

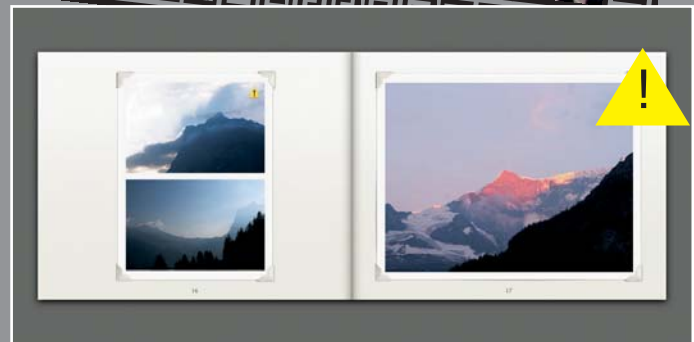


Photo-book Fun on

With digital photography, there are more possibilities than ever for showing off and sharing your photos. So, gather up your holiday snaps, follow these tips and get started on your own unique photo book.



Let photos fill the page for greater impact



In most photo-book programmes, a warning symbol will appear if you've chosen a low-resolution image that will not print well

cold days

By Kellie Nolan & Bryon McCartney | Creating a great personal photo album is easy! Gone are the shoeboxes jam-packed with prints, or binders of plastic sleeves. Instead, there are software solutions and online options to help you design and print books featuring your own pictures.

Get inspired

Start by checking out the wide variety of book styles, features and prices at some of the many online services, such as: Colormailer.ch; Snapfish.com; Blurb.com; Shutterfly.com; Picaboo.com; Mypublisher.com; Bookfactory.ch; Fotobuch.de; Koodibook.com (currently ships only to the UK), and the iPhoto programme.

Looking through sample books will give you ideas about the look and design you want for your own book, and help you choose which service fits your needs.

Some online services, like Colormailer.ch, also give you options to make calendars, as well as books. Through Blurb.com, you can even market and sell your photo books, or make your books private and invite family and friends to order their own copies.

While many of the online options work with PC or Mac platforms, several are downloadable PC programmes only. If you are a Mac user, you also have iPhoto with a complete selection of templates and themes to help you design your photo book or calendar.

Select and edit

First off, decide on the topic or focus for your book. Maybe it's a family Christmas, ski weekend with friends, last summer's travels to Venice, or a creative collection of photos with a similar artistic theme, such as architectural details, abstract compositions or landscapes.



Let photos tell the story with clean layouts and minimal captions; some layouts allow for dramatic two-page spreads (as shown above)

Select only the very best of your photos. Avoid pictures that are blurry or too dark. Look for overall quality – good exposure, interesting composition, effective use of colour or black and white, and meaningful facial expressions. For the best print results, be sure to use the highest quality images. When possible, plan ahead when you shoot and set your camera to capture photos as high-resolution jpeg or RAW files. Be aware that cropping your images will reduce the file size and resolution. Most book programmes include a warning to let you know if an image is not high enough quality for printing.

Prepare your photos to look their best. Make colour corrections or contrast adjustments, and do any cropping and retouching before you begin laying out your book. (See our “Tech tip”.)

When it comes to photo books, you *can* judge a book by its cover. Don't save your best for last – choose a photo that will make an attractive cover and entice others to open your book.

Organise

This is especially important if your photos tell a story or need to show a timeline of events from start to finish. Take the time to organise them in a logical sequence before you start the layout process. You can always make adjustments to fine-tune the order as you create the book.

Once you know how many photos you want to use, you'll have an idea about how many pages your book will need, and if you want a paperback or hardback cover.

Upload

Some of the online services and software include options to access photos you already have online: for example at Flickr, Facebook, MySpace or Picasa – or directly from your own photo management software.

Many of the book design programmes have an auto-flow function that will automatically place photos on pages. You can set how many photos you want on a page and if you want to add captions. Usually, the programmes allow you to move photos, adjust the design and add or delete pages up until you finalise the layout and order your book.

Design and layout

Simple design features and an uncluttered layout will help make your photos stand out. Start by placing one to four photos on a plain page. Only add design elements that enhance the photos or help you tell a story. Keep the amount of text on the page to a minimum, or just let your photos speak for themselves. Here are a few specific points to keep in mind:

Fonts: Use one or two fonts that are easy to read. Too many fonts and too much type on the page will distract from your photos. Be consistent: a good rule is to use one font for all captions and another for chapters or headings.



Select background colours that complement your photos

Backgrounds: Most templates offer many choices for background style and design. To keep people focused on your photos, use simple page designs in neutral or muted colours.

Placement: Use the composition of your photos to help people move through the book. Strong horizontal and diagonal lines can guide your reader to stop and focus on one page, or turn to the next. Similarly, when we look at photos, our eyes naturally follow the gaze of the person in the photo. If a photo includes people looking away from the camera or at something out of frame, place it so the subject's line of sight looks to the centre of the book and not towards the outside edge of the page (example right).

Captions: Good photos tell the story without words; after all, “a picture is worth a thousand words”. Use captions only when really necessary. Follow a consistent style and keep them short.



Place people photos so that they look into the book (above), instead of out over the edge of the page (below)





Personalise your book with maps from your journey, handwritten journal entries or postcards

Text: If you want to add an introduction or journal-style entry, use a separate page, maybe adding one or two small photos for visual interest. Or personalise your book by adding a handwritten note or journal entry, written on plain white or colourfully decorated paper. To do this, scan and save the note as a high-resolution jpeg file. Then simply use this image file to fill one of the photo spaces in your template.

Review your book carefully. If it is possible, create a PDF file you can proofread offline, or even make a rough print out. Once you are satisfied, all that's left is to place your order, enjoy and share your photos!

Tech tip

Before you start working on your book, be aware that a properly calibrated computer monitor will save you the disappointment of getting your finished book, only to find that the photos are too dark, or the colours are off. Colour calibration tools generally range in price from SFr 100-400. It's a worthwhile investment to help ensure that your photos look as good in print as they do on your computer.



Learn more about photography

ViewFinder Center offers several courses that will help you improve your photography, including Creative People Photography, DSLR for Beginners, Creative Composition and Better Travel Photography.

Photography is both a passion and a profession for Bryon McCartney and Kellie Nolan. At the ViewFinder Center for Photography in Zurich, they offer classes, workshops and customised group events conducted in English that are designed to help beginner and intermediate photographers improve their skills and find more enjoyment in photography. As an award-winning fine art and commercial photographer, Bryon specialises in photography, video and visual media consulting for business and industry.

www.viewfindercenter.com
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