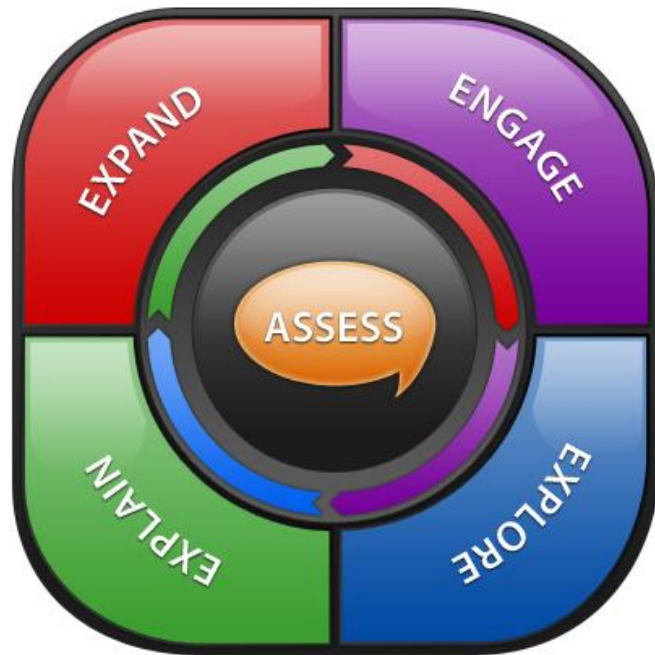


2017

21 Tools for the Sign & Print Shop



Mark Rugen, President Givmehelp.com

Givmehelp.com

1/1/2017

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INTRODUCTION

When I was asked to participate in this year's SIGN.BIZ convention, I was honored. When I was asked to develop this topic, I was.... well challenged! But isn't that what learning is all about! In this paper, I will attempt to supply you with 16 valuable business tools or resources that I am certain will make your daily work better and more fun. Work with me man, work with me.

So, to begin, I sat back and started thinking about what it takes to run a business and what it takes to create a design that can be cut or printed. Then, with some ideas in mind, I made the trip to the internet and my own experience to see if I could find 16 tools that I believe would help you the most. So, here they are!

TOOL #1: ADOBE PLUGINS

I figure most of you are somehow using Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator etc. to create some of your designs. Cool. Here are some plugins for Photoshop that I have found amazing! (FYI: most will work in FlexiSIGN!)

SMARTCURVES

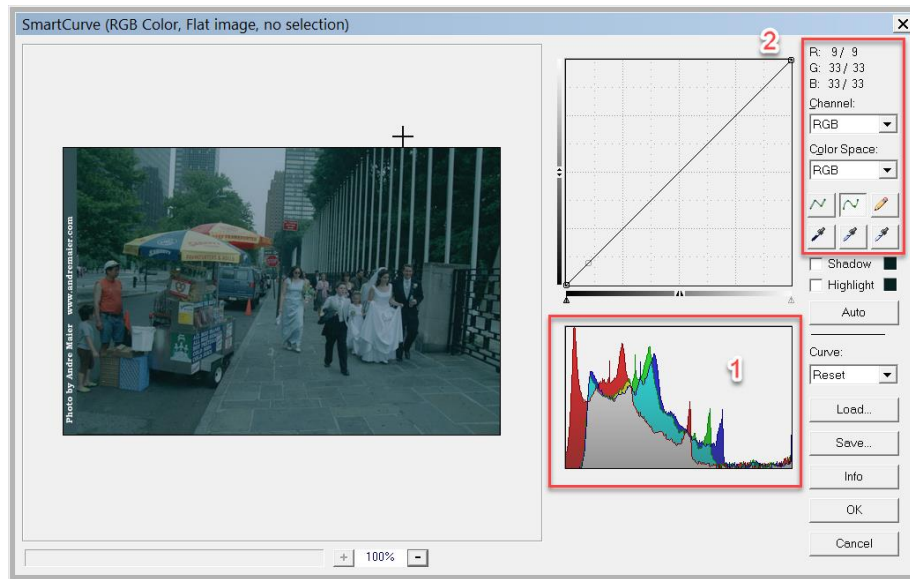
Here is a plugin to adjust the color on any bitmap or photo. It is designed to allow you to take a photo and apply adjustments so that the image has a neutral gray and thus better color.

Take the image below, it's a bit dark, and of course off color, perhaps with a cyan cast. How would you "fix" it? Photoshop, well perhaps, but using carves and levels can be a bit tricky. Install smartcurves and make your adjustments easier.



Let me show you, I'll be using FlexiSIGN but it works in Photoshop as well.

Choose the image, then open smartcurves from the bitmap and adobe filters menu. You'll get the following:



You can see how dark the image is. If you look at the histogram (1) you can see that the colors are out of sync, meaning that the image is unbalanced. Using the eye droppers, or adjusting the curves, you can get a better balance. Use the Black eyedropper to sample a place in the image that is supposed to be black, then use the white eye dropper to sample a place in the image that is supposed to be white, then use the middle or gray eye dropper to sample a place that is to be gray. The result can be like the one below:



As you can see in the histogram, there is more gray and spread over the left to right, meaning the image is more neutral. Of course, more adjustments can be made and there are numerous tweaking features. But you get the "picture", LOL!

Get smartcurve here: www.givemehelp.com/smartcurve.zip ITS FREE!

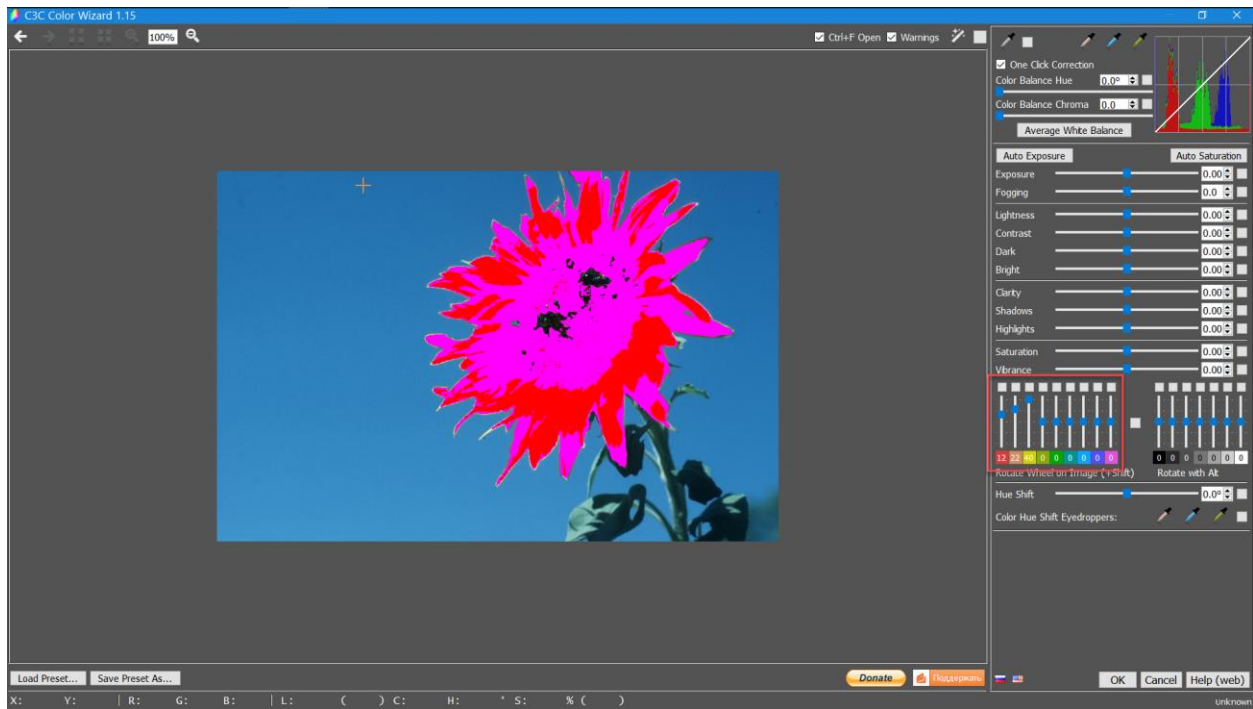
C3C COLOR WIZARD

Another great plugin is the C3C Color Wizard. This plugin in had literally hundreds of settings to make your image look like anything you may want and its pretty easy to use!

Look at the photo below, perhaps you need the flower to be more golden but you do not want to change the blue sky or stem. Typically take it to photoshop, select the flower and make changes, but C3C can save you some trouble, add more enhancement features and is compatible with FlexiSIGN!



On the next page, I have the image open in C3C Color wizard. I have “upped” the yellow, orange and red channels of color and the areas to be affected are in magenta, showing the sky will not be altered.



The result?



The “flavor” you give your photo is up to you, but this plugin is FREE, yippee! In addition to this simple example, you can control many other enhancements.

Publisher Description

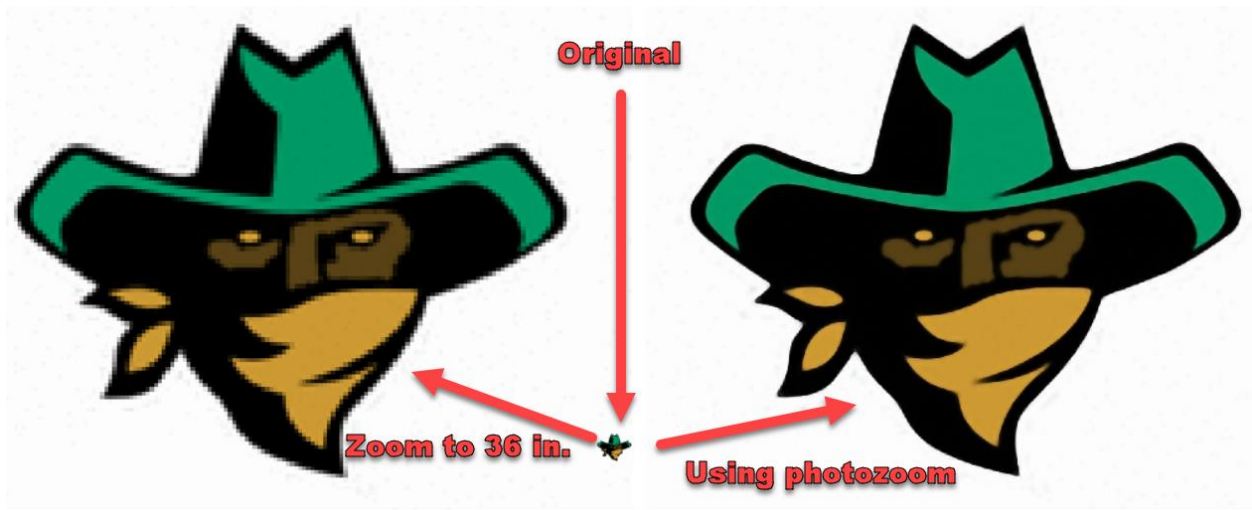
- Supports 8-bit and 16-bit RGB-mode.
- Multi-threading support. On computers with multiple processors or multi-core processor performance increases significantly.
- Provides accurate color conversion.
- Correction of color balance, dynamic range, saturation by one mouse click.
- Calculations are performed in floats.
- Automatic tuning overall contrast (Auto Exposure).
- Automatic adjustment of saturation (Auto Saturation).
- Automatic correction of overall contrast and saturation of one button (magic wand).
- Complete control over the output RGB color gamut.
- Innovative LPY color coordinate system.
- Changing the interface language (English/Russian) without restarting the program.
- Unlimited Undo.
- Live histogram.
- Tone Curve control.
- Presets.

I must say it's one of the more complete tools for image enhancement. While the learning curve is a bit steep, it's worth the effort and there are numerous presets as well as auto corrections you can try as well.

You can find this wonderful tool here: <http://c3c-color-wizard-x64.soft112.com/> It's FREE!

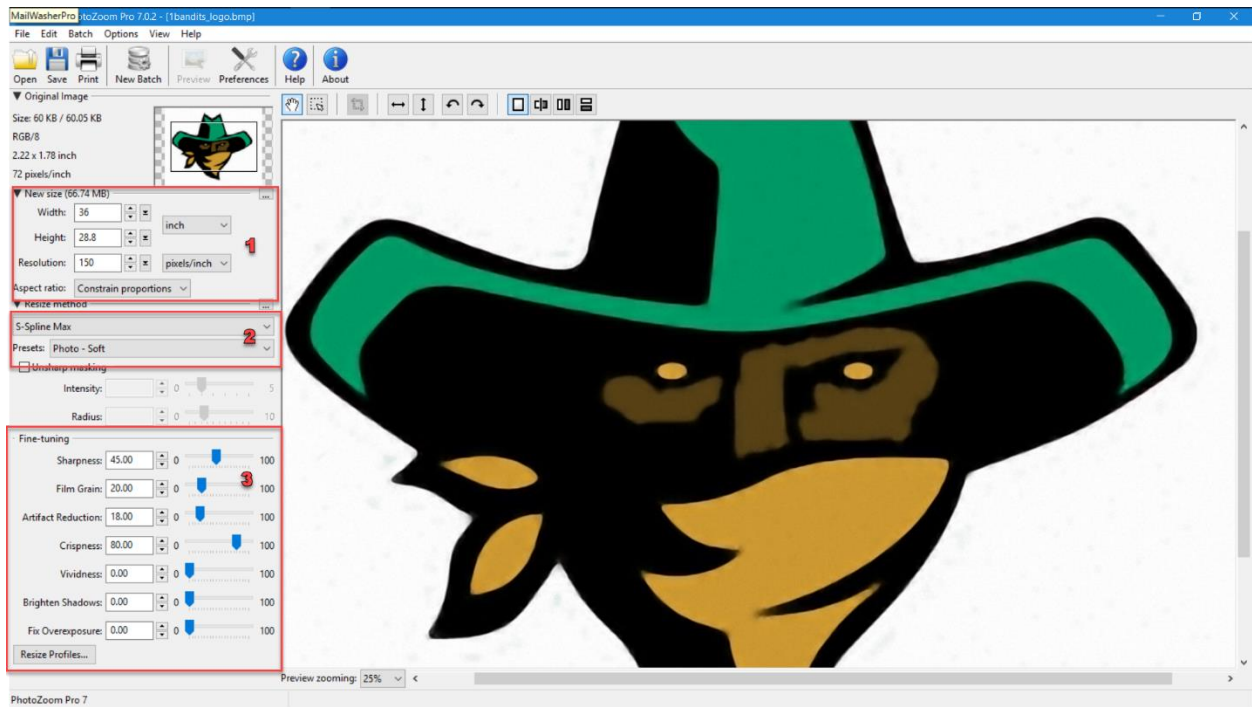
TOOL #2: PHOTOZOOM 7

Ever had to deal with low resolution images that your customer wants enlarged to several feet? Sure, you have, well here is the best solution. In the example below I took a 5x7 inch 100 ppi image and enlarged it to 10 FEET with little loss in quality and the file size is only about 68MB! In the example I show here, I take an image that is 2.2x1.7 inches at 72 ppi and make it 36 inches wide, that's about 17 times bigger and you can see the result!



It's as easy and 1, 2, 3!

1. Set the new size and resolution.
2. Choose the resample method.
3. Fine Tune.



You can even DOWNSIZE images, so if you have a very large print size and the image is say 5GB, you could downsize the resolution, still get good quality and have a much smaller file size.

MAC or Windows at \$169.00 definitely worth the investment!

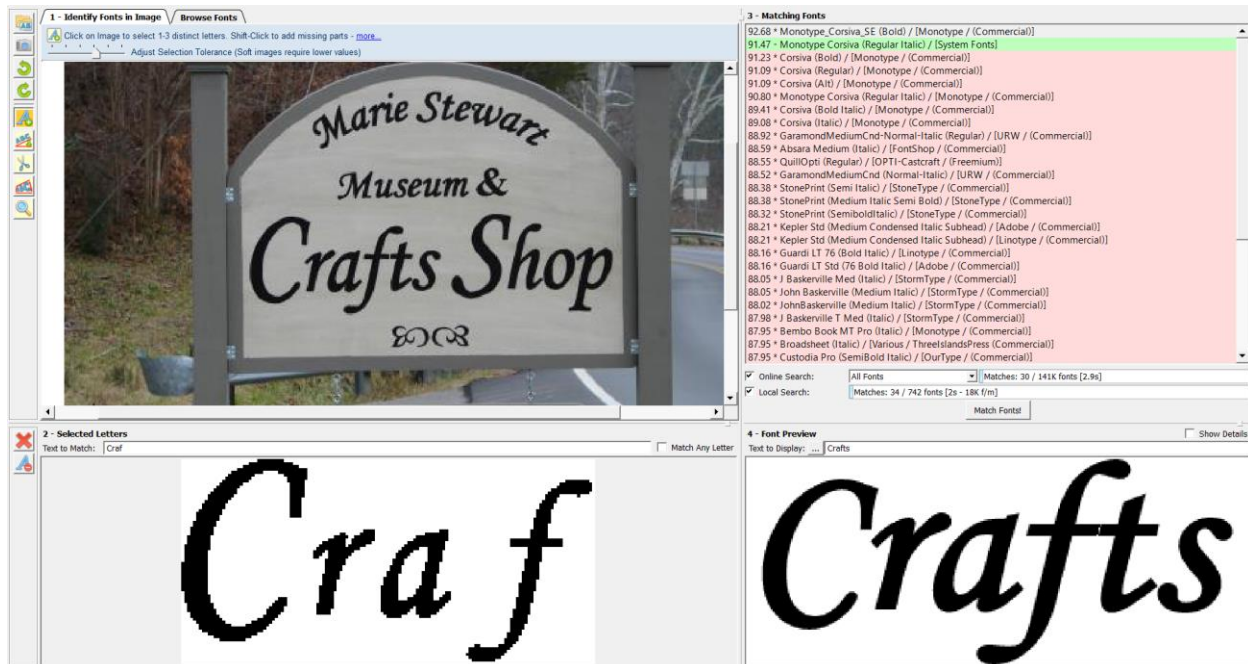
Get more info or order it here: <http://tinyurl.com/gmh-photozoom7>

TOOL #3: FINDING FONTS EASILY

Finding fonts, identifying fonts has always been a challenge to any shop. For some reason the customer doesn't know the font name, doesn't have it or simply brings you a picture of it. So, finding the match or at least something close is needed. Enter FindMyFont.

FINDMYFONT

With this tool, just open a bitmap of the font, select a few letters and click match. The software will search your hard drive and then the internet for the font, listing them in order of matching percentage. If you don't have the font on your hard drive, you can double click the name it found on the internet and it will take you to the site where you can either download or purchase the font. It's fast and darn perfect!



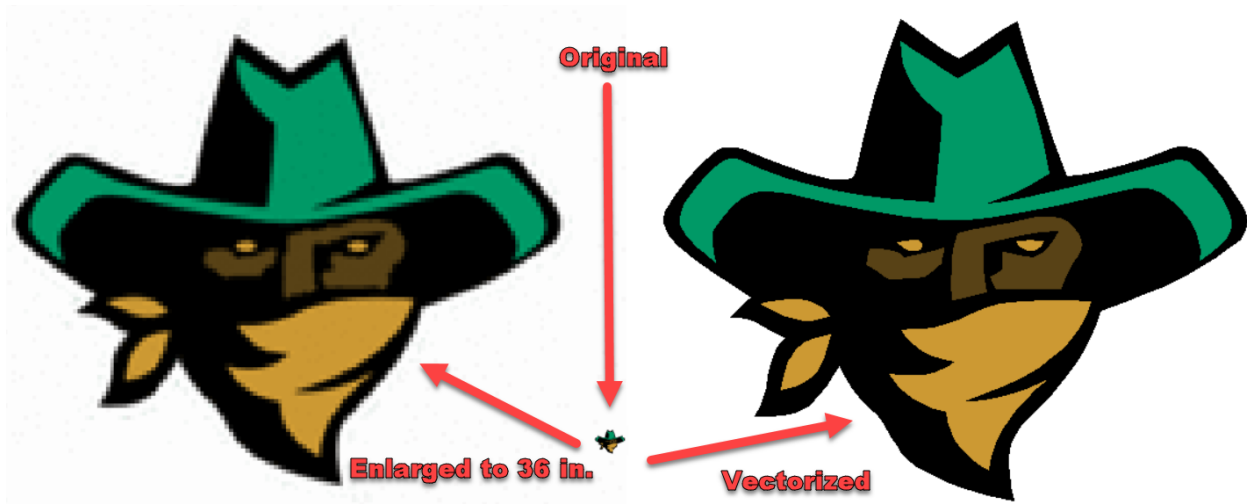
At a cost of only \$49, this is a tool that must be a part of your shop!

Get it here: <http://tinyurl.com/findmyfont>

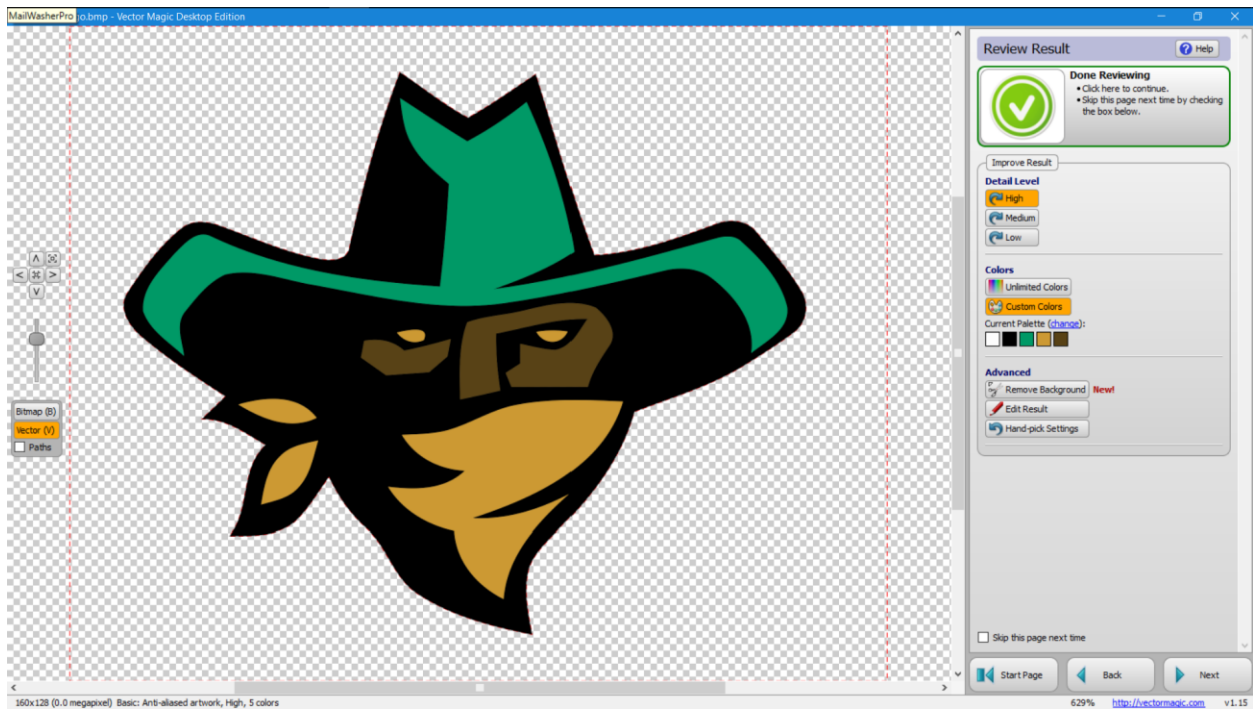
TOOL # 4: VECTORMAGIC

Converting low resolution bitmaps into vector art has always been a hassle.... until now! Vectormagic is a standalone program as well as a plugin for photoshop that can convert any bitmap, including photographs into vector art and it does it with great quality.

Using the same example above, Ill vectorizer the cowboy instead of resample and the result is even better!



Nice part about vectorizing this image is that we can now make it ANY size, even hundreds of feet and it will maintain its quality!



Save as EPS, PDF, AI DXF or even as a bitmap jpg or tif. This program is wizard driven with a very easy interface and almost no learning curve,

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF USING VECTOR MAGIC?

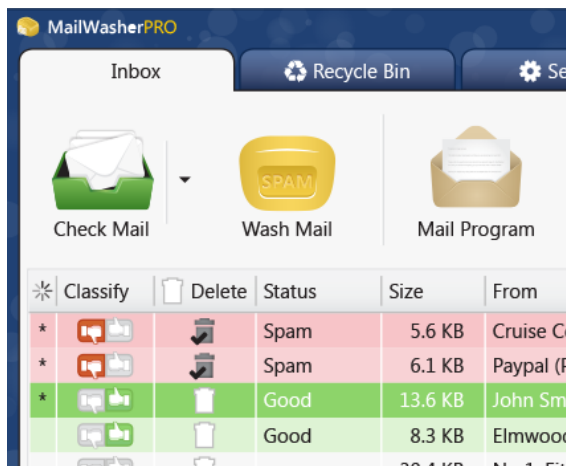
Vector Magic saves you time and frustration, while giving you better results than the alternatives.

- **No more tedious hand-tracing.** Hand tracing can take hours, and it can be costly to hire a professional to recreate the image. Why not let Vector Magic do the work, saving you time and money?
- **Better accuracy.** If you compare results from other tools side-by-side with those from Vector Magic, you will notice that Vector Magic produces vectors that more closely resemble the input image. Finer details in the shapes are recovered, and the curves are more faithful to the bitmap original.
- **Less cleanup required.** Vector Magic's results are cleaner, while still extracting more detail from the bitmap original. Normally you'd have to spend a lot of time cleaning up the output from an auto-tracer - with Vector Magic you can oftentimes use the result right away, and if it requires cleanup then it's usually much less than what's required for the results from the competing tools.
- **Easier user interface with less trial-and-error.** If you've used other tracing tools, you have probably noticed that they have tons of confusing options and settings, and require you to more or less randomly try different combinations of these in the frustrating search for a passable result. With Vector Magic on the other hand, the conversion options are all automatically selected for you. There's even an "Improve Result" feature to help you tweak the result if you'd like.

I highly recommend the desktop version as there are more features, but you can also subscribe. \$295 onetime charge or \$7.95/mo.

Here is how you can get it or find out more: www.tinyurl.com/vectormagic

TOOL #5: MAILWASHER-PRO



In our business, we get a lot of emails from customers, but because we are constantly online and communicating, we also get lots of junk email as well. With MailWasher you can prune your emails quickly **BEFORE** you get them in your inbox. I've been using it for years and let me tell you, it saves me lots of time and I only download emails that I want to have. This also lets me prune away any scams as well as emails that might have viruses before they get to my computer!

Install MailWasher today to screen all your email accounts in one place and **allow only the email you want in your inbox**. MailWasher lets you preview all your email before it gets to your computer or mobile device, enabling you to

read all your email securely, and instantly delete any unwanted or suspicious email. Your remaining good email is downloaded to your PC or mobile device, so you **avoid any spam or email viruses in your PC**.

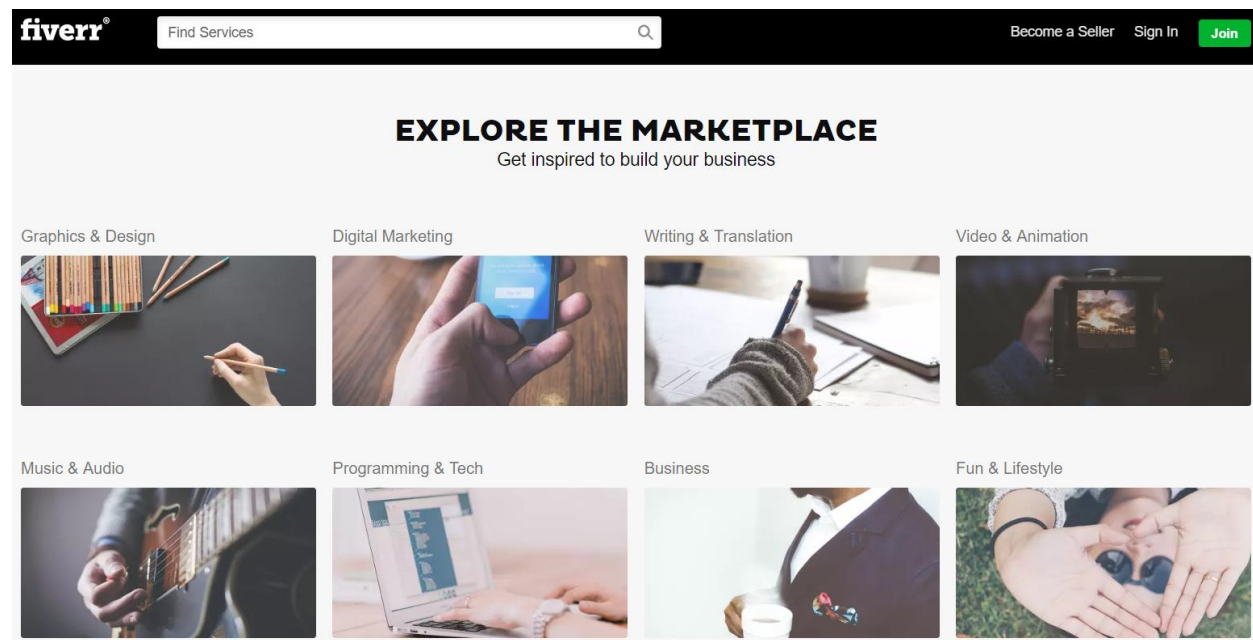
WHEN YOU USE MAILWASHER, THE BENEFITS BECOME OBVIOUS.

- Zero spam in your computer or mobile device.
- Inspect any email before it gets to your computer or mobile device.
- Never lose an email because you can't afford to.
- Intelligent spam tools ensure spam is caught and good email is not.

With a cost of only \$29.95 per year, this is well worth the investment: <http://tinyurl.com/gmh-mwpro>

TOOL #6: WWW.FIVERR.COM

You must spend a little time at this website. It is loaded with inexpensive talent that will do just about anything regrading design etc. and the name comes from the fact that it all starts for \$5!



As you can see from the screen shot above, there are categories for just about everything. I've used this service to create a 30 second video ad for just under \$50. I had them do some logo design for \$10. It's amazing.

In addition to providing services, you could even offer them! There are numerous photoshop designers in the group, but I saw little WIDE FORMAT PRINT services. Search for wide format printing, and you'll get a few hits, but this might be one more way to make a few dollars if you can be reasonable enough.

At the very least, if your sign designer quite all of a sudden perhaps you can use this service to fill in while you hunt for another person.

TOOL #7: ROYALTY FREE IMAGES

There are lots of site out there where you can pay for images and of course I know that some of you “borrow” images from Google, but here are a few ways to get legal images that are quite good quality.

WWW.GOOGLE.COM

Yes, www.google.com but when you choose images, go to the toll menu and choose advanced search, then go down a bit in the menu show below and choose “free to use, share, modify, even commercially”

Google+ Search **Images** Maps Play YouTube News Gmail More -

Google

Advanced Image Search

Find images with...

all these words:	<input type="text" value="cowboy"/>	To do this in the search box
this exact word or phrase:	<input type="text"/>	Type the important words: winter hoarfrost
any of these words:	<input type="text"/>	Put exact words in quotes: "frost flower"
none of these words:	<input type="text"/>	Type OR between all the words you want: trees OR weeds OR grasses
		Put a minus sign just before words you don't want: -windows

Then narrow your results by...

image size:	<input type="text" value="any size"/>	Find images in any size you need.
aspect ratio:	<input type="text" value="any aspect ratio"/>	Specify the shape of images.
colors in image:	<input checked="" type="radio"/> any color <input type="radio"/> full color <input type="radio"/> black & white <input type="radio"/> transparent <input type="radio"/> this color: <input type="color" value="#ff0000"/>	Find images in your preferred colors.
type of image:	<input type="text" value="any type"/>	Limit the kind of images you find.
region:	<input type="text" value="any region"/>	Find images published in a particular region.
site or domain:	<input type="text"/>	Search one site (like sfoma.org) or limit your results to a domain like .edu, .org or .gov
SafeSearch:	<input type="text" value="Show most relevant results"/>	Tell SafeSearch whether to filter sexually explicit content.
file type:	<input type="text" value="any format"/>	Find images in the format you prefer.
usage rights:	<input type="text" value="free to use, share or modify, even commercially"/>	Find images you are free to use yourself.

You can also...

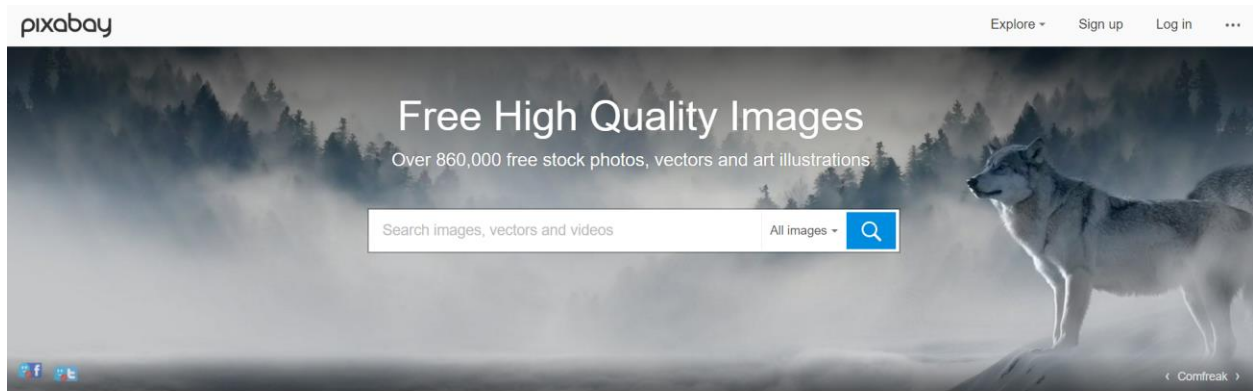
[Find pages that are similar to, or link to, a URL](#)
[Search pages you've visited](#)
[Use operators in the search box](#)
[Customize your search settings](#)

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[HTTPS://PIXABAY.COM/](https://pixabay.com/)

Another great resource is pixabay.com, where the images are part of the creative common and free from copyright ready to be used in any fashion. Get photos, bitmaps vectors even video.



Free images and videos you can use anywhere

All images and videos on Pixabay are released free of copyrights under Creative Commons CC0. You may download, modify, distribute, and use them royalty free for anything you like, even in commercial applications. Attribution is not required. [Learn more ...](#)



[HTTP://WWW.PUBLICDOMAINPICTURES.NET/](http://www.publicdomainpictures.net/)

Finally, I submit this source, because, not only is it a source of images, but also if you want to show some of your own work for others to use, you could win money and who doesn't like that. Each month, you can enter a picture and depending on downloads, you are eligible for cash prizes.

One last one that's exceptions. No need to describe just go there and investigate all free to use as you choose:

<https://blog.snappa.io/free-stock-photos/> This is a list of 21 sites with great photos you can use any way you want!

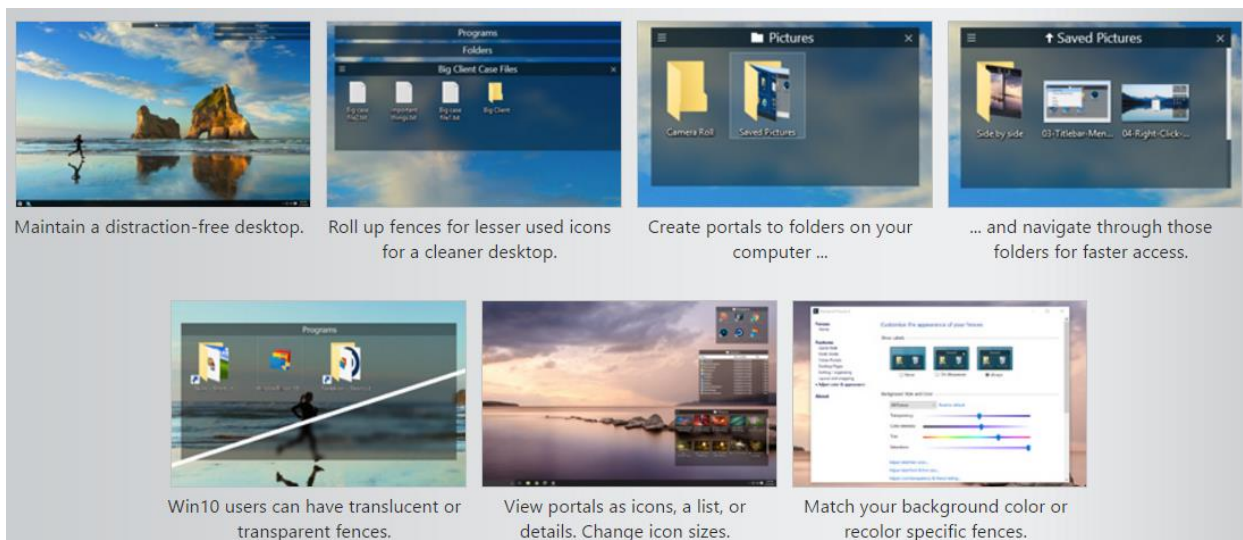
TOOL #8: FENCES FOR YOUR DESKTOP

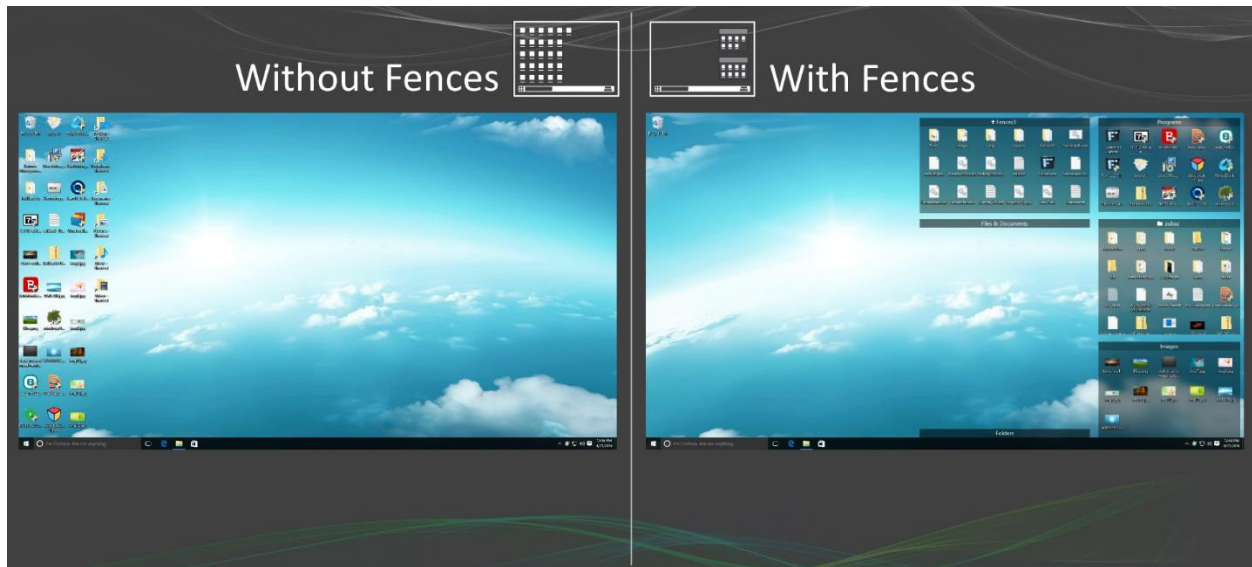
Does your desktop have dozens of icons for programs, files etc.? Organize your desktop with Stardocks Fences.

This program comes in the free and paid form, with the paid form offering some extras sorting tools etc. I've been using it for years to organize my desktop. I probably have a hundreds icons on my desktop, but with fences, I have them "fenced" into about 5 areas, Programs, Folder, File & Documents, Images, Etc. Here is how my desktop looks using Fences.



The green areas contain my icons. (You can make them any color you wish).





Organizing my desktop has saved me time in looking for files or folders. With this program, you can create your own fence categories and I highly recommend it for all your computers. I recommend you get the \$10 version with all the whistles!

Get it here: <http://www.stardock.com/products/> You can get a free version or try the pro version for 30 days and then it's just \$9.99 to buy it. Totally worth it.

Use this link to watch a video on most of the features: <https://youtu.be/s0GYI9L5i7Q>

TOOL #9: ROCKETDOCK

I realize that windows has a task bar, but it's rather clumsy so I added a MAC-like tool bar to my windows desktop and I love it! It's called RocketDock and it's FREE!

RocketDock is a smoothly animated, alpha blended application launcher. It provides a nice clean interface to drop shortcuts on for easy access and organization. With each item, completely customizable there is no end to what you can add and launch from the dock.

Now with added Taskbar support your minimized windows can appear as icons on the dock. This allows for better productivity and accessibility. Here is what mine looks like:



It's easy to set up, style and use, simply drag and drop icons on the "dock" and they give you a shortcut, and it operates much like a dock on MAC so those employees who love the MAC can feel a bit more comfortable as well. Can be placed on all four sides of the screen per your preference. I keep my top used program shortcuts on this bar for easy access.

Get it here: <https://rocketdock.com/> It's FREE!

TOOL # 10: TYPEWOLF

Finding fonts can sometimes be a challenge. I found this web site to be very instructive and it has many, many resources for our needs. Here is what the founder has to say:

About Typewolf

I launched Typewolf as a side project in June of 2013. Working as a designer, I was always frustrated by the lack of good resources for choosing fonts for design projects. Seeing type samples set in “the quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog” isn’t very useful when it comes to web design—seeing how real type performs on actual websites is much more helpful.

I’ve also noticed that other typography sites tend to be written from a type designer’s perspective rather than from the perspective of someone who actually uses type in their day-to-day work. I’ve been a designer for 15 years, so everything on Typewolf is approached from a designer’s perspective.

My goal is to make Typewolf the absolute best resource available for everything related to typography on the web. Typewolf will always remain an independent site that features typefaces from all type foundries regardless of where the fonts can be purchased.

I found that this site not only give you link and resources for getting a font, but the author does a great job of providing reports and other goodies that could be useful in our business.

For instance, he has a page where you can find alternatives to Helvetica and such and they are really good! Check out this page.

The screenshot displays the Typewolf website interface, which is organized into two main sections: "Favorites Lists" and "Alternative Lists".

Favorites Lists

- Top 10 Favorite Body Text Fonts:** A list of fonts with a sample image showing text like "typography to emphasize the symbol of the setting sun".
- Top 10 Favorite Fonts That Are Underused:** A list of fonts with sample images, including "Fiori beer", "Prosecco NV", "Italian White Wine", and "Italian Rose".
- Top 30 Favorite Sites:** A list of websites with a sample image showing "Editor's Letter N°1".
- Top 10 Favorite Typekit Font Combinations:** A list of font combinations with sample images showing "Lapture Display" and "Freight Sans" paired with "rag rag".

Alternative Lists

- Top 10 Helvetica Alternatives:** A list of fonts with a sample image showing "Los Angeles", "Pacific Coast", and "Death Valley".
- Top 10 Futura Alternatives:** A list of fonts with a sample image showing a "Dr. Auzoux Human Skull School Chart" with a price of "\$ 203.61".
- Top 10 Proxima Nova & Gotham Alternatives:** A list of fonts with a sample image showing a website layout with a "Work" button and a "Shop All Products" button.
- Top 10 Brandon Grotesque Alternatives:** A list of fonts with a sample image showing the text "LET'S MAKE COOL STUFF".

I am certainly not saying all these fonts are free, but this person has done a terrific job of talking about them and gives you plenty of choices and location to get them.

Check it out here: <https://www.typewolf.com/>

TOOL #11: PICOSMOS TOOLS

Picosmos is a software covering with all kinds of image functions, such as special effect, browsing, editing, composing, segmentation, combine and screen recording and screenshot. You can do most things if you install it.

It takes a bit if getting used to, but this FREE software can do so much for a single program, even remove complex backgrounds and do context replacements.



Did I already say FREE? Yep, why I don't know but get this before they figure out its worth money! This is one of my favorites!

Main functions



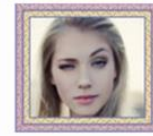
Image browsing

Picosmos has professional software to read pictures named "Picosmos Shows" .



Editor

You can do any complex operations to images through it.



Adding special effects

You can add special effects and photo frame to images, making them look more vivid.



Page Design

Combining your images to produce posters and covers.



Preview layout tools



Combine

Put pictures together according to stipulated rules.



Batch processing

Operating pictures, such as clearing up, optimizing, adding watermark and rotating.



Screen recording and screenshot

Combining multiple modes of clear screenshots



Cutout

It can make sectional drawing easy and quickly separate the background.



Animation production

It can produce SWF files spreading on the Internet, such as GIF and WebM.

Here's an example of an image where I removed the background using this program, just one of the hundreds of features. Took me like 60 seconds! I could do better but it's just an example!



Get this program here: <http://pcfreetime.com/picosmos/feature.php?language=en>

TOOL #12: FILE CONVERSION WITH XNVIEW

XnView is an efficient multimedia viewer, browser and converter. Simple to use! Support of more than 500 image formats.

Features

View

With XnView you can browse, organize, and view your images in numerous ways:

- Thumbnail View
- FullScreen View
- FilmStrip View
- SlideShow with FX
- Images Compare
- etc...

Edit

XnView allows you to process your images with an arsenal of editing tools:

- Resize, Rotate, Crop
- Lossless Rotate & Crop (jpeg)
- Adjust Brightness, Contrast, ...
- Auto Levels, Auto Contrast
- Modify Colors depth & palette
- Apply filters & Effects

Create

In addition to exporting to more than **70 Formats** XnView lets you create:

- SlideShows
- Web Pages
- Contact Sheets
- Video Thumbnails Gallery
- File Listings
- Strip of Images

Unrivalled Compatibility

XnView lets you read about **500 formats** (including Multipage and animated still formats APNG, TIFF, GIF, ICO, etc...). Some formats may require Plug-ins

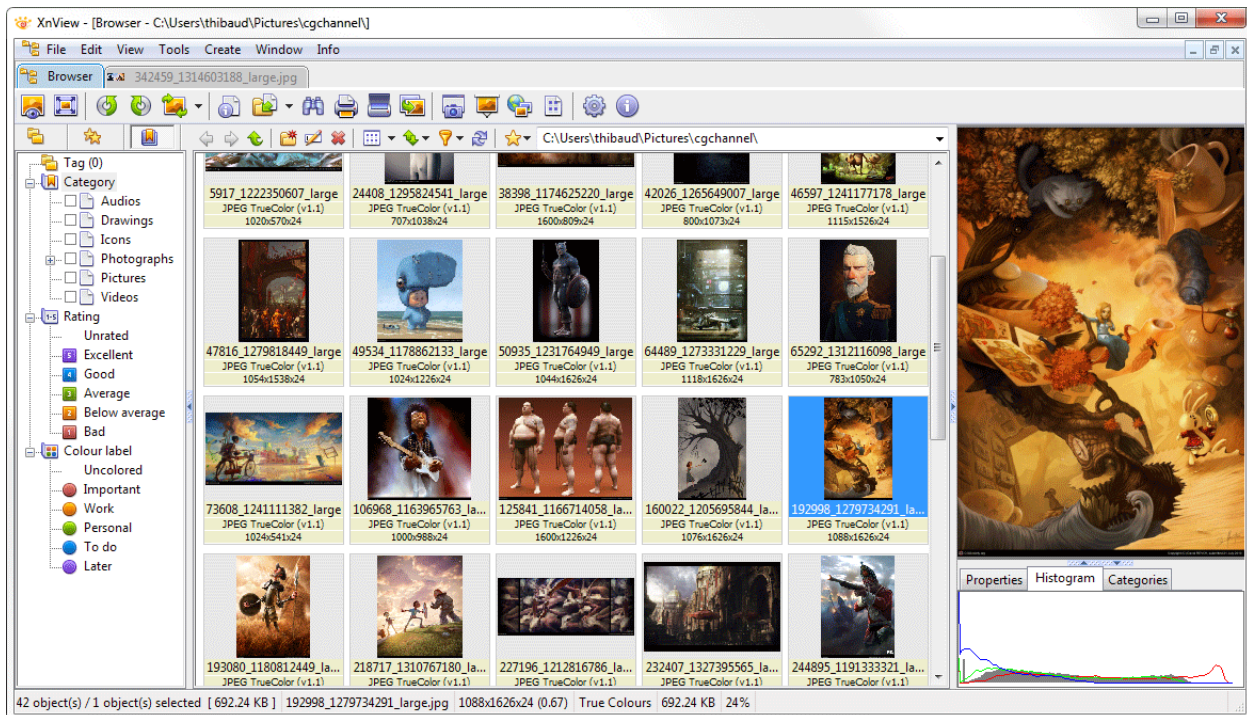
XnView also provides a convenient **Screen Capture module** and Windows™ **TWAIN & WIA** interface to capture images.

And Much More ...

Some other notable features of XnView are:

- Metadata support & Editing (IPTC)
- JPEG lossless Transforms
- Duplicate File Finder
- Batch Processing
- Batch Rename
- Print Module

Use this program to find and organize your images as well as make minor changes and most importantly convert them to useable formats.



Get your copy here: <http://www.xnview.com/en/xnview/#downloads> FREE!

TOOL # 13: CLEARCLIPBOARD

We do a lot of copy and paste in our shops, and each time we do so, the windows clipboard keeps a copy even after we paste. That uses valuable RAM and can even cause issues and crashes. Manage this with ClearClipboard.

This simple little program does just one thing, clear the clipboard.

Clear Clipboard instantly deletes the clipboard contents. You might want to run Clear Clipboard to **make sure that the clipboard is empty**.

Clear Clipboard is freeware - no need to pay for such a simple application!

- It is extremely easy to use Clear Clipboard:
- To run Clear Clipboard, click on its icon
- When the clipboard is emptied, a message is displayed
- Click 'OK' to hide the message and close the program

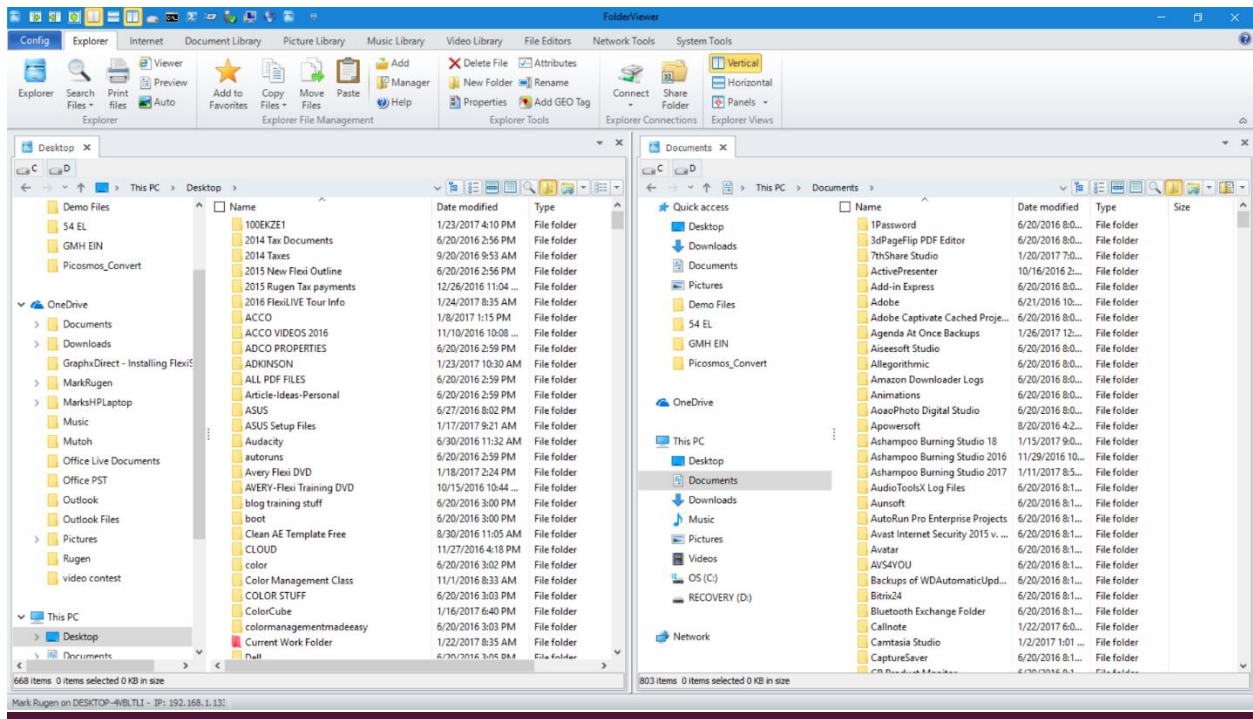
To launch Clear Clipboard easily, you can add its icon to the Quick Launch bar or to your favorite program launcher.

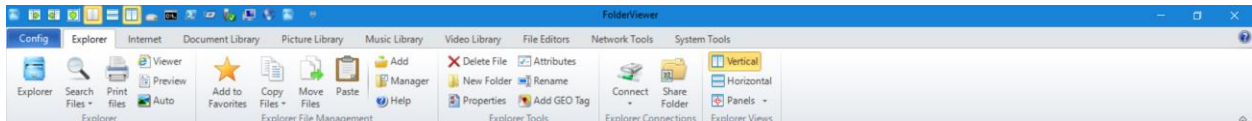
Get this little free jewel here: <http://clipdiary.com/clear-clipboard/>

TOOL #14: FOLDERVIEWER

While we are talking about copying and pasting, we also do a lot of file moving from one folder to another. The ver easiest way to do this is to use a great low cost program, FolderViewer.

This program not only allows you to see two windows at once so you can move or copy files, it also has a great collection of other tools.





You can download a 14 days trial version with full functionality by clicking on the following link: FolderViewer : <http://www.matirsoft.com/>

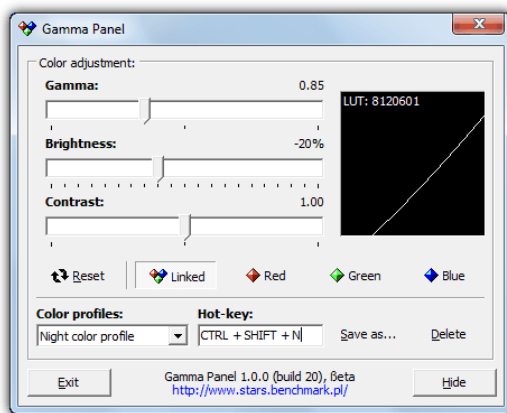
After the trial period has ended you can purchase FolderViewer for just \$10, and this offer includes lifetime free updates.

TOOL #15: MONITOR CALIBRATION/PROFILES/DISPLAYPRO

Applying a good monitor profile to your computer and using it within Photoshop or FlexiSIGN in color management is a great way to Soft Proof colors of a job before you print them.

MONITOR CALIBRATION

So, before you even think about monitor profiles etc., it's important to calibrate your monitor. What I mean is you need to at least set the brightness and contrast to optimum levels. Too bright and colors wash out, not enough contrast and hues disappear. So, let's get you some tools to set the brightness and contrast as best as possible. Clearly, most of the time this is rather personal preference and each user might set them a bit differently, but do this anyway.



First you need to find the location where you can adjust brightness and contrast. Can't find that, use this software it could help:

http://www.majorgeeks.com/mg/getmirror/gamma_panel,1.html

You can use it to adjust several options on your monitor and "build" a profile so to speak.

You might also want to try the Monitor Calibration Wizard. This program will allow you to set brightness, contrast and even adjust the individual Red, Green and Blue channels to produce a visually achieved profile. Now keep in mind this DOES NOT replace an instrument like an II Display to make one more accurately, but it will make a profile that might get you close to seeing on the screen what you print output looks like.

You can get the Monitor Calibration Wizard here:

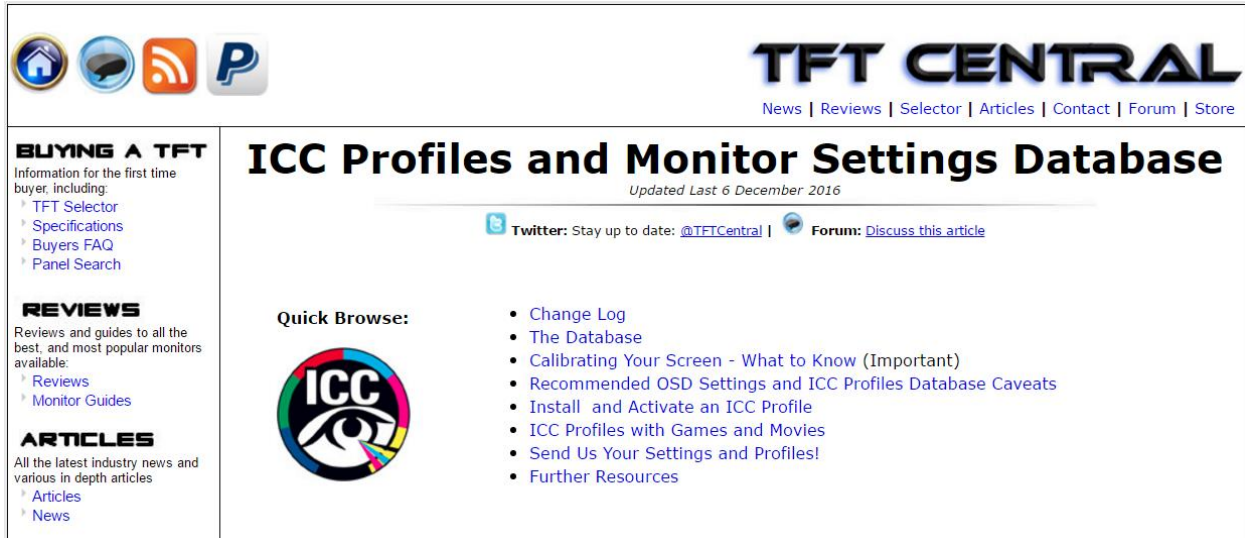
http://www.hex2bit.com/products/product_mcw.asp



MONITOR PROFILES

Use this link to go to a website where you will probably find a monitor profile for your monitor. It's best of course to make your own, but if you don't want to do that, you MIGHT just find one here.

http://www.tftcentral.co.uk/articles/icc_profiles.htm



The screenshot shows the TFT Central website. At the top, there are social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, RSS, and YouTube. The main header reads "TFT CENTRAL" with a navigation menu: News | Reviews | Selector | Articles | Contact | Forum | Store. The page title is "ICC Profiles and Monitor Settings Database" with a sub-header "Updated Last 6 December 2016". On the left sidebar, there are sections for "BUYING A TFT" (with links to TFT Selector, Specifications, Buyers FAQ, and Panel Search), "REVIEWS" (with links to Reviews and Monitor Guides), and "ARTICLES" (with links to Articles and News). The main content area features a "Quick Browse:" section with an ICC logo and a list of links: Change Log, The Database, Calibrating Your Screen - What to Know (Important), Recommended OSD Settings and ICC Profiles Database Caveats, Install and Activate an ICC Profile, ICC Profiles with Games and Movies, Send Us Your Settings and Profiles!, and Further Resources. Social media links for Twitter (@TFTCentral) and Forum (Discuss this article) are also present.

This is probably the best collection of monitor profiles on the net. Once you find one, add it to windows in the...get ready.....

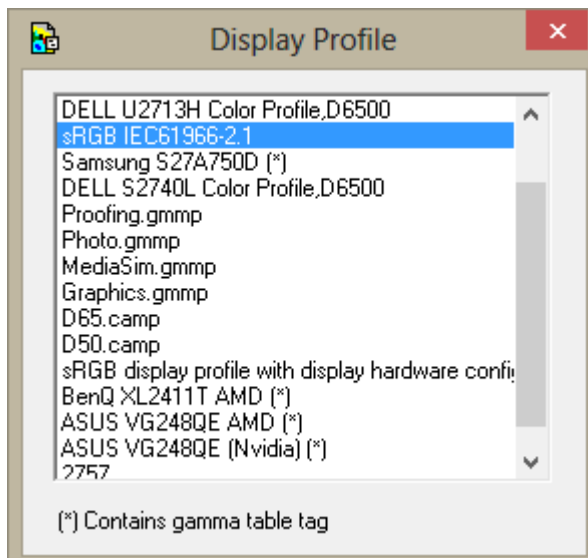
C:\Windows\System32\spool\drivers\color

Once here it can be accessed by all windows color management programs. For FlexiSIGN, just save it to your desktop, then in the EDIT>Color Settings menu browse to the profile and add it. Once there it's always available to Flexi.

Use this link to watch a video on its use and importance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WsbXgwSKcak>

DISPLAYPRO

This is a little program used to change the display profile. It opens all profiles in windows, you click on a new profile name and your monitor will adjust to that profile. This allows you to toggle between ICC profiles or use the system defaults if you essentially want to disable any ICC profile corrections. To use system defaults and disable any specific LUT and gamma corrections simply select 'sRGB IEC61966-2.1' in the utility.

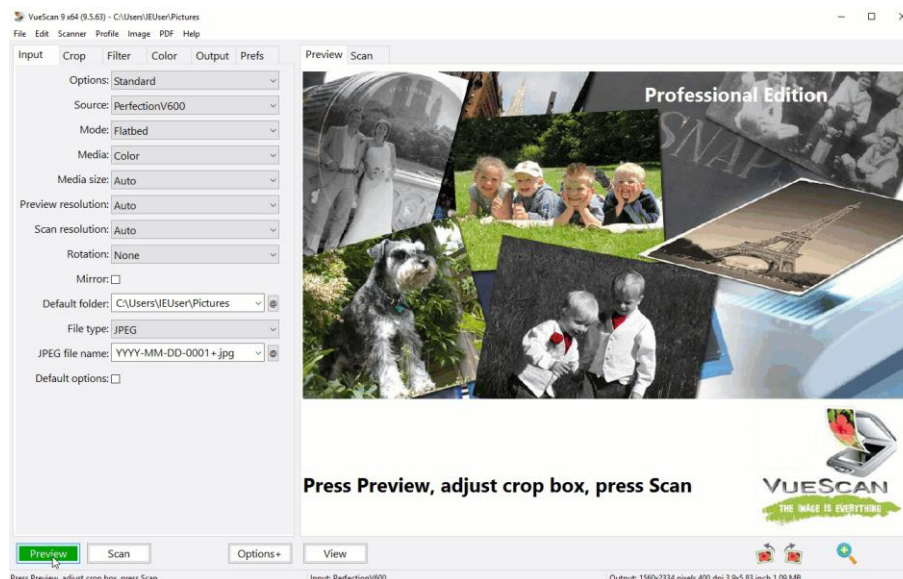


It's free and can be very useful. Pick the profile that best matches your monitor.

Get it here: <https://pcmonitors.info/icc/DisplayProfile.zip>

TOOL #16: VUESCAN

Here's a nice little software for running a scanner. I realize there may be software that came with your scanner, or perhaps you just use Photoshop, but this is good stuff. The main feature of VueScan is that it is compatible with over 2500 scanners, new and old.



Once you have opened VueScan, its interface is intuitive and very easy to use. Using the tabs in the upper left corner of the screen, just work your way through from left to right: Input, Crop, Filter, Color, Output and Preferences. The first few times you use VueScan it will feel slow, but once you're familiar with the program and have determined the basic settings for your scanning needs you'll be impressed with how fast it works. We

now just open VueScan, check a few settings and are ready to start scanning. Unlike a lot of software programs these days, the VueScan User Guide (PDF format) is very useful and understandable, with many tips that can explain differences in the setting choices, allowing you to get the best quality from you scans. It's important to

realize that although VueScan can produce very high-quality scans, the actual quality of scan will be ultimately dependent on the quality of the scanner.

There is a standard and Pro version, with the Standard version suitable for most users. Get more info here: <http://www.hamrick.com/>

TOOL #17: MEASUREMENT TOOLS

Of course, when we work on projects, many times we need to take a measurement of an object located in an inconvenient location, like a few dozen feet above the ground. In the last few years, the SPIKE was invented. A device that is laser driven that fastens to a smartphone allowing you to take measurements. Some swear by it, other find it inaccurate. Either way it can be expensive at \$499



Here are a few alternatives. Just keep in mind ANY app will only be as accurate as the care given it by the operator. Calibrations, as well as usage is only accurate if given due care. <http://ikegps.com/spike/>

EASYMEASURE - MEASURE DISTANCE WITH YOUR CAMERA



EasyMeasure® shows you the distance to objects seen through the camera lens of your iPhone, iPad or Android device. Simply aim your device to any object in your surroundings, and EasyMeasure displays the distance towards that object on top of the camera image. With its amazing 3D camera overlay grid, using EasyMeasure is very intuitive and easy!

Find out how far it is towards that boat at the other side of the lake. Measure how tall buildings are. Use the app as a golf-aid. Measure your friend's height (and width :P). The possibilities are endless!

How does it work? EasyMeasure uses the height of the camera lens and its tilt angle to calculate the distance to the object. A comprehensive animated tutorial on how to use EasyMeasure is included.

Features

- User friendly interface with Retina Display Graphics and 3D engine
- Measures distance. Can be updated to measure the height and width of objects!
- Share your results by email, Twitter or Facebook
- Includes the possibility to calibrate your iPhone/iPad for most accurate results!
- Make a snapshot of the image with the distance and store it in the photo album for later use.
- Supports Metric and Imperial units.
- Animated tutorial to explain the measurement procedure.
- "Dynamic Photos": Analyze and adapt measurements after photo is taken (Upgraded version)
- Switch on flashlight for measurements in the dark

Use this link to watch a video: <https://youtu.be/L0uzLqwcIUc> or this one to find out more about this product: <http://www.caramba-apps.com/easymeasure/> Free but \$2.99 for pro version.

TOOL# 18: PC TUNEUP WITH GLARY UTILITIES



Using a computer daily is much like driving your car constantly. It's going to need maintenance. At the very least the hard drive may need to be defragmented and the buildup of temporary files must be cleaned and deleted. In addition, you are using the internet to download files, exchange files and perhaps offering some sensitive data like credit card info etc. It's important to manage your online security as well by deleting that data.

Over the years, I have tried numerous utilities to get this done safely and found that Glary Utilities does the best job safely.

This software has a great free version or you can go with the Pro version for more control. I don't use the "I-Click" system that does it all, I use the advanced tools menu and

chose what I want done. I typically clean my registry, remove temp files and other junk files and defrag when needed (although I have a Solid State Drive now and don't defrag very often.)

Glarysoft's Glary Utilities is one of the most consistently popular and most frequently recommended system utilities, and why not? It bundles some of the most useful Windows-related tools in one free download. It scans and cleans your PC, cleaning temporary files, removing junk files, fixing broken shortcuts, and resolving a wide range of issues, both major and minor, that most Windows users will have no trouble recognizing. You can configure its One-Click Maintenance option to run just those processes you want with a single click, making regular maintenance just too easy for excuses. You can run any of its many tools individually, too - CNET Editors' review

Get the free copy here: <http://www.glarysoft.com/glary-utilities/>

TOOL #19: 13 HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR COLOR PALETTE INSPIRATION

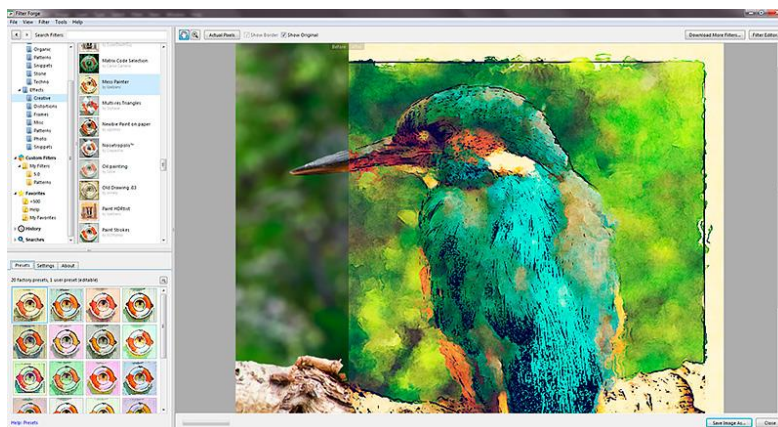
I never received any formal training on design and color, and if you've been to one of my Flexi classes you know that, but here is a collection of sites that offer color palettes that are awesome.

<https://blog.snappa.io/color-palette-inspiration/>



Here you can create some pretty awesome looking palettes and when you need them in Flexi, well you should take a class, BUT here you go. This video may help: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TOSS67JVPC0>

TOLL #20: FILTEREFORGE



One more Adobe Photoshop plugins that also works well in FlexiSIGN, Filterforge. This little jewel will allow you to create millions of textures or use some that are already available through the user gallery. Its fun, it's easy and the textures are cool.

Filter Forge is a high-end plugin for Adobe Photoshop that gives you the power to create your own filters without any programming knowledge at all. Filters include seamless textures,

visual effects, distortions, patterns, backgrounds, frames, and more.

The key features of Filter Forge include the filter editor and a free online library of user-created filters. You can access the library directly from the user interface of Filter Forge. Currently the library contains more than 11,000 filters.



All filters are adjustable, resolution-independent, support real-world HDRI lighting, and most of them can be seamlessly tiled. Also, filters can automatically generate diffuse, specular, bump, and normal maps, which makes Filter Forge an essential tool for artists creating 3D models and environments, architectural visualization and high-end game content. All filters are built in the filter editor – a visual node-based environment allowing users to connect

familiar operations, such as blurs, gradients, color adjustments, distortions, or blending, into a network to combine their effects.

I love the fact that you can create brushed steel or diamond plate and make seamless tiles so that you can use them in Flexi to fill any vector or text! This is a must for your shop. The price may seem a bit steep, but well worth it.

Get it here: <http://tinyurl.com/gmh-filterforge>

TOOL #21 [WWW.SIGNELEMENTS.COM](http://www.signelements.com)

Okay, we all need a really good resource of images and templates and there is none better than <https://www.signelements.com>! Here is just a sampling of what is available. I have NEVER found a better site for design elements or should I say SIGN ELEMENTS! LOL!



5,476,317 Graphics for Sign Makers

The largest collection of sign industry images & vehicle templates in the world. Period.



Vehicle Templates



Super Hi-Res Photos



Vinyl-Ready



Vector Illustrations



Professional Fonts



Wrap Artwork



Vehicle Templates

- Premium quality 1:20th scale templates with 5 highly accurate views.
- Updated each month with the very latest vans, trucks and cars.
- CDR and AI format for importing into almost any vector program.
- Number online: **20,164** [BROWSE ALL](#)

↓ Free testers



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- Millions of professional photos and backgrounds covering literally every subject!
- Every image is super high resolution, ready for large format printing.
- 100% royalty-free and fully released for commercial use.
- Number online: **3,974,792** [BROWSE ALL](#)

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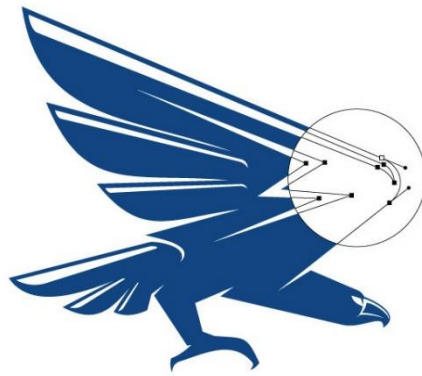
Vector Illustrations



Professional Fonts



Wrap Artwork



Vinyl-Ready

- Ready-to-cut artwork files for vinyl.
- EPS vector format for compatibility and editability across all software.
- No intersecting lines and minimal anchor points for clean results.
- Number online: **24,951** [BROWSE ALL](#)

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Vector Illustrations



Professional Fonts



Wrap Artwork



Vector Illustrations

- Can be scaled to ANY size with zero loss of quality.
- EPS vector format for compatibility and editability across all software.
- Thousands of backgrounds, templates, logos and textures
- Number online: **1,092,577** [BROWSE ALL](#)

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Vehicle Templates



Super Hi-Res Photos



Vinyl-Ready



Vector Illustrations



Professional Fonts



Wrap Artwork

Retro
URBAN
SKETCHY
 plus tons more
 styles!

Professional Fonts

- Premium display fonts for high impact, creative signage.
- A huge range of traditional, hand-painted and modern styles.
- OpenType & TrueType format.
- Number online: **1,582** [BROWSE ALL](#)

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Vehicle Templates



Super Hi-Res Photos



Vinyl-Ready



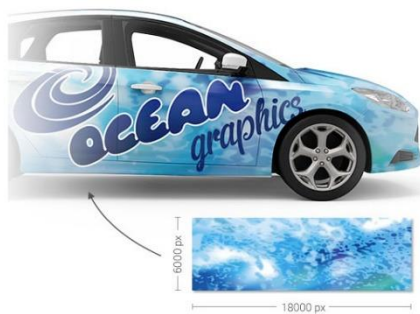
Vector Illustrations



Professional Fonts



Wrap Artwork



Wrap Artwork

- Ultra high resolution files for unrivalled quality and detail (220"x72"@100 dpi).
- Full side wraps, seamless textures and print & cut graphics.
- Save some serious time with files that are literally ready to print.
- Number online: **2,461** [BROWSE ALL](#)

↓ Free testers



TOOL #22 WWW.LEARNFLEXI.COM

Okay, okay I had to at least do a shout out to my own website! If you own FlexiSIGN, this is the location of great learning tools, blogs and the location of FlexiLIVE Seminars. You'll want to check it out periodically for new articles, helpful tools and tips on Flexi as well as videos and more.

Of course, I want you to plan on attending a FlexiLIVE seminar or one of our new Color Management Secrets – Color Printing seminars as well.

It's been a pleasure as all ways.

www.learnflexi.com

