What is the purpose of Picnik?

Picnik is a user-friendly photo editing site which is offered free of charge. Picnik explains, “By offering an ad-supported (free) version of Picnik, we can make richer, deeper, and ultimately better photo-editing functionally available to people around the world.” Picnik’s purpose is to “Bring photo editing awesomeness to everyone.” Many photo editing sites and programs are known to leave people frustrated by simply being too complicated. Picnik has created their site to allow even the most computer illiterate person to become a “photo editing superstar.”

For those who want the full experience of Picnik, there is the Picnik Premium which includes “more features, more content, more awesomeness” for a small fee of $2.08 per month.

A survey conducted by Picnik found that 80% of users are female. Of those 80%, half of the users are under the age of 20. Picnik is continually thinking of ideas to broaden its user base and appeal to more individuals (Picnik, personal communication, April 10, 2009).
I. HISTORY

I.1 Development of Picnik

The title of this application is Picnik. In 2005, Darrin Massena and Mike Harrington came up with an application idea for a photo editor that was fun and flash-based. Picnik began as a BETA, and then developed into the version we have today. In February of 2007, a very simple BETA with only an edit tab was released to the public. Approximately 8-10 months later, it came out of BETA and it has been growing ever since (Picnik, personal communication, April 10, 2009). According to comScore, Picnik now ranks 14th on the list of largest sites for photos. Jonathon Sposato, CEO of Picnik, said, "45 million photos were uploaded in January (2009) alone." In addition to the co-founders and CEO, roughly 15 computer engineers, computer graphic designers, business majors, and other computer and community representatives make up Picnik. Most of the developers have a background in either business or computer technology. Picnik is overseen by a larger company called Bitnik.

Google Acquires Picnik

On March 1, 2010, Picnik reported on their blog that they had been acquired by Google. This allows for Picnik to process a much greater amount of data much faster. Picnik stated that while nothing will be changing immediately, their users can expect great changes in the upcoming months.

On February 11, 2011, one of these changes that has already come into effect since Picnik was acquired is the addition of their "Get Married in Style" tools. This tool allows wedding photographs to be put into specially designed collage templates. This partnership with Google also allows the couple to be married to create wedding invitations using Picnik.
I.2 How Does Picnik Work?

What does one have to do to start using it?

Want to Picnik? It is fun and easy to start using! All you will need to access this application is a computer, Internet service, Adobe Flash 9, and a creative mind. Picnik even offers a quick tour of their various editing tools such as auto-fix, red-eye and etc. to get beginners started. Picnik makes it simple for anyone to use from graphic professionals to a student that has never edited a picture before!

Still having trouble understanding how to use Picnik? Google provides a step-by-step tutorial on how to become a “Picnik Master.” Just visit the following site (Picnik Master) and it will expand your skills “from a seed to big shady tree.” It will teach you how to go from just fine-tuning your pictures to using the curving tool to fix the contrast and tone of your pictures.

Also, for those who are concerned about your pictures or information being shared on the web, Picnik provides a Privacy Policy that states, “We require opt-in consent for the sharing of any sensitive personal information.” So you can be assured that Picnik will not make anything public without your permission.

As you start getting comfortable using Picnik, you’ll begin to notice an interesting characteristic about Picnik is that it features seasonal trends. For example, during the month of October, they might include featured editing tools, fonts, borders and etc. to go along with the scary theme of Halloween or maybe during winter, they might provide snow-like edits to go along with the wintery feel. Furthermore, they don’t only make these edits available in the corresponding months but it is always available under the “seasonal” tab!
Picnik is very convenient because it allows the user to save and share their finished products in countless ways. The most conventional way is saving it to computer but Picnik also allows the editor to upload to other picture sites and one the largest social networks, Facebook. In addition, for those trying to share photos with specific people, for example a family member trying to send a photo to relatives, there is the email option. Lastly, for the people who want to immediately frame the photo or hang it up, there is the print option. With these numerous options, Picnik makes it quick and easy for the user to find the most appropriate method for their situation.

I.3 Getting More Out of the Application

Although it is not required to upgrade to the Premium offer, for a small price, it expands the amount of editing, viewing, history and etc. a person can do. If one decides that this is an appealing purchase, it only costs a monthly payment of $2.08 (US Dollars). This Premium version offers all of the great tools that the regular version has while unlocking more features such as creating advanced collages and allowing you to use more advanced editing tools like Levels and Curves. Below is a list of all the advantages to upgrading to Picnik Premium.

- More effects
- Beauty tools
- More fonts, collages, and stickers
- Advanced editing tools
- Unlimited history and connections
- Priority feedback
- Ad-free and fullscreen
- Layering and more!

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In addition to advanced tools, you also gain access to Priority Help Support, previews to new content, and professional FontShop fonts. As shown below, Picnik Premium also removes the advertisement bar from the main screen, making a less distracting photo-editing environment.

Although only Premium users receive access to the Priority Help Support, basic users also receive benefits of their Picnik Help Center that answers questions ranging from fixing a small problem such as trouble uploading photos to more specific questions about individual accounts such as billing. Moreover, Picnik provides a forum for users to interact with other users by answering each other’s questions.

Another great characteristic of this particular picture-editing tool is that it allows for more than just picture editing. With Picnik, you are able to make a collage, fancy collage, slideshows, and keepsakes. The various ways you can utilize Picnik really makes it a advantageous tool. Particularly, the keepsake feature is unique, allowing you to make hard copies of memories through mugs, books, calendars, cards, postcards, wrapping paper and even more! This should be feature any user would want to take advantage of.

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II. How is Picnik Related to Other Applications?

II.1 Comparison to Competitors

Within the Web 2.0 Technology Flickr, you can use most of the same tools as Picnik. This is the result of a partnership between the two companies that was formed in December 2007. This partnership allows you to edit your photos on Flickr using Picnik. You can use either the basic version of Picnik or Picnik Premium. Depending on what version of Flickr you use (i.e. Flickr or Flickr Pro), you can use Picnik in limited or expanded situations. Such situations include the basic ability to save pictures, or the advanced ability to return to previous versions of the picture.

Flickr decided to enter this partnership instead of attempting to create their own photo editing tool because “As soon as we saw it, we knew that there was huge potential for us to join together. Rather than Flickr diverting from our specialty to enter a realm we had no (particular) expertise in, the thought of a partnership seemed much more sensible”.

Like other Web 2.0 photo editing applications such as FotoFlexer, Fauxto and Adobe’s Photoshop express, Picnik offers the ability to upload photos through Facebook, Flickr, Picasa Web Albums, MySpace, Webs, Webshots, and Photobucket. This gives users easier access to pictures that may not be stored on the users computer.

Most photo editing sites also give you the option to share photos on the very same site. Picnik differs by only giving you the option to edit. Other applications such as Facebook, Myspace, and even other photo editing sites are used to display the newly “Picnik” edited pictures.
On Tuesday of October 9th 2007, PhotoWorks added the editing tools and capabilities of Picnik to their website for personal photo publishing. Picnik editing tools can be used without even leaving the PhotoWorks site. Picnik uses your PhotoWorks account to store your photos, so there's no need to register with Picnik separately. Both sides are satisfied with this partnership and feel that it will make photo editing and publishing simpler and more accessible for PhotoWorks users and potential users.\(^{13}\)

Unlike many other photo editing sites, Picnik provides a blog that is run right on their site so that it is easy for users to interact with one another and keep each other up-to-date about the newest editing tool, or benefits of Picnik. You don’t even need an account! All you need is a name and email and your comment will be posted.\(^{36}\)

Picnik even has its own Facebook and Twitter page, two of the most commonly used social networks, to allow users to stay up-to-date with daily updates and promotions.\(^{30} 31\)

Picnik has received massive attention from the media ranging across magazines to news channels. This application has received numerous awards and has been recognized for its outstanding quality. It is amazing to see how such a simple application has received so much recognition from various types of groups such as teens to adults and students to businessmen. Click below to see view the list of awards, media recognition and etc.\(^{38}\)

Picnik Press

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**II.2 Unique Ways to Use Picnik**

The 'Create' tools offered by Picnik are very unique. "Stickers" of beards and mustaches can be placed on faces in pictures. Text can be put onto pictures with many different types of fonts. These tools are quite fun to use. One very unique and user friendly tool provided is the "effects" tool. The effects range from a simple black and white tool to a pencil sketch effect which turns a picture into what looks like hand drawn art. It is a way to change photos that many would never think of.\(^{5}\)

![Picnik Effects Tools](image)

Picnik also offers the ability to create your very own cards. There are many different types of cards that can be created varying from holiday cards to seasonal cards. There is a collage section were one can decide to make a quick and simple collage, or make what Picnik refers to as a "fancy" collage. Other applications provided include birth announcements and scrapbooking sheets. There are many other types of handy uses that a person could use after exploring the website some more.\(^{14}\) Laura Jean Karr, a Picnik member, has found ways to use the editing tools provided to create business cards, make logos, and even use the program as a graphics editor. Articles of how to do any of these can be found on her site.\(^{15}\)

It is also possible to make clip art with the edited photos. This could be a good alternative to the clip art provided by Microsoft Office programs, which generally only offer a limited selection of images. The procedure for this method is described on this website. It tells you step by step how to do it with pictures.\(^{16}\)

Many YouTube users have found unique ways of editing pictures. This link will bring you to the page that shows you which ones Picnik likes: [http://www.youtube.com/PicnikPhotoEditor](http://www.youtube.com/PicnikPhotoEditor)

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III. Real World Application

III.1 Education Lesson Plans

Incorporating the use of Picnik’s website and editing capabilities into the classroom can be easily done. For elementary teachers, it is very useful in creating holiday decorations. Students could use the program to create their own picture book. This would be great to leave out for parents to look at during an open house. English students, when writing a short story or reflection papers, can add creative pictures to the story. Older children can use Picnik to edit pictures throughout the school year for the yearbook or school website. High school art classes could also widely benefit from Picnik, especially those on limited funding to buy computer photo editing tools for the classroom. All teachers can benefit from Picnik’s editing features. The screenshots used in this page were prepared using Picnik’s sticker and text capabilities. This provides a great tool for helping students visualize a process and see where things are located on a webpage.

An example of how to incorporate Picnik into a lesson can be found here: http://www.uni.edu/coe/ci/240-020/documents/labpdfs/Digital_Imaging.pdf
Dear mommy and daddy,

Today in class I made you a postcard. I used a picture from our last vacation of the Rocky Mountains. I hope you like it.

Love,

Lizzy

P.S.
Can we have spaghetti tonight? Please, please?
iii. Post Secondary

IV. Business/Industry
IV. Demonstration of Educational Value

Eric Ulken, a journalism teacher, posted on the website http://mindymcadams.com/tojou/2008/journalists-html-and-dreamweaver/ how he used Picnik to teach his online class. The online aspect of journalism benefits from Picnik because you can make similar changes to those you would do manually prior to publishing online in the same place as your publication. A video tutorial can be found at this site http://www.vimeo.com/430033 showing how to use Picnik on a Smart Board, a virtual touch-screen white board used in many classrooms today. This gives teachers the potential to more easily navigate the site for their classroom, and show an entire class the same demonstration at one time. An educator posting on a web page called Open Source described their use of Picnik with sixth grade students by having them upload images and drawings into the program and edit them to make such items as CD covers. This demonstrates a real life example of the integration of Picnik into a learning environment.

Moving outside the realm of education in schools and more into the educating people in the professional world, Harvey McKinnon Associates ("a consultancy specializing in fundraising, relationship building, and direct response for the nonprofit community" - http://www.harveymckinnon.com) seeks to promote Picnik as an application that can be used as a cheaper alternative to expensive photo editing applications such as Photoshop. They bring up the point that non-profit organizations have a tight budget as is, so using the features of Picnik to design a webpage or brochures is something that is important for people to know about.

V. How is Picnik Used Internationally?

How is the application used in other countries? Are there unique features of the application that may be more relevant to those outside of the United States?

As in the United States, Picnik is an emerging application in Australia. It's used in editing photos for facebook, home, and office. The availability of the program does not differ, and is used for the same purposes Americans use Picnik. That would be for editing photos for social networking sites such as facebook.

When it comes to school use, Picnik is normally not the application of choice. Adobe Photoshp is most likely to be found in schools in Australia, which is common in the U.S. as well (Jasmine Taylor, Kirrin Timbs, and Melissa Turner, personal communication, March 25, 2009).

If people who use Picnik in other countries want to use Picnik in their native language, there is a language bar at the top of the page where you can change these settings. This makes Picnik more accessible to more people (Picnik Team, personal communication, April 10, 2009).
Below are some examples of what Picnik looks like in different languages.
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