Getting Creative with Your Computer
Ideas and resources for creating personalized holiday gifts, greetings, and more...

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Getting Started *or* What's the Occasion?

- Holidays
- Birthdays
- Special occasions
- Personal projects
- Just because

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Computer Based Projects

- Cards
  - Online e-cards or print cards
  - Printed cards using greeting card programs
  - Personally designed cards
- Simple printed items
  - Labels, name tags, gift tags, place cards, ...
- Basic desktop publishing
  - Holiday letters (complete with pictures)
  - Newsletters
- Printed (and framed?) Photographs

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Computer Based Projects, cont.

- Self-designed projects printed / produced by an outside company
  - Photo books, calendars, puzzles, photo cards, mugs, puzzles, blankets,...
- Self-written e-books and interactive books
- Crafts and gifts designed on a computer
- Animated slideshows, personal videos,...

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Choosing Online E-card Sites

- When sending e-cards, be sure to select a reputable site, so that you do not accidently send malware
- Some friends need to know an e-card is coming
- Varied sources for e-cards:
  - AmericanGreetings.com/ecards
  - BlueMountain.com
  - JacquieLawson.com
  - JibJab.com
    - Be aware of JibJab's policies

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Creating Printed Greeting Cards

- Hallmark Card Studio - hallmarksoftware.com
  - Both Mac and Windows versions
- BlueMountain.com
  - Besides e-cards, they also allow printing of some cards
- The Print Shop
  - Both Mac and Windows versions
  - Great layouts for cards, business cards and labels which you design
  - Great control on printing business cards and labels
  - Uses many Avery templates

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Desktop Publishing Programs

- Microsoft Word (Mac and Windows)
  - Hint: For pictures use Wrap Text -> Tight for added control
- Microsoft Publisher (Windows)
  - Easy to use and with all sorts of sizes
- Pages (comes on a Mac)
  - The functionality of iBooks Author is now included in Pages
- The Print Shop (Mac from MacKiev and Windows from Broderbund)
  - For more details see previous slide

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Desktop Publishing Programs, cont.

- Adobe InDesign (Mac and Windows)
  - Expensive, professional level
  - A Creative Cloud app available by subscription only

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Graphics and Fonts

- Download only from reputable sites.
- Be aware of the licensing / terms of service / permitted uses for your graphics and fonts.
- Images are tagged with keywords, which helps in searching.
- Clipart and extra fonts are included with some programs, plus font and clip art collections can also be purchased separately
  - Don't load every font onto your computer!

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Finding Fonts

- Before using fonts, be sure that you have the right to use them in your project
- Many sources for fonts - free, paid, or by subscription - boxed or downloaded
  - Included with many programs and operating systems
  - FontSpace - fontspace.com
  - Font Squirrel - fontsquirrel.com
  - Adobe - https://fonts.adobe.com
    - Included with Adobe Creative Cloud subscriptions - https://www.adobe.com/creativecloud/plans.html

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Graphics Tips

- Before using a graphic, be sure that you have the right to use it in your project
  - Read the licensing agreement to determine permitted uses
  - Just because you found it by Googling, does not necessarily give you rights to use an image as you please
- There is a wide range of images, and many come in different resolutions, file types, or as vector images
  - Getting an appropriate resolution is critical!
- Keep a folder of the downloaded images that you have purchased, as well as any receipts or licensing agreements

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Getting Free Graphics

- There are a number of excellent sites for obtaining free images and royalty free stock
- Unsplash - https://unsplash.com
  - High-resolution photographs
- Pixabay - https://pixabay.com
  - High quality stock images, videos and music
- Pexels - https://www.pexels.com
  - Stock photos, royalty free images and video

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Some Paid Graphics Sites

- Depending upon your project, you may need to purchase graphics – Be aware prices vary greatly and depend upon use
- 123RF - 123rf.com
  - Photographs, various types of graphics, video and audio
  - Most affordable is purchasing a set of credit (good for year)
- Adobe Stock Photo - stock.adobe.com
  - Images, video, audio and templates
- iStock by Getty Images- istockphoto.com
  - Photos, illustrations, music and video
- Shutterstock - shutterstock.com (photos and video footage)
  - Images, videos and music

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Create Your Own

- Use your own photographs
  - Again, a caution if the work will be sold or posted online
  - Edit them for appearance, as well as appropriate resolution for the project
- Create your own graphics
  - Be original and don't just copy someone else's work
  - Even fonts can be designed, but few people actually do

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Photo and Video Editing Programs

- There are many programs available, both free and paid
  - Determine what you need to do / create or edit
    - Edit photos and graphics, slideshows, videos
  - Check online reviews from credible sites
- Each of the following is FREE and either originally included with a new computer or available as a free download
  - Photos and iMovie are originally included with a new Mac and also available in iCloud
  - Microsoft includes Photos and Video Editor with Windows
  - Gimp (Mac, Windows, Linux) - gimp.org

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Paid Photo and Video Editing Programs

- Adobe Programs (all but Elements are by subscription)
  - Photoshop and Photoshop Elements (Mac and Windows)
  - Lightroom Classic and Lightroom (Mac and Windows)
  - Premiere Pro and Premiere Elements (Mac and Windows)
  - Premiere Rush (Mac, Windows, iOS and Android) – mobile
- CyberLink Power Director (Mac and Windows)
- Final Cut Pro (Mac)
- Pinnacle (Windows)
- Movavi (Mac and Windows)

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Animated Slideshows

- You not only will need a group of your pictures; you will also need some music
- Use the mp3 format for the music to help keep file size down
- If uploading to sites like YouTube, you need to have original or royalty free music
- There are programs that will let you easily create your own soundtracks

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Programs for Creating Soundtracks

- Free
  - Apple's Garage Band
  - Audacity (Mac, Windows, Linux) – open source
- Purchased
  - Magix Acid Music Studio 11 (formerly owned by Sony)
    - Large loops collections available
    - Easy to use
  - Adobe Premiere Elements
- You can also add narration
- Keynote and PowerPoint can also be used but are not as versatile

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Photo and Graphics Prep Tips

- Choose clear in focus pictures.
- The final images should be 300 dpi and a suitable size for the project.
- Pictures need to be straight and well lit.
- Crop images appropriately.
- After the the pictures / graphics are edited, save complicated images with layers as either psd (Photoshop) or tiff files at 300 ppi
- Save the images to be uploaded as jpgs at 300 ppi

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Photo and Graphics Prep Tips, cont.

- If you are making a project such as a mug, calendar, etc. with image templates, try doing the following to get good results:
  - Copy the template, figure the scale and make a correctly sized template - this works best in a program with layers
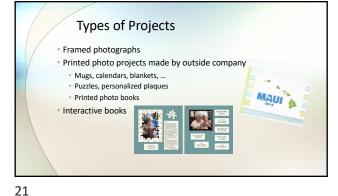
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Types of Projects

- Framed photographs
- Printed photo projects made by outside company
  - Mugs, calendars, blankets, …
  - Puzzles, personalized plaques
  - Printed photo books
- Interactive books

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Photo Project Sites

- There are many sites where you can have photo projects made or printed
- Shutterfly.com
- SnapFish.com
- Apple.com/mac/print-products/ - Apple iPhoto and Photos print products through Apple
- Local businesses such as Kinko's, Walgreen's, Walmart, OfficeMax, Office Depot…

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Creating Photo Books

- There are a number of sites where you can design and publish photo books, using online templates.
  - snapfish.com
  - shutterfy.com
  - blurb.com – offers a wider selection of printing and publishing options
- iBooks Author (Mac) has now been incorporated into Apple's Pages, which comes with all new Macs

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Write an Interactive Book

- iBooks Author (Mac) has now been incorporated into Apple's Pages, which comes with all new Macs
  - Use it to create beautiful books from a template or design your own
  - Add multimedia and interactive elements
  - Many ways to output and read final product
    - Publish to Apple's iBooks Store
    - Output as an iBook to be read on an iOS device or computer
    - Output as a pdf either to be read on a computer, tablet or smart phone, or to be printed
- Adobe InDesign is a professional solution for print and interactive book creation

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Designing on a Computer

- Beyond specialized programs for project design, such as CAD and embroidery programs, patterns can be designed and printed with your computer.
- Using a graphics program such as Photoshop Elements or Photoshop, which have layers, a project can be designed and patterns printed out.
- If you plan to make items for each grandchild over a period of time, consider saving all the upper and lower as well as numbers in the desired font and size on different layers in a program like Photoshop Elements.
  - Also save as jpg files, since original fonts can be lost

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Printing Oversized Patterns

- Use Microsoft Publisher, which can print a large object on multiple pages, which can then be taped together
- Take a jpg file of the object to a place such as Kinko's, which can print it on a single piece of large paper, using a specialty printer

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Computer Inspired Projects

- There are specific programs for designing a wide range of items from woodworking to embroidery
- Design patterns for sewing projects such as Christmas stockings, Christmas tree skirts, banners, doll clothes

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Computer Inspired Projects, cont.

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Now It's Time to Get Creative…

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