

Digital Doctor

By Stu Gershon
"The Digital Doctor"

Now that you're interested in digital photography, you've bought a digital camera *and* you've made that moral commitment to "edit" the pictures, where do you go?

It's time to decide on which software — the computer programs that will help you edit your images — to use.

The easiest software to start with is a free program called *Picasa 2.1* which is distributed by Google. You can download it by going to my website, www.digital-doconline.com, click on the "Important Stuff" page and then click on "*Picasa 2.1*." This action will take you to the "Free Download" page, then save the program to a specific place on your hard drive. Double click and it's installed. *Picasa 2.1* is constantly updated and is designed to work with the current version and updates of Windows. So if you don't do "Automatic Updates" regularly, update *before* you install *Picasa 2.1*. You can update your computer by going to "Start", then "Help," then clicking on the "Windows Update" icon.

In *Picasa*, you will learn (through trial and error — you cannot make a mistake since *Picasa* never modifies your original image file) some of the basics. You should learn "cropping," "redeye removal," "contrast," etc., from the Basic menu. There is also a "Tuning" menu with some tools to modify specific aspects of your image, and the "Effects" menu allows you make some really interesting changes to your photos.

If you consider *Picasa 2.1* your training wheels, the next program you should move up to is the software that came with your digital camera. You should do this for two reasons — they gave you an instruction book



with your camera (that's your best friend) and the 800 number that comes with your camera also supports the software (usually for the first year). Ask them all the questions you can! This is always an important aspect of all software. Many people say they got something "from a friend" and that's okay to save money. But if you don't have the instruction manual or toll-free support, many programs are really difficult to use!

Once you understand all the concepts and are familiar with cropping and other ways to modify your image, you might be ready to step up in software. The be-all-end-all of digital photography is *Adobe Photoshop CS*, which costs over \$700 and is

very hard to maneuver through. There is even a User's Group devoted to Adobe Photoshop which meets the first Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at the Bethpage Library. Other widely used programs (all less than \$100) are mentioned below, and while both the Adobe and PaintShop programs manipulate photographs more completely, the Roxio program is not only used for manipulating image files, it also has programs to write DVDs, and edit video and audio. (Roxio also owns Napster and, I think, includes a free trial of that music service.)

The programs (newer editions may be hitting the market when this article is published) are: *Adobe Photoshop Elements 4.0*: www.adobe.com/products/photoshopelwin/index.html; *JASC Paint Shop Pro XI*: www.corel.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=CorelCom/Layout&c=Product_C1&cid=1152105040706&lc=en; and *Roxio EZ Media Creator 9.0*: www.roxio.com/enu/products/creator/suite/overview.html.

There are other software programs available, but I don't recommend them because I have not used them. If you have a program that works for you, continue to use it until you want to move up to something more sophisticated.

Once you've edited your photo images, you will have to decide whether to e-mail, print or do other things with them, and that discussion will be in the November column.

Stuart Gershon is known as "The Digital Doctor." You can get more information and the schedule of his classes at: www.DigitalDocOnline.com.