



Creative software for Christmas

We pick the best packages for editing digital photos and home movies, and for mapping out your family tree

What better present to give to budding photographers, film directors or family historians than computer software that helps them get more from their hobby?

With photo-editing software, they'll be able to enhance and retouch digital photographs, and restore old photos that have been scanned into a computer. Video-editing packages can be used to turn digital camcorder footage into memorable home movies.

Which? has also tested family-tree software – although it won't do the actual genealogy research, it'll help

historians organise all the information they've gathered in one place.

Here, we've selected five Best Buy packages that impressed our computing experts and would make great gifts.

Photoshop Elements 8 (£57) cost £6 less than Paint Shop Pro Photo X2 Ultimate when we checked prices, but you may find either Best Buy for less if you shop around online.

Unwanted presents

It's worth bearing in mind that the rules on returning software differ slightly from those on other goods. Even if you

still have the receipt, most retailers won't take back working software that has been opened, so keep software shrink-wrapped if you can't use it.

If you're buying the software as a gift, encourage the recipient to check the program's system requirements before removing any packaging. (The requirements will be printed on the box, and we've also listed them opposite.) That way, if their computer can't run the software, they'll be able to return it.

Finally, go to www.which.co.uk/unwantedgifts for detailed advice on returning unwanted presents and any goods that you've bought online.

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FAMILY-TREE SOFTWARE

Family Historian 4 £36

which?
BEST BUY**Which? test score 92%**

PROS This package makes building a family tree easy. You can choose from a good range of charts and customise almost every element within them. If this sounds too much

like hard work, don't worry – the default settings are good, too, and should be more than acceptable for most people's needs, allowing you to get started quickly.

CONS Family Historian 4 lacks some of the online genealogy research tools available with other programs.

Full review at www.which.co.uk/familyhistorian4

We found it cheapest at my-history.co.uk Also available at amazon.co.uk **System requirements** Windows 98, 140MB hard disk space, 64MB Ram (128MB recommended)

Reunion 9 £65

which?
BEST BUY**Which? test score 89%**

PROS Reunion 9 for Apple Mac computers has an intuitive design. Beginners will feel at home with its basic features, while more advanced users can delve into the extensive electronic manual to discover its subtleties. The program has a good range of charts and reports, and you can also add links to film clips and other sources of data, such as birth certificates.

CONS It doesn't include tools for researching a family tree. You can't export reports directly in PDF format.

Full review at www.which.co.uk/reunion9

We found it cheapest at genealogysupplies.com, my-history.co.uk Also available at twrccomputing.co.uk **System requirements** Mac OS X 10.3.9 or newer

VIDEO-EDITING SOFTWARE

CyberLink Power Director 8 Ultra £50

which?
BEST BUY**Which? test score 68%**

PROS The screen that displays your camcorder footage is excellent, with a large preview window, clear buttons and plenty of useful options.

The software comes with a comprehensive and well-presented PDF manual on disc, together with built-in help that makes it easy to find any information you want.

CONS The software can automatically detect scene changes but it sometimes splits video clips slightly early, and the thumbnail images it assigns to clips are slightly confusing as a result. The editing-trim window, where you can perform fine editing on your clips, isn't as well designed as in the previous version of the software. These are minor issues, though.

Full review at www.which.co.uk/powerdirector8ultra

We found it cheapest at amazon.co.uk Also available at play.com **System requirements** Windows XP, 512MB Ram (2GB for HD editing), 60GB disk space for Blu-ray production, 10GB disk space for DVD production

PHOTO-EDITING SOFTWARE

Corel Paint Shop Pro Photo X2 Ultimate £63

which?
BEST BUY**Which? test score 74%**

PROS Corel Paint Shop Pro Photo X2 Ultimate is advanced and extremely flexible. The software enables you to make detailed adjustments to your

digital photos. The advanced tool for removing red eye from photographs is excellent – it enables you to change pupil lightness, glint lightness and size, eye hue and iris size. The online tutorials are good, and the help function is comprehensive.

CONS A complete beginner will have to work hard to master this program. We think the software's automatic picture correction tool could be better, and installation is rather long-winded.

Full review at www.which.co.uk/paintshopprox2

We found it cheapest at amazon.co.uk Also available at play.com, dabs.com **System requirements** Windows XP, 1.5GB hard disk space, 512MB Ram (768MB recommended)

Adobe Photoshop Elements 8 £57

which?
BEST BUY**Which? test score 75%**

PROS Photoshop Elements is a consistent Best Buy. Elements 8, the latest version, is a sophisticated package with lots of features, but it's

flexible – you can select your skill level when using tools. It includes some interesting new features, including people recognition – identify someone in your photos and the program will locate the same face in other pictures. The red eye removal tool is quick and precise, and the scratch removal tool works well.

CONS It was sluggish when we tried it on a lower-spec PC that still met the system requirements.

Full review at www.which.co.uk/adobeelements8

We found it cheapest at amazon.co.uk Also available at dabs.com **System requirements** Windows XP with Service Pack 2, 2GB hard disk space, 1GB Ram

WHICH? COMPUTING

Which? Computing is the UK's only completely independent computing magazine. Offering impartial, jargon-free advice, product reviews and the latest hot tips, it's the essential computing companion. To receive two issues for only £3, call 01992 822800.



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Corel www.corel.com

Cyberlink www.cyberlink.com

Family Historian www.family-historian.co.uk

Reunion www.leisterpro.com