

Photos for Mac

When Apple introduced iPhoto in 2002, it was a tremendous boon to casual photographers. Rather than focusing on tweaking individual photos to perfection, it was centered on easy organizing of the many images people were beginning to accumulate via digital cameras.

Apple had three main goals in designing Photos, the replacement for iPhoto: **Greater speed, less clutter** and somewhat **more sophisticated editing**. In my opinion, it achieved all three.

Scrolling — even through 10,000 images — is fast and fluid. And search is more sophisticated. In my search tests — “boat,” “Seattle,” and “wedding” — I was quickly able to narrow things down by date, name and location.

As for clutter: While iPhoto started out as a simple program 13 years ago, over time it acquired so many options and controls that it became complex. The new Photos sweeps that all away, while retaining major features.

The main screen of Photos has a toolbar with just four big buttons:

Photos, Shared, Albums and Projects.

These are similar to the icons across the bottom of the screen in the iPhone and iPad Photos app.

Shared are the albums you’ve shared with friends via iCloud Photo Sharing.

Albums are the collections of photos you previously combined in iPhoto.

Projects brings up things like paper books & cards, as well as slideshows.

But most people will spend their time in the **Photos section** of the app, which is divided into the same three views you see on your iPhone or iPad.

Moments gathers photos taken at the same time and place — for example, a museum you visited on a given day during vacation.

Collections, is broader. They’re events, for example, an entire vacation.

The last is **Years**, which is just what it sounds like.

To find **location**, click on photo title in Moments, Collections or Years and a map will open showing the photo locations.

To search by **Face** recognition, click on Albums and scroll to the top. Taking the time to go through and confirming a few photos are indeed of the person you are looking for will bring up dozens more. This is also where **Videos**, **Bursts** and **Panorama** images can also be found.

View/Show Sidebar - opens a sidebar, making Photos look like iPhoto, but takes away the four big buttons: Photos, Shared, Albums and Projects.

I haven't done much **editing** yet, but in my tests, it was easier in Photos than in iPhoto.

Apple stresses that editing isn't meant to be the main purpose of Photos, but the company has worked to add some options.

The finest editing controls appear first in simple formats, with sliders for things like "Light". But you can click to expose more, such as highlights and shadows, each with its own sliders. You can also white-balance photos.

My personal favorite was a new one called Auto Crop, which not only resizes a photo, but straightens it and tries to make it look more professional — all in one click. Speaking of one click, most of just use **Enhance!**

iCloud Photo Library

You don't have to use the new iCloud photo-syncing service with Photos — but if you do, there are advantages.

All your full-sized original photos are stored in the cloud, and the local copies on your mobile devices are scaled-down versions that take up less space, but are optimized to look good on the device's screen.

Not only that, but edits made on one Apple device almost instantly show up on all the others.

It does cost money. Apple gives you five gigabytes of iCloud storage free, but charges from 99 cents a month for 20GB, \$4 a month for 200GB. With 10,000 photos, I needed the 99 cent, 20GB option. Storage space for your photos is shared with storage space for other iCloud services like Mail, backups and documents.

We'll do a full review on the new Photos app in the fall.