

Pixlr X: Free Online Photo Editing

Course Notes — Full Walkthrough

1. Introduction to Pixlr

Pixlr is a free, browser-based photo editor built into the iPhotography website. It requires no software installation and is accessible to all iPhotography members under Resources > Pixlr Editor.

Key advantages:

- Free to use as part of iPhotography membership
- No Photoshop or Lightroom subscription required
- Intuitive interface with a toolbar on the left, layers panel on the right, and action buttons at the bottom
- To open an image: click Open and select any file from your computer

2. Properties Panel

Image Resize

- Displays current image dimensions in pixels
- Resize by typing a new value; proportions are maintained automatically
- iPhotography gallery upload limit: 5,000 pixels

Canvas Size

- Canvas is the background the image sits upon — distinct from the image itself
- Useful for adding borders or extra design space around a photo
- The Anchor Point controls the position of the image on the enlarged canvas (e.g., center, left, right)
- Background color of the new canvas area can be set using presets, a color slider, or the eyedropper tool

Rotation & Flipping

- Rotate left / right, flip horizontally, flip vertically
- Undo / Redo available for all changes

3. Layers & Arrange

- Layers allow stacking of multiple images, shapes, and text
- Click the + icon in the layers panel to add: empty layer, image layer, or text layer
- Toggle layer visibility with the eye icon
- Reorder layers by dragging them in the panel
- Hover over a layer for the three-dot menu: rename, duplicate, change blend mode / transparency, delete
- Press Unlock in the Arrange tab before manually repositioning an image on the canvas

Blend Modes

- Only effective with two or more layers
- Multiply — darkens by removing lighter areas
- Screen — brightens by removing darker areas
- Transparency slider — softens the blend between layers

4. Crop Tool

- Drag boundary box handles to crop freely
- Type exact pixel values for precision crops
- Select Aspect for constrained ratios (e.g., 1:1 square, 2:3 portrait)
- Social media presets available (Instagram, Facebook, etc.)
- Straighten slider corrects a tilted horizon
- Press Apply to confirm the crop; Undo to revert

5. Cutout Tool

Used for background removal and isolating subjects.

AI Cutout

- Automatically detects and removes backgrounds (Premium feature)

Shape Cutout

- Cuts out the image in a preset shape (star, heart, etc.)
- Useful for cards and scrapbooking projects

Magic Cutout

- Click-based selection using color similarity
- Tolerance: higher value = wider color range selected; lower = more precise
- Contiguous ON: selects only connected pixels. Contiguous OFF: selects similar colors across entire image
- Keep (green) or Remove (red) modes available
- Options: Extract as Layer, Invert Cutout, Reset

Draw Cutout

- Manual brush-based selection — similar to a layer mask in Photoshop
- Green brush = Keep; Red brush = Remove
- Adjust brush size and softness (hardness) as needed
- Non-destructive: mistakes can be corrected by switching between Keep and Remove

Lasso Cutout

- Freehand drawing around a specific area
- Best used with a graphics tablet and pen for precision
- Feathering (softness) available for smooth edges

6. Adjust Panel

Auto Fix

- One-click automatic correction — useful as a starting point but limits manual control

Color Adjustments

- Black & White mode with B&W-specific controls
- Invert image colors
- Vibrance, Saturation, Color Balance, Warmth/Coolness, Tint, Hue

Basic Tone Controls

- Exposure — overall brightness
- Contrast — difference between light and dark areas
- Blacks / Whites — adjust the darkest and brightest tones
- Highlights — targets the very bright areas
- Shadows — targets the very dark areas (avoid over-brightening — creates flat, noisy results)

Toning & Fill

- Toning — applies a color cast (vintage, period looks)
- Fill — color overlay on a layer; useful with blend modes

Curves

- Plot points by double-clicking (unlike Photoshop's single click)
- Pull up = brighter; Pull down = darker
- S-curve = more contrast
- Individual RGB channels (Red, Green, Blue) can be adjusted for color grading
- Double-clicking a point removes it

7. Filter Panel

- Sharpen — increases edge detail globally (avoid over-sharpening to prevent noise)
- Clarity — enhances micro-contrast and texture
- Smoothing — softens detail; useful for portraits and skin tones
- Blur — overall defocus; can be used creatively as a background for a sharp top layer
- Grain — adds film-like texture; useful for period/vintage looks
- Vignette — darkens (left) or lightens (right) edges; focuses attention on the subject
- Dehaze — removes atmospheric haze globally
- Bloom — brightens highlights; useful for softening skin
- Glamour — similar to Bloom; adds crispness and appeal
- Posterize, Pixelate, Mosaic — artistic/abstract effects

Note: All Filter adjustments are global (applied to the whole image). Use layers for localized effects.

8. Effects Panel

- Pre-made style presets — one-click solutions to change the mood of an image
- Categories: Retro, Artsy, Portrait, Food, Nature, Urban and more
- Hover to preview before applying
- Density slider controls how strongly the effect is applied
- Press Apply to confirm; Cancel to go back

9. Liquify Tool

- A distortion tool for pushing, enlarging, shrinking, or swirling parts of an image
- Commonly used for flattering portraits (slimming, reshaping features)
- Push — moves pixels outward from the center of the brush
- Enlarge — expands pixels outward in a circular shape
- Shrink — pulls pixels inward toward the brush center
- Swirl Right / Swirl Left — rotates pixels clockwise / counter-clockwise
- Restore — returns areas to their original state
- Controls: Brush Size, Strength, Density

10. Retouch Panel

Heal & Repair

- Best tool for removing blemishes
- Patch mode — single click removes a blemish
- Infill mode — draw around an area; Pixlr fills it based on surrounding pixels

Clone Stamp

- Copies pixels from one area to another

Sharpen & Blur (Local)

- Localized versions of the global sharpen/blur filters

Dodge & Burn

- Dodge (Lighten) — brightens specific areas (highlights, midtones, shadows)
- Burn (Darken) — darkens specific areas
- Tip: Keep Dodge on Highlights and Burn on Midtones/Shadows for natural results
- Use lower Strength settings for subtler, more realistic effects

11. Drawing & Text Tools

Drawing Tool

- Brush, Pen (narrower line), Eraser, and Shape tools
- Always add a new empty layer before drawing for non-destructive editing
- Adjust size, softness, and transparency of the brush

Text Tool

- Add a new text layer; double-click the text icon to type
- Format options: alignment, uppercase, italic, bold, font, color
- Size, line spacing, and letter spacing controls available
- Background color, outline, and drop shadow can be added to text
- Rotate text using the blue rotate icon

12. Add Element

- Sub-categories: Overlays, Borders, Shapes, Stickers
- Some elements are free; premium elements are marked with a yellow tag
- Elements are added as new layers for further editing (transparency, rotation, position)
- Examples: bokeh overlays, snow/seasonal effects, art deco borders, heart shapes

13. Add Image

- Quickly add more images to the current project
- Browse from computer, enter a direct URL, or search Unsplashd (free, royalty-free stock images)
- When adding from Unsplashd: choose 'Add to current' to place it as a new layer on the existing composition

14. Saving Your Work

- Always press Apply after changing values in any panel before moving on
- Press Save in the bottom corner when finished editing
- Close button at the bottom dismisses the current image/panel