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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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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 is 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 you 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.

CHAPTER 1

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 guestimated 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

- Slackware
- OpenSUSE
- Ubuntu

Most other versions of Linux also support GIMP but the installation may be more complicated.

System Requirements

GIMP 2.8+ runs well on computers that are one to three years old. GIMP needs 1GB of RAM to run. More RAM is definitely an advantage, especially when working on large images.

GIMP will run on Windows or Mac computer without conflicting with other graphic software such as Photoshop.

GIMP Is Free Open Source Software

GIMP is free of charge. It is not only free of charge but you are free to use and share this program with as many people as you wish. Beginners can use GIMP; in fact, this book aims to help beginners become proficient at using GIMP. At the other end of the spectrum, if you're a programmer, you're free to change the source code to suit your needs, provided you agree to keep the GIMP source code open. This means it is possible to use, share, and enhance GIMP. There is a copy of the full GIMP GNU General Public License v 3 in Appendix B.

GIMP has a large online community of users. You are welcome to be a part of this online community no matter where you live—you just need an Internet connection. GIMP is available in a large number of languages.

This chapter focuses on downloading GIMP 2.8+ released in 2012. If you have an older version of GIMP, now is the time to upgrade—GIMP is free. See the following sections for instructions for downloading and installing GIMP on Windows, Mac, and Linux.

Windows: Downloading and Installing GIMP

Downloading and installing GIMP on Win7, Windows Vista, or Windows XP is easy. Anyone who has downloaded a program on a Windows computer can do this. If you have never downloaded anything before, try now.

Close any other programs that are currently running on your computer. This is to ensure a clean installation.

To get the latest version of GIMP, you will be clicking through a few screens.

■ **Note** `www.gimp.org` automatically checks your computer's operating system and loads the front page with links to installing GIMP for your operating system.

---

1. Go to `www.gimp.org` (Figure 1-1).

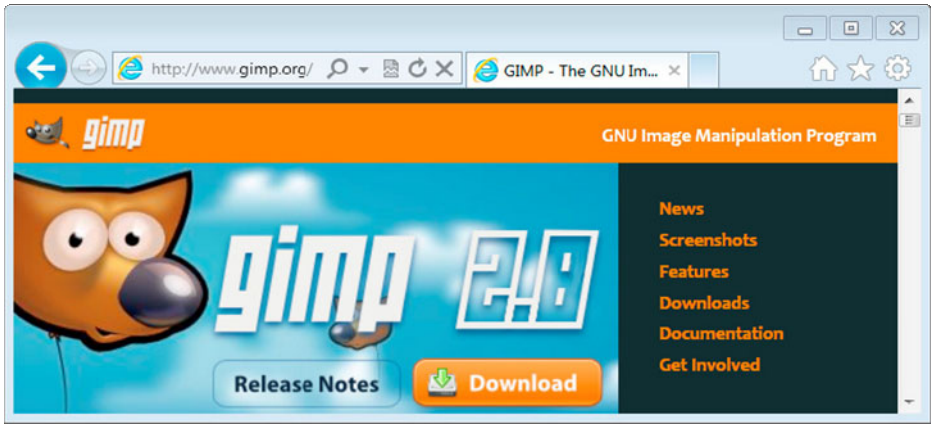

Figure 1-1. *The GIMP web site*

2. Click the Download button. This takes you to the GIMP for Windows downloads page (Figure 1-2).

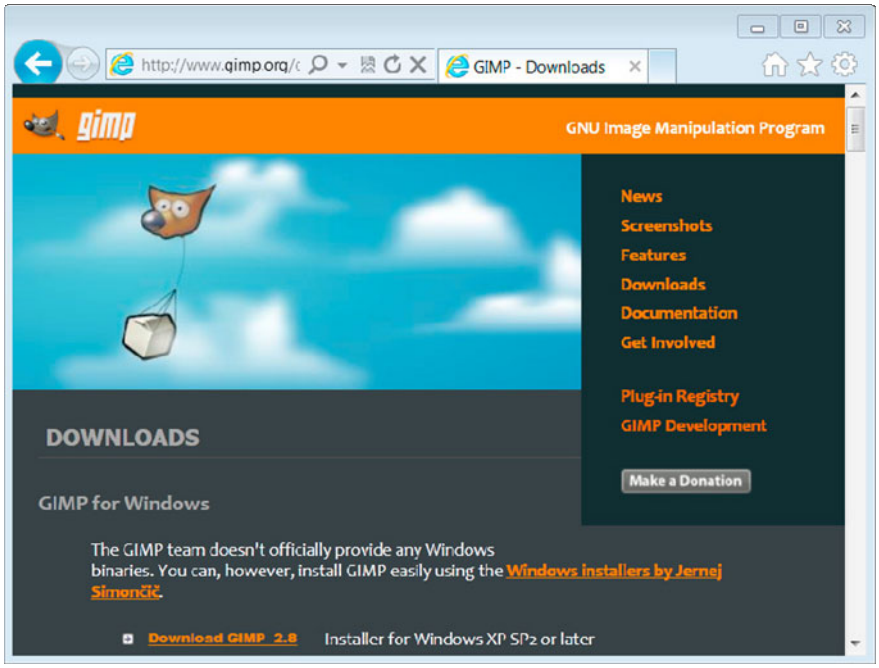

Figure 1-2. *GIMP for Windows download page at `www.gimp.org/downloads/`*

3. Click the "Download GIMP 2.8 – Installer for Windows XP sp2 or later" link. When you click the link, you will be taken to the SourceForge download center (Figure 1-3). The installer for Windows XP sp2 or later includes GIMP.

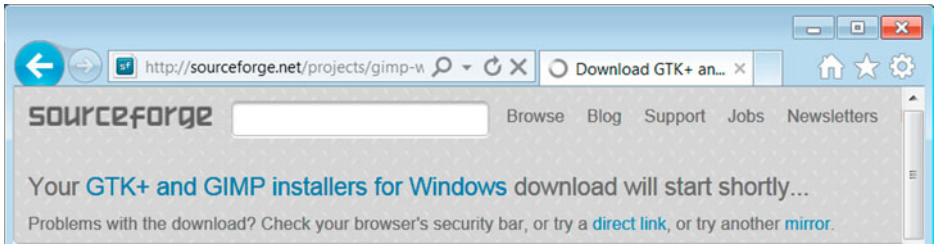

Figure 1-3. *The SourceForge download page for GIMP.*

4. If the download does not start automatically, click the Save button at the bottom of the SourceForge page. When GIMP has downloaded to your computer, a small window will pop up asking if you want to run this file. You're nearly there—just a few more clicks!

5. Click Run (Figure 1-4). If you do not see the pop-up screen, look in your Downloads folder or the folder where you normally download items from the Internet.

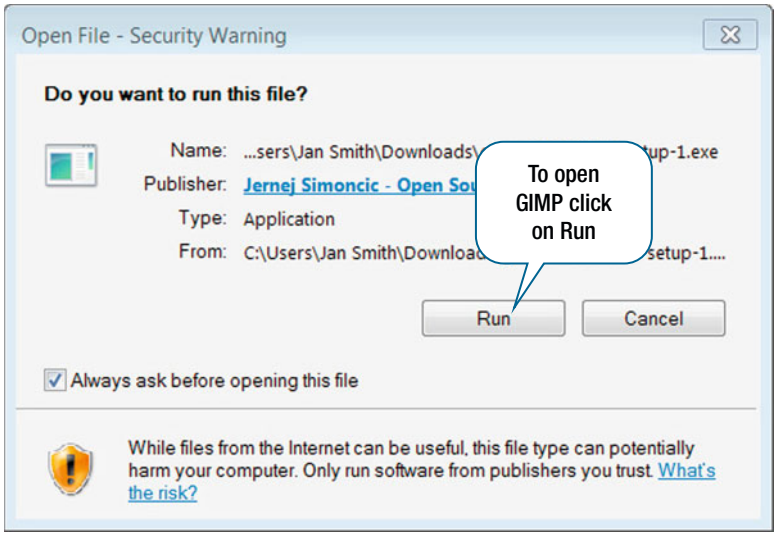

Figure 1-4. *This window pops up after GIMP has downloaded to your computer*

6. Follow the instructions in the installation setup wizard (Figure 1-5).

Figure 1-5. *The first GIMP installation screen*

The next screen has the GNU General Public License.

7. Click Next to accept the GNU General Public License. The final installation screen follows (Figure 1-6).
8. Click the "Install now" button.

■ **Note** The GNU General Public License v3 guarantees your freedom to share and change free software and to make sure the software is free for all users. A copy of the full GNU General Public License v 3 is at the back of the book in Appendix B.

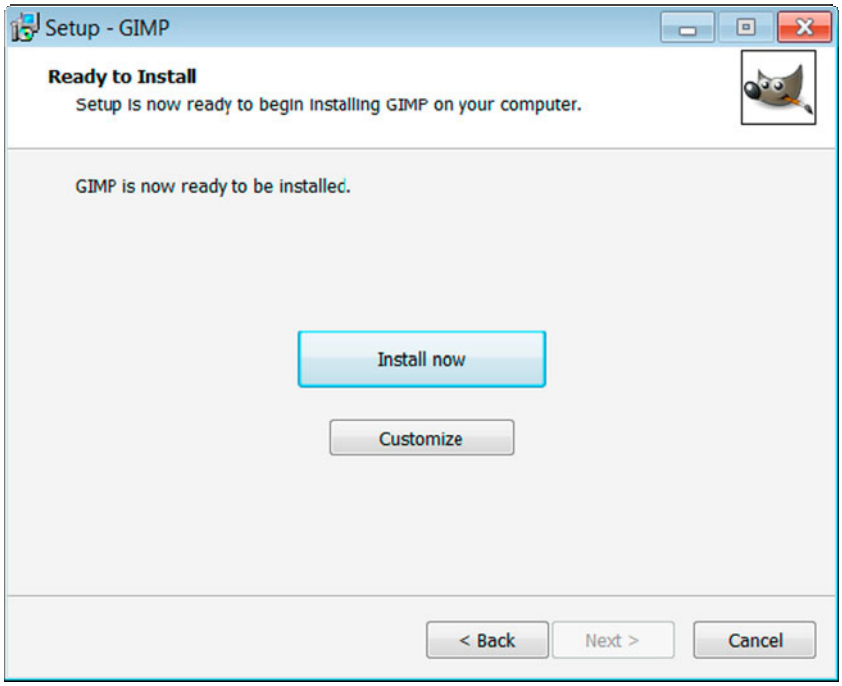

Figure 1-6. *Click the "Install now" button to install GIMP onto your computer*

When GIMP is installed on your computer, you will see a screen with the option to launch (or start) GIMP. Congratulations! GIMP is now installed.

■ **Note** The first time GIMP opens on your computer, it will take some time. GIMP is loading a number of presets and tools. Be patient. GIMP will open a lot faster after this first time.

Portable GIMP for Windows: Installing GIMP on a USB Drive, CD, or DVD

This is an optional extra for people with Microsoft Windows on their computer. GIMP is small enough to run on a USB drive. GIMP portable will run on a thumb drive/USB stick, CD, or DVD. GIMP Portable will not run as fast as if it was installed on your computer but can be very handy to have on hand.

Figure 1-7. *Portable GIMP is available from* `www.portableapps.com`

1. Go to `www.portableapps.com` (see Figure 1-7).
2. Click on Applications in the top menu bar.
3. Scroll down and click on GIMP portable. You will then see the GIMP portable download area.
4. Click on the Download button.

When GIMP Portable has downloaded to your computer, it is a good idea to test the download on your desktop. Click and start GIMP Portable on your desktop. If GIMP Portable opens and runs well, your test is complete. Close GIMP Portable by clicking on File ➤ Exit. Copy the file to your USB drive, CD, or DVD.

If there is a problem with the download, delete that copy and download GIMP Portable again. This should sort out most problems.

Mac: Downloading and Installing GIMP

If you are not sure which Mac OS X operating system you have, click on the Apple logo on your top Mac menu bar and then click "About This Mac".

Check below to see if GIMP 2.8 is available for your version of the Mac operating system. Usually it's just a matter of time before GIMP is available for the latest Mac operating system.