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Covers GIMP 2.8

GIMP

for Absolute Beginners

Jan Smith with Róman Joost

Apress®

GIMP for Absolute Beginners



Jan Smith
with Roman Joost

Apress®

GIMP for Absolute Beginners

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Contents

■ About the Authors.....	xv
■ About the Technical Reviewer.....	xvi
■ Acknowledgments.....	xvii
■ Introduction.....	xviii
■ Chapter 1: Finding and Installing GIMP.....	1
■ Chapter 2: Getting to Know the GIMP Workspace.....	15
■ Chapter 3: Basic Computer Graphics.....	45
■ Chapter 4: Image Straightening, Cropping, Scaling, and Perspective.....	61
■ Chapter 5: Fixing Problems in Images.....	85
■ Chapter 6: Digital Imaging Projects.....	131
■ Chapter 7: Setting Up a Graphics Tablet.....	167
■ Chapter 8: Digital Art: Painting in GIMP.....	175
■ Chapter 9: Digital Art: Drawing in GIMP.....	223
■ Chapter 10: Hints, Tips, and Further Help.....	273
■ Appendix A: Keyboard Shortcuts.....	287
■ Appendix B: GNU General Public License.....	295
■ Glossary.....	307
Index.....	315

Contents

■ About the Authors.....	xv
■ About the Technical Reviewer.....	xvi
■ Acknowledgments.....	xvii
■ Introduction.....	xviii
■ Chapter 1: Finding and Installing GIMP.....	1
In This Chapter.....	1
Is This Chapter for You?.....	1
GIMP Works on Windows, Mac, and GNU/Linux.....	2
System Requirements.....	3
GIMP Is Free Open Source Software.....	3
Windows: Downloading and Installing GIMP.....	3
Portable GIMP for Windows: Installing GIMP on a USB Drive, CD, or DVD.....	7
Mac: Downloading and Installing GIMP.....	8
Snow Leopard and Leopard (Mac OS X 10.6x, Mac 10.5x).....	9
Tiger: Downloading and Installing GIMP.....	11
GNU/Linux.....	11
Ubuntu.....	12
Extra Functionality in GIMP via Plugins.....	13
Summary.....	14
■ Chapter 2: Getting to Know the GIMP Workspace.....	15
In This Chapter.....	15
Is This Chapter for You?.....	15
Quickest Way to Learn GIMP.....	16
Starting GIMP.....	16
Windows.....	16

Mac	16
Linux.....	16
GIMP 2.8 Workspace	17
Simplifying GIMP's Workspace	18
Quick Quiz.....	21
GIMP Workspace Tour	21
Quick Quiz.....	27
Toolbox.....	28
Quick Quiz.....	30
Menus in GIMP	30
File Menu	30
Edit Menu.....	31
Select Menu.....	33
View Menu	34
Image Menu	35
Layer Menu	36
Colors Menu.....	37
Tools Menu	38
Filters Menu	39
Windows Menu.....	40
Help Menu	41
Quick Quiz.....	42
Dockable Dialogs or Dockable Panels	42
Undo History—Great for Beginners.....	42
Quick Quiz.....	43
Summary	43
■ Chapter 3: Basic Computer Graphics	45
In This Chapter:	45
Choosing an Image File Format	45
Suggested File Types for Beginners.....	46
Quick Quiz.....	47
Zooming in GIMP	48

Image Basics	48
Quick Quiz.....	53
Checking Image Resolution in GIMP	53
Saving Files in GIMP via the File ► Export Menu	55
Saving (Exporting) and Reducing JPG File Size.....	58
Summary	60
■ Chapter 4: Image Straightening, Cropping, Scaling, and Perspective	61
In This Chapter	61
Straightening or Rotating an Image	62
Image Opens Upside Down	68
Cropping an Image.....	70
Basic Crop	70
Cropping to an Aspect Ratio	72
Cropping to a Width or Height	74
Changing the Size of an Image	74
Making an Image Larger	75
Making an Image Smaller	77
Fixing Perspective: Leaning Buildings	78
Framing an Image.....	82
Summary	83
■ Chapter 5: Fixing Problems in Images	85
In This Chapter	85
Assessing Images	85
Image Assessment Gallery	86
Assessing Brightness and Darkness	89
Assessing Your Editing	91
Areas of GIMP Used in This Chapter.....	92
Correcting with Brightness (Contrast)	93
Improving Tones in Images with Levels	96
Correcting a Dull Image with Curves	101
Improving Color and Tone with Curves	106

Color Too Strong (Oversaturated)	107
Hue-Saturation	108
Noisy Image	111
Sharpening an Image	113
To Sharpen an Image with Unsharp Mask	115
Removing Red Eye	117
Selections	117
Red Eye Removal	117
Using Brushes to Repair Images	120
Whitening Teeth	120
To Whiten Teeth	120
Unwanted Spots or Blotches	125
Removing Spots with the Smudge Brush.....	125
Removing Spots with the Healing Brush	126
Making Brushes Dynamic	129
Summary	129
■ Chapter 6: Digital Imaging Projects	131
In This Chapter	131
The Digital Project Gallery	132
Adding Text to an Image	134
Text on a Transparent Background.....	136
Layers.....	138
Adding Two or More Images Together	138
Saving Layers	147
Layer Masks (Non-Destructive Editing).....	147
Working on Part of an Image (Selections)	149
Tools to Select Part of an Image	151
Cage Transform Tool.....	157
Cloning or Copying Parts of an Image	159
Cloning an Item in an Image	159
Color to Black-and-White	161

Changing the Look of Your Images with Filters	162
Old Fashioned Sepia Toning.....	163
Warping an Image	164
Using a Filter to Convert a Photo a Background for a Drawing	165
Summary	166
■ Chapter 7: Setting Up a Graphics Tablet.....	167
In This Chapter	167
The Benefits of Using a Graphics Tablet.....	167
How to Add a Graphics Tablet.....	167
Installing Graphic Drivers on Your Computer	168
Setting Up Your Graphics Tablet.....	168
Troubleshooting Tips	170
Adding Pressure Sensitivity to Your Tablet.....	170
Setting Up Your Tablet's Eraser.....	172
Summary	173
■ Chapter 8: Digital Art: Painting in GIMP	175
In This Chapter	175
Paint Tools in GIMP	175
Is This Chapter for Me?	176
Digital Painting: The Advantages	176
The Canvas.....	177
Navigation and Zooming	178
Color Basics.....	179
Choosing a New Color: The Color Dialog	180
The Bucket Fill Tool.....	181
Changing the Background Color	181
Managing Colors: Palettes	184
Becoming a Digital Painter: Using Paint Tools	188
The Eraser Tool.....	188
The Paintbrush Tool.....	192
Doing More with Brushes	199

Layers.....	202
The Canvas Revised.....	202
Managing Layers with the Layer Dialog.....	210
Doing More with Layers.....	214
Problems with Layers	218
Filling in the Details	219
Blending Colors	219
How to Blend Colors with the Smudge Tool.....	219
Lightening and Darkening Colors	220
Summary	221
■ Chapter 9: Digital Art: Drawing in GIMP.....	223
In This Chapter	223
How to Draw in GIMP	223
Tools for Drawing.....	224
The Bucket Fill Tool.....	226
The Eraser Tool.....	226
Drawing with Selections	226
Selection Tools.....	228
Creating an Elliptic Selection.....	228
Doing More with Selections.....	233
Drawing Freely.....	236
Drawing a Straight Line.....	236
Pixel Art	238
Using Depth in Pixel Art.....	239
Painting Without a Tablet.....	247
Assistive Painting: The Paths Tool.....	247
The Path Tool Options	251
Common Problems with Using Paths.....	256
The Paths Dialog.....	257
Summary	271
■ Chapter 10: Hints, Tips, and Further Help.....	273
Customizing GIMP	273
Increasing GIMP's Undo History	274

Scanning Images.....	275
GIMP Can Be Extended.....	276
What is a Plug-in?	276
GIMP Extension List.....	278
Photoshop and GIMP: A Comparison.....	279
GIMP and Photoshop on the Same Computer.....	280
Troubleshooting GIMP	280
I Just Want One Workspace	281
I Cannot Seem to Paint or Fill My Image with a Color.....	281
The Paint Tools Are Not Working.....	281
GIMP Will Not Let Me Do Anything.....	282
Lost Toolbox or Other Dialogs.....	282
Where Is Undo History?	282
Resizing Your Workspace.....	282
Layer Control	282
How Do I Make Changes Outside a Selected Area?.....	282
How Do I Reset a Tool or Dialog?	283
Improving GIMP's Speed.....	283
How Do I Get Maximum Editing Control of an Image?.....	283
How do I Copy and Paste in GIMP	283
How do I remove the Marching Ant Border around my Image	284
How do I open Raw Files.....	284
Further Help.....	284
Mailing Lists.....	284
IRC: Joining the GIMP Community.....	284
Further Reading.....	284
Other Open-Source Graphics Software	285
Inkscape	285
Scribus.....	285
Blender	286
GIMP's Future.....	286

■ Appendix A: Keyboard Shortcuts.....	287
Help	287
Tools	287
Context	289
Within a Dialog	290
Within a File Dialog.....	291
Window	291
Zoom	291
Scrolling (Panning).....	292
Rulers and Guides.....	292
Undo/Redo	292
Clipboard	293
Fill	293
■ Appendix B: GNU General Public License	295
Preamble	295
Terms and Conditions.....	296
0. Definitions.....	296
1. Source Code	296
2. Basic Permissions	297
3. Protecting Users' Legal Rights from Anti-Circumvention Law	297
4. Conveying Verbatim Copies.....	298
5. Conveying Modified Source Versions	298
6. Conveying Non-Source Forms.....	299
7. Additional Terms	300
8. Termination	301
9. Acceptance Not Required for Having Copies	301
10. Automatic Licensing of Downstream Recipients	302
11. Patents	302
12. No Surrender of Others' Freedom	303
13. Use with the GNU Affero General Public License	303
14. Revised Versions of this License	303
15. Disclaimer of Warranty	304

16. Limitation of Liability	304
17. Interpretation of Sections 15 and 16	304
How to Apply These Terms to Your New Programs	304
■ Glossary	307
Alpha.....	307
Alpha Channel	307
Aspect Ratio	307
Brightness.....	307
Color Cast.....	307
Convert to RGB Working Space	308
Crop	308
Curves.....	308
Dialog	308
Dock.....	308
Docking	308
Dot for Dot	308
EXIF Data	309
Export/Save Images.....	309
GIMP	309
Guides.....	309
Grid.....	309
Help	309
HDR	309
Histogram.....	310
Hue	310
Inkscape	310
Interactive Boundary.....	310
Levels.....	310
LZW.....	310
Pixel	310
Pixel Art	311
Plug-in	311
Raster Images.....	311

Saturation.....	311
Save.....	311
Scaling	311
Scale-Up.....	311
Sharpening.....	312
Snap to Grid	312
Snap to Guide	312
Tonal Range	312
Undo.....	312
Undo History	312
Unsharp Mask.....	312
Value.....	313
Vector Images	313
XCF	313
Zoom	313
Index.....	315

About the Author



Jan Smith has been taking photos for more than 20 years; her photos have been reproduced in a range of media. In 2000 she studied digital imaging at the Adelaide Central School of Art and moved from the darkroom to digital editing with relief.

Jan discovered GIMP nine years ago while volunteering at Computerbank (a non profit company refurbishing donated computers for low income people). She helped people become familiar with computers loaded with open-source software. She has developed a solid grasp of the way beginners learn to use software.

Jan has worked as a technical writer for Infrae in the Netherlands and for companies using open-source software in Australia. She was elected Vice President of the Zope Foundation in 2010. She has a background in radio journalism, technology and production.



Roman Joost first learned about open-source software in 1997. He is the project manager of GIMP's user documentation and he has contributed code to GIMP. He has contributed to GIMP and Zope open-source projects for eight years.

Roman has a Diplom-Informatiker (FH) from Anhalt University of Applied Sciences in Koethen, Germany. He has worked for Gocept GmbH & Co. in Germany, Infrae in the Netherlands, and is currently working for another Zope company in Brisbane, Australia. For relaxation, he enjoys photography and digital painting with GIMP.

About the Technical Reviewer

Alexandre Prokoudine is a regular contributor to various, free software projects—mostly related to design, photography, and music and video production. When not using, testing, or translating apps, he writes news about and tutorials on them for the Libre Graphics World blog. He works in the education projects department for a Linux vendor.

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—Jan Smith

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I would also like to thank Jakub Steiner and Garrett LeSage for their contributions to the free software community; they inspired me to contribute, too.

—Roman Joost

Introduction

Is This Book for You?

- Yes, if you are moving from a photographic darkroom to a digital image editor.
- Yes, if you are looking for a digital image editing guide for beginners.
- Yes, if you enjoy using free software.
- No, this book is not for you if you want to use the command line or scripting (see GIMP's online resources for assistance).

What Is GIMP?

GIMP is a digital image editor and a digital drawing tool. GIMP allows you to:

- Retouch photos by fixing problems affecting the whole image or parts of the image
- Adjust colors in your photos to bring back the natural look
- Be creative with your photos—crop, blend, and add items, special effects, and more
- Discover the fun of digital drawing and painting without messy paints and a wet canvas

If you need something more than a simple digital editing program, GIMP could be for you. GIMP has the ability to sandwich different elements to make up a picture. It also has controls for cropping, scaling, exposure, brightness, contrast, color balance, sharpening, and a vast number of ways of selecting objects in an image. There are a large number filter effects for photos and drawings. Images can convert to a large range of file formats.

Volunteer programmers, designers, and writers have been developing GIMP for more than fifteen years. The 2012 release of GIMP version 2.8 has new features, such as Single-Window Mode and Paint Dynamics. GIMP traditionally has three separate windows. Single-Window Mode joins the three windows into one workspace. With Paint Dynamics enabled, brush strokes mimic real-world brush strokes.

GIMP for Windows, Mac, and Linux

This book covers GIMP 2.8 and explains GIMP for Windows, Mac, and Linux. If you have an older version of GIMP, please upgrade so that you can use GIMP's latest features, which are described in this book. GIMP is free to upgrade because it is free software.

Why Does GIMP Have an Odd-Sounding Name?

This is a question often asked of the GIMP community.

GIMP stands for **GNU Image Manipulation Program**. It was originally called The GIMP, but today the correct name is GIMP. Developers of GIMP are happy with this name.

This Book Is for Beginners

This book is written for absolute beginners to digital image editing and digital drawing. We presume you have a working knowledge of your computer, its operating system, how to use a mouse, and find items in a menu system. You should also be able to find your images on your computer. We do not expect you to have used GIMP or any other digital image editing software. This guide is to help you get up and running editing your images using a wide range of options and to get started with digital drawing.

Some people have the luxury of learning digital image editing in a classroom with the help and support of teachers and other students. This book presumes you have no one to turn to for help or for encouragement with your GIMP project.

There is nothing like the exhilarating feeling of transforming an ordinary image into a very good or even a great image. It is not so great if you are stuck or if you do not know how to do something in GIMP. It is even worse if you do not know the technical name for the task that you are trying to complete. Forgetting or not knowing the technical name for a task can happen with any image-editing program, not just GIMP.

We have reduced the emphasis on technical terms such as, masks, paths, channels, layers, filters, and so on. However, this does not mean we do not cover these topics. If you know what these concepts mean, you can look them up in the index at the back of the book. Beginners using this book will get to use some or all of these concepts depending on the projects they choose to do.

The Focus Is on Problem Solving

The focus of this book is on tasks and problem solving. We tested chapters in this book with people who had never used GIMP and with people new to digital editing. We also surveyed camera club users and took note of their responses. For some, the hardest part was finding things in GIMP. Throughout the book, we help you locate tools and menu options. Some people want to jump in and start editing straight away. Others need an overview and a clear roadmap. Not everyone learns a new skill the same way. This book covers a few approaches to learning.

You can read each chapter in turn or you can just read the section that solves your current digital editing task or problem. It is your choice.

Throughout the book, we point out traps for new digital editors.

Will I Be Successful in Using GIMP?

If you use GIMP once a year, you are not going to be successful in using GIMP. To get the maximum benefit from GIMP, like anything worthwhile, you must practice. If you do not have lots of time, we suggest you learn one or two useful tasks in GIMP. It is then easy to build on this and increase your skills.

Is GIMP Too Complicated?

If you are worried that GIMP may be too difficult or geeky for you, you are probably wrong. If you can pass exams, drive a car, cook, sew, hold down a job, or find your way around a new city with a map, then you have sufficient skills to try GIMP. If you have a fear of computers, then think of your computer as a mere tool for your creativity, rather than a barrier.

Have you used another image-editing program? Do not expect GIMP to do things exactly the same way. GIMP does some tasks differently; for instance to save a JPG image, you export it rather than save it. There may be a learning curve for you. This book tries to resolve those hiccups and differences.

Photoshop and GIMP Comparisons

You may have been using Photoshop and have decided to try GIMP. Things will not necessarily be in the same place in both programs. Our hints and tips section in Chapter 10 looks at the similarities and differences between Photoshop and GIMP. GIMP is more complex than Photoshop Elements.

Why Is GIMP Free?

People participate in open-source software for similar reasons that people play or follow a sport. They like the code and they enjoy the social aspects. Open-source developers believe in sharing knowledge freely. Working on an open-source project is a way for people to have fun, to build something they need, to share, to compete, to extend their knowledge, to help others, to be part of a community, and for some, to become well-known in that community.

The History of GIMP

The story of GIMP's development helps explain how open-source programs evolve and extend.

In 1995, two university students, Peter Mattis and Spencer Kimball, developed the first version of GIMP for a project at the University of California at Berkeley. After the completion of the class project, they decided to extend their small project. Peter worked on the plug-in architecture and Spencer worked on core GIMP. This meant they were working on very separate pieces of the architecture. They were complimentary teammates.

Collaboration and Sharing in the Open-Source World

Peter and Spencer did not develop in isolation; they participated in newsgroups and mailing lists. In July 1995, Peter answered a mailing list question about plug-ins, gave his own solution, and offered further information, if needed. A few months later, Peter asked a newsgroup, “What kind of features should (image manipulation software) have? (Tools, selections, filters, etc.) What file formats should it support?”

They were developing, sharing, evolving, and collaborating with others from the beginning.

By July 1996, GIMP had two mailing lists, the gimp-user and the gimp-developer mailing lists. In 1997, Peter and Spencer graduated from the university and stopped contributing to the GIMP project. By then, however, other people were contributing to GIMP and are continuing to do so today.

GPLv3 License for GIMP

GIMP 2.8 has a GPLv3 license. The GPLv3 license allows people to use GIMP for no charge. Additionally, developers can use or make a copy of the source code and add to it or turn it into something else entirely. Developers can distribute this new version, as long as the original code and the new code have the same sharing conditions. You can read the full license details in Appendix B.

GIMP 2.8

Released in 2012, this version of GIMP has a number of new features.

- Single-Window Mode gives the option of joining GIMP’s three windows into one window.
- Single-Window Mode incorporates the navigation of open images via thumbnails.
- With Brush Dynamics enabled, the thickness and opacity of a brush depends on the pressure, speed, and angle of your mouse or graphical tablet.
- Brushes now have the option of rotation.
- There is an improved text tool.
- Enhanced resource management allows for tagging of frequently-used tools.
- Layers have a locking feature to avoid accidental strokes.
- There is improved ability to customize GIMP’s tools and workspace.
- The Cage Transform Tool enables you to alter the shape of a subject, while keeping it realistic-looking.

400,000 Downloads a Week?

According to SourceForge, every week more than 400,000 people download GIMP for Windows and Mac from its web site alone.

Summary

GIMP is a sophisticated, open-source image-editing program. If you have basic computer skills, it is possible to learn GIMP. This book guides the person new to graphics and digital editing software. Use this book to solve some simple graphics tasks, then come back to the book to try tasks that are more complex.



Finding and Installing GIMP

In This Chapter

- Where to find GIMP
- How to install GIMP on your computer

Is This Chapter for You?

- If you have installed a program on your computer before, try this chapter.
- If you have not installed a program on your computer before, ask the person who usually adds extras to your computer for help. Do not forget to hand them your usual bribe and this chapter. They will be pleasantly surprised to see how easy it is to install GIMP.
- If you want to install GIMP from the source code, this chapter is not for you. Try the online resources at www.gimp.org.

You may still be hesitating and asking yourself if you should try GIMP. GIMP is one of the very few free programs that provides an alternative to expensive advanced photo editing software such as Photoshop. If you use Photoshop and are trying GIMP for the first time, Chapter 10 covers the similarities and differences between GIMP and Photoshop. When you download GIMP, you will not be alone; there have been over 112 million downloads of GIMP for Windows.

You probably have some photos you would like to improve or play around with but you aren't sure if this will be easily accomplished. We try to make editing in GIMP as easy as possible for a beginner so you can focus on your creativity.

Will GIMP work on your computer? GIMP is available for computers with Windows, Mac, or Linux operating systems, and it needs 1GB or more of RAM. Do not put GIMP on an old computer from your garage and then blame GIMP if it runs slowly.

This chapter shows you where to find and download GIMP and how to install it for Windows, Mac, and Linux. GIMP 2.8 was used for this book, but older versions are available. However, since GIMP is free, we see no need to use an older version. And GIMP 2.8 has some very useful new features!

As mentioned, you will not be the first person to download and try GIMP.

- There are over 400,000 weekly downloads of GIMP for Windows from SourceForge.
- There are around 40,000 weekly downloads of GIMP for Mac from SourceForge.
- For Linux, it is gestimated that there are more weekly downloads than GIMP for Mac.

GIMP Works on Windows, Mac, and GNU/Linux

GIMP is available for the following Microsoft Windows systems:

- Win7
- Vista
- XP
- Windows Portable is a GIMP application for a USB drive, CD, DVD, etc.

■ **Note** Older versions of Windows can run older versions of GIMP. However, very old versions of GIMP look and behave differently than the examples given in this book.

GIMP is available for the following Apple Macintosh systems:

- Snow Leopard 10.6x
- Leopard 10.5x
- Tiger 10.4x

GIMP works on both PC- and Intel-based Macs. The GIMP for Mac download comes bundled with a number of extra photo editing and retouching tools.

■ **Note** A very old version of GIMP will run on Panther 10.3 but it lacks many of the features talked about in this book. GIMP will not run on version 9 of the Macintosh operating system.

GIMP is easy to install on the following Linux systems:

- Debian
- Fedora
- Gentoo Portage

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