

Choosing the Right Graphics Application

With so many different graphics applications on the market, many users are bewildered about which applications they should use for what purposes. No application does everything well, while any major graphics application excels at some things. Many applications are sold as part of a suite, which collectively address a much larger set of needs. Even so, different studios have different emphases. Thus, the Adobe Design Collection excels with print projects, but is comparatively weak on the Web, while Macromedia Studio MX is just the opposite

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The following table summarizes the comparative advantages and disadvantages of several major graphics applications published by different companies.

Feature/Use	Adobe Photoshop	Adobe PageMaker, Adobe InDesign, OR Quark Xpress	Adobe Illustrator, Macromedia Freehand, OR Corel Draw!	Adobe ImageReady	Macromedia Fireworks	Corel Paint	Macromedia Flash OR Adobe LiveMotion
Description	The premier application for digital photography and bitmap image editing	Desktop publishing programs; excellent page layout and text controls; mediocre drawing tools	Excellent drawing and shape tools; solid (Freehand) to poor text layout handling (Illustrator)	Bundled with Photoshop, used to optimize and export Photoshop projects to the Web	Bundled with Dreamweaver, used to create and optimize graphics for use on the Web	Used for painterly graphic design. Comes bundled with brushes, textures, and other creative tools.	Multimedia authoring tool for creating animations and interactive applications for the Web
Type of Graphics Created or Edited	Bitmap	Vector (can import, but not create bitmaps)	Vector (can import, but not create bitmaps)	Bitmap	Vector and Bitmap	Bitmap	Vector (can import, but not create bitmaps, sounds, and video)
Digital Photography (image retouching, tonal adjustments)	Excellent	Poor	Fair to poor	Good	Good	Fair	Poor

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Page Layout	Poor	Excellent	Fair to good	Fair (for Web page layouts), Poor for print page layouts)	Good (for Web page layouts), Poor for print page layouts)	Poor	Good (for Web page layouts), Poor for print page layouts)
Illustrations, logos, & drawings	Fair	Fair	Excellent	Fair	Excellent	Fair	Excellent
Painting	Fair	Poor	Poor	Fair	Fair	Excellent	Poor
Output to Web (Optimization)	Fair	Poor	Fair	Excellent	Excellent	Fair	Excellent
Output to print	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Poor	Poor	Excellent	Poor
Animations and Interactivity	Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Good	Poor	Excellent
Workshop(s) offered by IT Training & Education?	Yes	PageMaker Y; ImageReady N; Quark Xpress N	Illustrator Y; Freehand N; Corel Draw! N	Yes	Yes	No	Flash Y; LiveMotion N
Available in IUB STC?	Yes	PageMaker Y; Imageready N; Quark Xpress N	Illustrator Y; Freehand N; Corel Draw! N	Yes	Yes	No	Flash Y; LiveMotion N