

I'm Walter Gajewski. Welcome to episode four, "Using the free Picasa software to manage your digital photos."

Serious digital photographers have any number of fancy, expensive and complicated software packages available to help them download, adjust, organize and distribute their photographs. It's possible, however, to avoid the expense of Adobe Photoshop, Photoshop Elements, or Adobe Lightroom and still have an effective tool to add enjoyment to your daily family photography.

Macintosh computers come with the Apple iPhoto software pre-installed. iPhoto has gained a much deserved reputation as a powerful yet fun to use digital photo tool.

In the PC camp, however, the field is crowded with a lot of different free software packages all claiming to be the PC equivalent of iPhoto. You may already have one or more of these on your computer. PC companies like Dell and HP install their photo organizers on every new computer they sell. Microsoft also provides photo software and many digital cameras include a disc of software you can install.

My recommendation today is to ignore all of these in favor of the free software called Picasa. Picasa is available as a free download from Google and only runs on a PC. Apple users already have iPhoto anyway.

To get your copy of Picasa, go to their website. There is no WWW in the address. It is simply [picasa.google.com](http://picasa.google.com)  
Picasa is spelled p i c a s a.

Once you're at the Picasa site, click on the "Try Picasa Now" button to save the software to your hard drive. Once it's fully downloaded, you can double click on the file called `picasaweb-current-setup.exe`.

This will lead you through the simple installation procedure.

The first thing Picasa will want to do, after it's installed, is look through your entire computer and any connected hard drives to find and catalog all your digital photos. In fact, unless you instruct it otherwise, Picasa will always want to go through this procedure. To avoid this, use Picasa's folder manager. Go to the top menu and select Tools, folder manager.

When the folder manager opens, it will allow you to select which computer file folders Picasa will always check, looking for new pictures. Typically, this would be the "My Pictures" sub-folder in the "My Documents" folder on your PC. You can also designate which folders you want scanned once, to find long lost photos scattered all over your hard drive.

After you close the folder manager dialog box, you can go to the top menu again and select Tools, Options. This will let you decide where new photos go when you download them off your camera. Once again, this would typically be the My Pictures folder.

Once Picasa is installed on your PC, you can connect a digital camera or flash card reader to the computer and a menu will pop up, asking if you want to launch the Picasa software. If you say yes, Picasa will move the photo files into the computer, asking you to name a new folder. It will then add that folder to the list of previous photo folders and display all of them in chronological order.

Picasa offers a wide variety of navigational aides that help you find pictures based on name, date, keywords, quality ranks, etc. There is even a provision for adding latitude and longitude information related to the location of the subject in the photo. To see how this works, go to the website [picasa.google.com/support](http://picasa.google.com/support). Click on "New Features for Picasa" and then click "How do I Geotag Photos."

Organizing your pictures is only a small part of what Picasa offers. You can select any picture in your library and make adjustments that will improve the esthetics of your work. Clicking on "I'm feeling lucky" is the first thing I try. This usually makes amazing improvements to the shot. If it doesn't, click on "Undo I'm feeling lucky."

Simple to use tools will allow you to remove red eye from your family portraits, crop, lighten, darken, and change contrast. You can even get fancy and deepen the blue in the sky with a graduated blue tint or emulate old fashioned photography by adding a sepia tone.

You can play to your heart's content because Picasa always preserves your original file, allowing you to save the adjusted photo under a new file name.

From within Picasa you can send your photos to your own printer or to commercial photo printing companies. In addition, you can create slide

shows and web photo galleries. Picasa will even host the web galleries for you, making it easy for friends and family to see your handy work.

And, if you're interested in sending photos out by email, Picasa can will launch your email software and attach the photo files automatically.

There's a lot to like about Picasa and a lot to learn. Fortunately the help menu is well thought out and you can always go to the support site I mentioned earlier, [picasa.google.com/support](http://picasa.google.com/support).

That's all for today. I'm Walter Gajewski, thanks for listening.