

Transcript: Photo Editing Basics with GIMP

[00:00:00:00] Photo Editing Basics with GIMP: A Digital Writing Tutorial from Bedford/St. Martin's

[00:00:00:05] You've probably heard the expression a picture's worth a thousand words. And it's true. Sometimes photos really can communicate in a way that words alone simply can't. Think of all of the photos you take every day and share with your friends and family. In the same way that photos can enhance your social life, they can enhance projects that you create for school, or for the workplace.

[00:00:00:25] But how do you know when using photos is the best choice? Well, even though you might not be aware of it, there are reasons that you decide to share some information visually and some in writing, or, a lot of the time, in some combination of the two.

[00:00:00:41] Here are some of the major reasons that we use visuals to communicate. To evoke emotion. I could tell you I just adopted an adorable kitten, but that won't make you go "Aww" like this photo will. To illustrate a point. You could just say, "We've got the most snow I've ever seen, but providing a picture of what you're describing will help your audience experience the full meaning of your words. As evidence for an argument. You're trying to convince your friends that you were responsible for making those big framed glasses cool, and you've got a picture of your fourth grade specs to prove it. And, lastly, to emphasize important information. Including a picture of something tells your audience "Hey, pay attention. See this pizza? It was the very best part of my trip to Little Italy."

[00:00:01:25] You may not edit the everyday photos you take, but in the same way you need to edit the words in the papers you hand in, you'll need to edit the photos you include in projects for school and work before they're ready to present.

[00:00:01:37] There are lots of photo editing apps and programs out there. One fantastic program that you can download to your desktop for free is GIMP, or the GNU Manipulation Program. Go to www.gimp.org and download a copy for your computer. It takes only minutes to install. In the meantime, save a photo you'd like to work with to a convenient location on your computer, like your desktop. Once GIMP has installed, open it up. To begin working with the photo, go to "File," "Open" and navigate to the location where you saved your photo. Select it, and press "Open."

[00:00:02:15] In this tutorial, we will discuss two key photo editing principles, cropping and contrast, and show you how to implement them using GIMP.

[00:00:02:24] First, let's talk about cropping. When you crop a photo, you remove something from it. Here, I'm cropping the flagpole out of a photo. When you remove portions of a photo, you change its frame – that is, you change what the picture includes. This picture no longer has a flagpole—just an elephant statue and some palm trees. This all sounds pretty basic and obvious, right?

[00:00:02:46] It's not. Why? Because how you frame your photo – the choices you make about what to put in it and what to leave out of it – speaks volumes about what you're trying to say through that photo. For example, sometimes cropping allows a photographer to place more emphasis on his or her

subject. In this photo, removing the flagpole and changing the orientation from horizontal to vertical helps emphasize the statue more boldly compared with the original.

[00:00:03:11] That's a relatively insignificant change, but often, cropping can totally reconfigure our understanding of an image. Look at this photo. Comical, right? But what if all you saw was this? What would your first reaction be?

[00:00:03:25] When you work with images in multimodal projects, you may often find that you need to adjust their frames by cropping them. You can easily crop your own photos in GIMP.

[00:00:03:35] To crop a photo, I'll click on "Tools," "Transform Tools," and "Crop." The cursor will change to a plus sign. Simply drag the cursor around the area of the photo you want to keep. GIMP will give you a preview of the new image. If you don't like it, simply click anywhere outside of the preview. If you do like it, double-click to complete the cropping. If you accidentally double-clicked, you can always go to "Edit," "Undo Crop Photo" to return to the original image.

[00:00:04:04] Next, we'll discuss contrast. Contrast is the measure of the difference in the brightness and color within a photo. Our eyes are naturally drawn to areas of high contrast, so you can use technical contrast in your images as means of calling attention to the elements that are important to contrast from a rhetorical standpoint.

[00:00:04:22] I took this photo hoping to convey the dramatic play of light on the water created by the combination of sun and fog on the San Francisco bay. But right now, the photo's looking awfully flat, like everything's just a shade of gray. The tone of the darkest clouds isn't all that different from the tone of the sunniest spots of the sky or the water. I'm going to try to change that by adjusting the contrast. Notice that when I increase the contrast, the photo gets too dark. I can fix this by adjusting the overall brightness, or the overall amount of light in the image. Look at the difference. This isn't a snapshot of the Golden Gate Bridge now as much as it is a documentation of the mysterious climate of the Bay Area.

[00:00:05:00] How do you adjust the contrast and brightness in a photo? Navigate to "Colors" and click "Brightness-Contrast". A new window will appear. Use the sliders to adjust the brightness and contrast in the photo. To see the colorful houses on the hill in this photo, we'll need to add more light. But as we increase the brightness, you'll see that we'll need to up the contrast too to keep the photo balanced.

[00:00:05:25] As you slide, you'll see your photo change accordingly. Hmm. I think I may have increased the contrast in this photo a little bit too much. Look at that white sky. We want to keep things looking natural – when your photo starts looking like something out of a sci-fi film, you can be sure you've gone too far. If you don't like the changes you've made, click "Reset" to return to the original photo.

[00:00:05:50] Cropping your photos and adjusting their contrast can go a long way toward helping them say exactly what they need to say. Go try it out now with some of your own photos.