots and lots of photos. Once you've purchased your digital camera, you can take as many photos as you want. The only cost is for batteries and storage for your photos.

The more you practice, the more confident you'll become in your skills and in your equipment. You'll also develop the habit of keeping your camera close by, and having it ready for photo opportunities. Train yourself to look for these opportunities, and take advantage of them when they come to you. Some of the world's most memorable photos were taken by amateur photographers who happened to be in the right place at the right time. So to be ready to take that once-in-a-lifetime shot, know how to use your gear, have your equipment handy, and be on the lookout for great photo material.

10. Show Your Photos to Other People

Even when you are making great progress with your photography skills, it's easy to overlook the shortcomings in your own work. To continue improving your abilities, show your photos to other people. Getting others' opinions is an invaluable learning experience.

Good photos should be visually exciting to people, eliciting a "Wow, this is great!" response. If you find that people are not very excited by your photos, ask them what they think is missing, and what you could do to make them better. You'll be surprised what some people like and do not like about your photos.

Find other photographers in your community. You can look at each others' work and give feedback. This kind of mutually beneficial arrangement also helps you to develop your critical eye.

While it's important to show your photos to others, remember that you are the ultimate judge of your own work. Photography is an art, and as an artist you should establish your own voice and style. You don't have to listen to every piece of advice, and you may produce your best work by taking chances and following your own instincts.

That said, photographs are made to be seen! As you improve your photography skills, showing off your photos can be the best part.

12-month calendars 59

A

action photography 95
adding
 pictures to canvas 22
 text to pictures 25
Adobe Photoshop files 11
aging pictures with color effects 50
aligning text 25
antique effects 50
aperture 87
aperture priority mode 88
archival paper and inks 69
artifacts 77
artwork effect 49
aspect ratio 99
AutoCAD files 11
automatic camera modes
 action 95
 burst 97
 macro 94
 overview 93
 panoramic 99
 portrait 98
automatic exposure 86, 102
automatic flash 82
automatic media detections 7
automatic object flattening 42
automatic Picture It! setup 1

B

backlighting 84
balancing colors 32
batch editing 53
battery life 81
black and white, changing to 50
BMP files 11
bold formatting 25
borders, adding 55
bracketing 87, 107

brightness
 correcting 31
brushes
 freehand 51
 rubber stamp effects 51
buffers 97
bulleted lists 25
burst mode 97
buttons 19, 26

C

calendars 59
cameras
 action shots 95
 automatic modes 93
 battery life 81
 burst modes 97
 close-up shots 94
 compatibility 7
 compression 77
 digital 74
 file formats 78
 flash 82
 manual settings 85
 opening pictures from 9, 12
 overview 73
 panoramic 99
 photography tips 101
 portraits 98
 removable media 80
 resolution 75
 self-timers 100
 zoom 79
canvas 22
cards, greeting 57
CDR files 11
CDs
 opening pictures from 9
 recommendations 80
circles 44
close-up photography 94

closing Startup Window 20
colored casts 32, 92
colored pencil filter 49
colors. *See also* painting pictures
 antique 50
 applying color effects 50
 black and white 50
 Magic Wand 47
 mats 56
 print lifespan ratings 70
 red eye 33
 text 25
 tint adjustments 32
 white balance 32, 92
color management, printer 68
combining objects 40
Common Tasks list 21
CompactFlash card 80
compatibility, automatic detection 7
composites 37
composition 35
compressing files 77
connecting scanners 15
contrast
 correcting 31
 copying original versions 62
 copying pictures. *See* scanners
 copying picture features
 Edge Finder 46
 copyrights 17
 CorelDraw files 11
 Create a Project button 20
 cropping pictures 35, 44
 currently open pictures 22
 cutting picture features 46

D

daylight 84
depth of field 87
detecting compatible media 7
device compatibility 7

- Diffuse Glow filter 98
- digital cameras
 - action shots 95
 - automatic modes 93
 - battery life 81
 - burst mode 97
 - close-ups 94
 - compression 77
 - file formats 78
 - flash 82
 - manual settings 85
 - opening pictures from 9, 12
 - overview 74
 - panoramic 99
 - photography tips 101
 - portraits 98
 - removable media 80
 - resolution 75
 - self-timers 100
 - sensitivity setting 91
 - zoom 79
- digital photo card readers 9
- digital zoom 79
- digitizing prints. *See* scanners
- discolored prints 70
- displaying. *See* viewing
- drawing (artwork) effect 49
- drivers 66
- DRW files 11
- DVDs
 - opening pictures from 9
- DXF files 11
- E**
 - e-mailed pictures 16, 65
 - edge effects 55
 - Edge Finder 46
 - editing pictures. *See* also objects; special effects
 - brightness 31
 - contrast 31
 - cropping 35
 - Mini Lab 53
 - opening 7
 - red eye 33
 - selection tools 43
 - text 25
 - tint 32
 - touchup tools 31
 - workspace area 21
 - Edit Multiple Pictures button 19
 - emboss filter 49
 - EMF files 11
 - enhanced resolution feature 79
 - enlargements, ordering 71
 - EPS files 11
 - EV setting 107
 - exposures 85, 102
 - exposure compensation 87, 102, 107
 - eye redness 33, 83
- F**
 - f-stops 87
 - facial touch ups 98
 - fade-resistant paper 69
 - fade ratings 70
 - Files palette 22
 - file browser 9, 19
 - file compression 77
 - file formats supported 11, 63, 78
 - file size 75
 - file transfers
 - importing 7
 - fill flash 84
 - film cameras
 - action shots 95
 - aperture 87
 - automatic exposure 86
 - automatic modes 93
 - burst mode 97
 - close-ups 94
 - exposure 85
 - exposure compensation 87
 - ISO setting 91
 - overview 85
 - panoramic 99
 - photography tips 101
 - portraits 98
 - self-timers 100
 - shutter speeds 89
 - white balance 92
 - film speeds 91
 - filter-enhanced pictures 49
 - filtering lighting colors 32
 - finding pictures. *See* locating pictures
 - Fix Red Eye tool 33
 - flash 33, 82
 - FlashPix files 11
 - flatbed scanners
 - opening pictures from 15
 - flattened PNG files 64
 - flattening objects 42
 - Flipbook animations 97
 - floppy disks 9, 80
 - fold styles, card 58
 - fonts 25
 - formats supported 11, 63, 78
 - formatting text 25
 - FPX files 11
 - frames, adding 56
 - freehand brush 51
 - freehand tool 45
- G**
 - GIF files 11
 - glossy paper 69
 - graininess 91
 - gray area, workspace 21
 - greeting cards 57
 - grouping objects 41

H

half-fold cards 58
hand-created artwork effect 49
hard drive, opening pictures from 9
Help links 20
Help resources 26
Hide button 21
high-quality printer settings 68
highlighted edges 55
high resolution pictures 69
holiday cards 57
Home Publishing files 11

I

image sensors 75, 91
importing pictures 7
incandescent lights 32
index, online Help 27
ink options 70
Installation Wizard 2
installing Picture It! 1
Instructional Videos 29
Internet, opening pictures from 17
interpolation 79
invitations, personalized 57
irregular shapes 45
isolating picture parts. *See* selection tools
ISO setting 91
italic formatting 25

J

JPEG files 11, 42, 63, 75

K

Kodak Photo CD files 11

L

larger print sizes 69
layers. *See* objects
LCDs 108

lifespan ratings, print 70
lighting
 aperture 87
 automatic exposure 86
 bracketing 87, 107
 colors 32
 exposure compensation 87
 film speed 91
 flash 82
 incandescent 32
 overview 85
 problems 31
 red eye 33, 83
 shutter speed 89
 tips 104
 white balance 32, 92
linking objects 40
locating pictures
 file browser 9
 overview 7
 TWIN support 12
 WIA support 12
locked objects 38
long exposure shots 100
lossless compression 77
low-quality printer settings 68
low resolution pictures 16, 69

M

Macintosh PICT files 11
macro mode 94
Magic Wand 47
manual camera settings
 aperture 87
 automatic exposure 86
 exposure 85
 exposure compensation 87
 ISO setting 91
 overview 85
 shutter speeds 89

 water glass analogy 86
 white balance 92
manual Import Pictures Wizard starts 8
manual Picture It! setup 1
marquee tool 44
mats, adding 56
maximum print sizes 75
media, storage 7, 80
memory cards or sticks 80
menus 21, 26
microdrives 80
Micrografx Designer files 11
middle gray 86
miniature storage cards 80
Mini Lab 53
MIX files 11
More Files button 20
mosaic effect 49
motion photography 95
moving picture features 39
MSN Photos Web site 71
multimedia cards 80
multiple
 objects edited 41
 objects flattened 42
 objects selected 40
 pictures edited 53
 pictures printed 66
 pictures taken in succession 97
 picture versions 62

N

natural light 32
noise 91
numbered lists 25
number of pixels 75

O

objects
 combining 40
 consistently colored areas 47

- displaying separately 37
 - Edge Finder 46
 - flattening 42
 - freehand tool 45
 - grouping 41
 - handles 39
 - locked 38
 - marquee tool 44
 - moving 39
 - multiple selected 40
 - overview 37
 - preserving layers 42
 - selection tools 43
 - object tool 39
 - odd-sized pictures, mats for 56
 - one-month calendars 59
 - one-week calendars 59
 - online Help 26
 - online print and gift ordering 71
 - online tutorials 29
 - opening pictures
 - cameras 12
 - e-mail 16
 - file browser 9
 - overview 7
 - scanners 15
 - troubleshooting 14
 - TWAIN support 12
 - Web pages 17
 - WIA support 12
 - opening Startup Window 19
 - Open from Camera button 19
 - optical zoom 79
 - ordering prints and gifts 71
 - outside edges, photo 55
 - overexposure 85
 - overriding automatic exposure setting 87
 - ozone 70
- P**
- painting (artwork) effect 49
 - painting pictures
 - freehand 51
 - rubber stamp effects 51
 - panoramic photography 99
 - paper options 69
 - partial picture selections. *See* selection tools
 - parts of pictures. *See* objects
 - PCD files 11
 - PCT files 11
 - PCX files 11
 - PC Paintbrush files 11
 - permanent object links 42
 - personalized cards 57
 - photo. *See* photo quality; pictures
 - photo card readers 9
 - photo paper options 69
 - photo projects 57
 - photo quality
 - aperture 87
 - automatic camera modes 93
 - automatic exposure 86
 - compression 77
 - exposure 85, 102
 - exposure compensation 87, 102
 - file formats 78
 - film speed 91
 - flash 82
 - long exposures 100
 - manual camera settings 85
 - overview 73
 - red eye 33, 83
 - resolution 75
 - self-timers 100
 - shadows 84
 - shutter speeds 89
 - storage media 80
 - tips 101
 - water glass analogy 86
 - white balance 92
 - zoom 79
 - PHP files 11
 - pictures. *See also* photo quality
 - color effects 50
 - filter-enhanced 49
 - formats supported 11, 63, 78
 - importing 7
 - opening 7
 - ordering prints and gifts 71
 - resizing 23
 - text 25
 - Picture It!
 - file formats supported 11, 63, 78
 - installing 1
 - Picture It! Tour 28
 - pixels
 - cropping 35
 - interpolation 79
 - noise 91
 - overview 74
 - picture resizing 23
 - print sizes 69
 - resolution 75
 - PNG files 11
 - PNG Plus files 42, 63
 - portrait photography 55, 98
 - positioning camera and subjects 101
 - precise editing. *See also* objects; special effects
 - preserving object groups 41
 - preserving object layers 42
 - printers
 - color management 68
 - drivers 66
 - options 70
 - quality settings 68

- printing pictures
 - alignment on page 66
 - cropping 35
 - lifespan ratings 70
 - maximum sizes 75
 - multiple images 66
 - paper options 69
 - quality settings 68
 - resolution 75
 - single image 66
 - size 69
 - prints, ordering 71
 - product tours 28
 - program modes. *See* automatic camera modes
 - projects, creating photo 57
 - proportional cropping 35
 - proportional resizing 39
 - PSD files 11
- Q**
- quality enhancements. *See* editing pictures
 - quality ranges, printer 68
 - quarter-fold cards 58
- R**
- rearranging objects 22
 - rechargeable batteries 81
 - rectangles 44
 - reducing photo size 77
 - red eye 33, 83
 - reinstalling Picture It! 3
 - removable media 80
 - removing
 - picture features 46
 - Picture It! 3
 - reordering objects 37
 - resizing
 - picture cropping 35
 - picture features 39
 - picture size 23
 - resolution
 - cropping 35
 - e-mail quality 16, 65
 - overview 75
 - picture resizing 23
 - print size 69
 - Web quality 65
 - rotating picture features 39
 - rubber stamp effects 51
 - rule of thirds 36, 105
- S**
- saving pictures 61
 - scanners
 - opening pictures from 15
 - Scan a Picture button 19
 - searching online Help 28
 - selection tools
 - described 22
 - Edge Finder 46
 - freehand 45
 - Magic Wand 47
 - marquee 44
 - object 39
 - overview 43
 - self-timer features 100
 - sending prints or gifts 71
 - sensitivity camera setting 91
 - sepia tones 50
 - series, photo 97
 - shadows 84
 - sharpening pictures 49
 - sharp prints 69
 - Show button 21
 - Show on startup checkbox 20
 - shrinking picture to show edge 55
 - shutter lag 95
 - shutter priority mode 90
 - shutter speeds 89
 - single picture printing 66
 - size
 - e-mails 65
 - file compression 77
 - flattened PNG files 64
 - odd-sized pictures, mats for 56
 - picture cropping 35
 - picture features 39
 - picture resizing 23
 - prints 69, 75
 - storage media 80
 - text 25
 - skin touch ups 98
 - SLR (single-lens reflex) cameras 85
 - smaller print sizes 69
 - small aperture 87
 - SmartMedia card 80
 - soft edge effect 55
 - special effects. *See* also objects
 - colors 50
 - filters 49
 - freehand 51
 - stamps 51
 - spotchy color 77
 - Stack 22, 37
 - stained glass filter 49
 - stamps, painting with 51
 - Startup Window 19
 - storage media 7, 80
 - stretching picture features 39
 - sunlight 84
- T**
- table of contents 27
 - tabs 26
 - technical support 29

- temporary object links 40
- text, adding to pictures 25
- TGA files 11
- thumbnails
 - Files palette 22
 - objects 37
 - rearranging order 22
- TIF files 11, 63
- time
 - print lifespan ratings 70
 - shutter lags 95
- tint adjustments 32
- toolbar 21, 25
- touching up pictures. *See* editing pictures
- touchup tools 31
- transferring files
 - importing 7
- tripod substitutes 100
- tutorials 29
- TWAIN 12

U

- underexposure 85
- ungrouping objects 41
- unlocking objects 38
- unprintable card areas 57
- upgrading Picture It! 3
- USB Mass Storage Class devices 9

V

- Video player 29
- virtual drives 9

W

- water glass analogy 86
- Web pages, opening pictures from 17
- Web quality resolutions 65

- weight ranges, paper 69
- white area, canvas 22
- white balance 32, 92
- WIA 12
- wide aperture 87
- Windows Bitmap files 11
- Windows Metafile files 11
- wizards
 - Import Pictures 7
 - Installation 2
- workspace area 21

Z

- zoom 79

