

# Top Software for Image Creation & Photo Editing

Discover the best photo editing and image creation software for Windows, Mac, iPhone and Android.



(Image credit: Emily Bernal, Unsplash)

---

It's difficult to know what tools you need when looking at creating images. Whether it's drawing and painting on a digital pad, or cropping out a picture and removing a background, there's a piece of software to make everything easier.

It's important to consider the pros and cons of different programmes, as some apps will certainly be better at some things than others. In 2021 there are so many options for editing pictures and creating new art, that it can become overwhelming to look at your options and know where to start.

To help in this effort this document outlines the top picks for your software needs, whatever you may be doing:

---

## Image Editing / Graphic Design

These are our top picks for the best programs that primarily focus on image editing / graphic design.

(Please note the listing order does not reflect any ranking system.)

# 1. Affinity Photo



(Image credit: Affinity Photo)

## Pros & Cons:

- + Professional full feature Programme
- + Does not require a very powerful computer
- Android is not supported. iPad software sold separately
- Has a large learning curve, advanced features

**Price:** £23.99 (Single Purchase)

**Free Trial:** yes

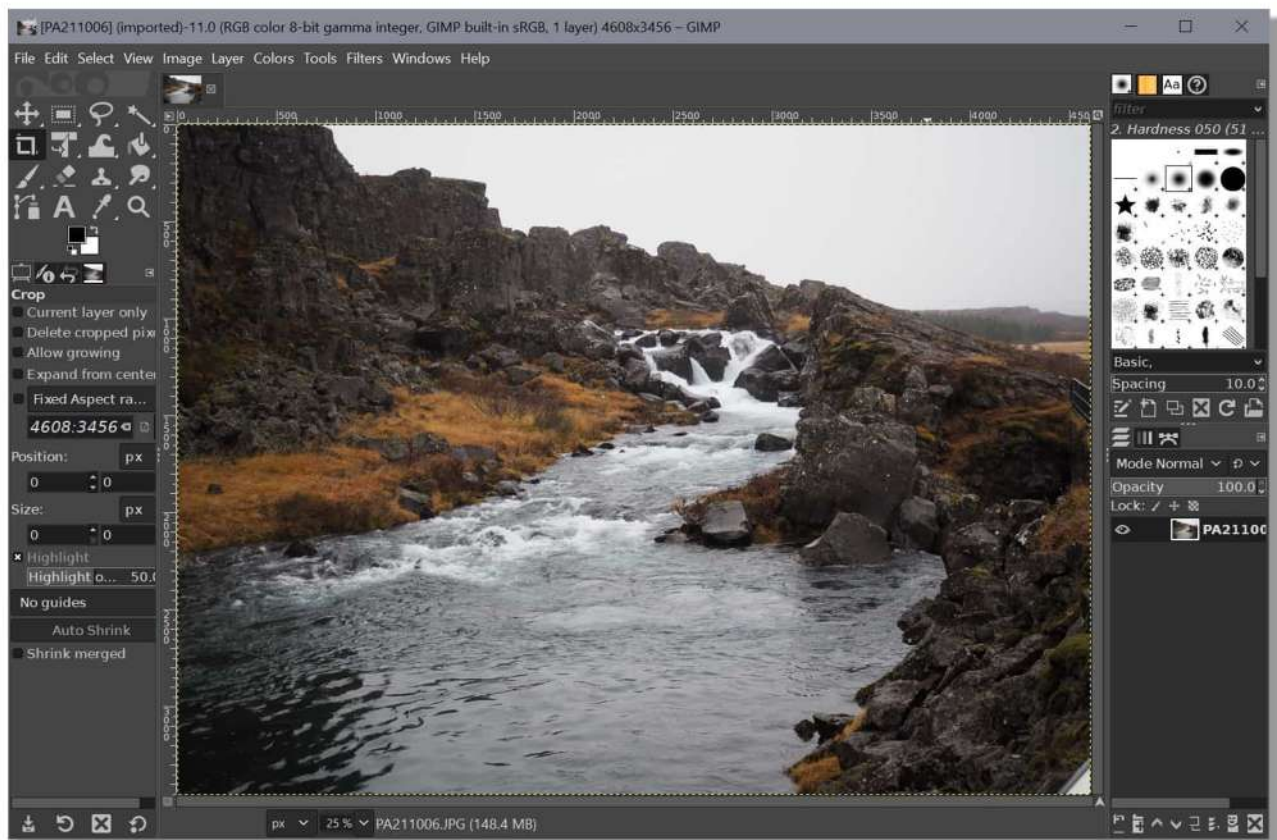
**Free Version:** No

**OS:** Mac, Windows, and iPad

Affinity photo is a serious contender to more popular software like photoshop in the digital designing space. It is considered largely to be a better option due to its price, although recently photoshop has come down in cost, making it a tougher decision. Both Photoshop and Affinity Photo have a learning curve and the same set of tools.

The computer requirements for Affinity Photo are much less demanding than that of Photoshop. They offer a more stable platform, with fewer crashes and higher speeds overall. The programme is designed specifically with quad-core processors in mind though, so performance might suffer in lower-end computers.

## 2. GIMP



(Image credit: GIMP)

### Pros & Cons:

- + Open source
- + Good file compatibility
- Requires a somewhat powerful device
- Has a large learning curve, advanced features

**Price:** Free

**Free Trial:** No

**Free Version:** Yes

**OS:** Mac, Windows, Linux

This software offers a large amount of features, with its greatest benefit being that it is completely free to download and use. The tools available to the user include all of those that you might find in a programme like photoshop, even coming with a version which has its user interface organised like Adobe's for the photoshop feel.

The platform has been developed with compatibility in mind, allowing for the use of most popular file formats. The panels, tools and interface have a unique style to them. So while all of the tools you might expect to find are available, it will take some time to understand how particular features operate. This option is great for those who want a cost-free solution for image editing and creation, and don't mind taking a little bit of time to learn how to use the full suite of tools features.



### 3. Adobe Photoshop



(Image credit: Photoshop)

#### Pros & Cons:

- + Smart AI Tools for ease of use
- + Colour correction without crushing image
- + Supports Raw files
- Has a large learning curve, advanced features

**Price:** £9.97 (Billed monthly)

**Free Trial:** Yes

**Free Version:** Yes (Photoshop express)

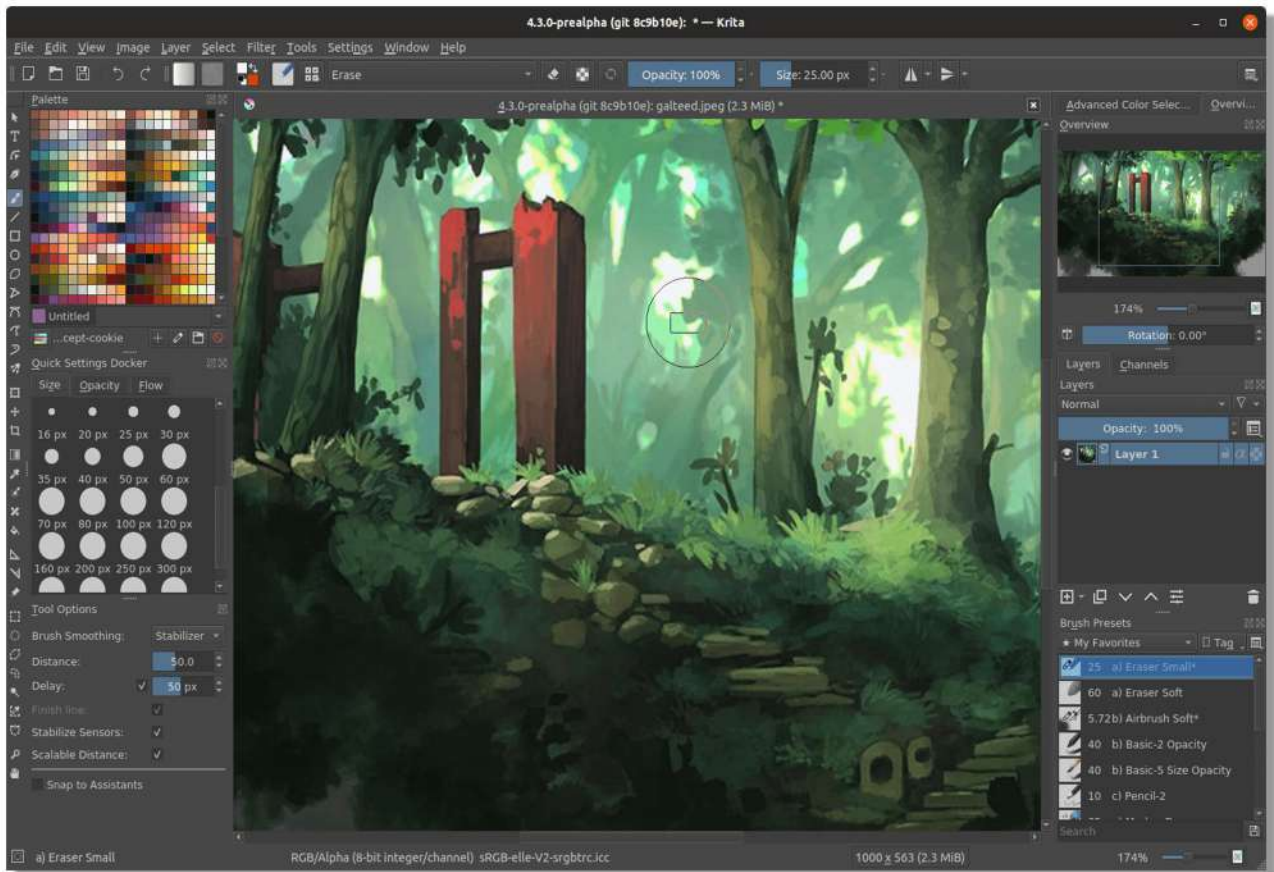
**OS:** Mac, Windows, and iPad

Adobe has been a major player in the editing software space since its first inception in 1990. If you can get over the steeper price point compared to similar editing softwares on this list then it can be a great asset to your arsenal.

Adobe's advanced AI editing tools definitely puts it a cut above the rest on the list making cropping, selection and image correcting a breeze with just a little know-how.

One major drawback of Photoshop is its somewhat steep learning curve. While the basics can get you some amazing results, its more advanced tools can be very confusing and intimidating to new users. If you have used other editing softwares in the past you may find it easier to grasp Photoshop's more advanced tools as a lot of other developers have drawn inspiration from the iconic power house. Adobe also has a habit of releasing untested beta updates that can cause all kinds of unknown errors due to it not being fully tested before being released to the public.

## 4. Krita



(Image credit: Krita)

### Pros & Cons:

- + Completely Free
- + Supports PSD
- + Graphics tablet support
- Primarily a painting program (limited photo editing options)

**Price:** Free

**Free Trial:** No

**Free Version:** Yes

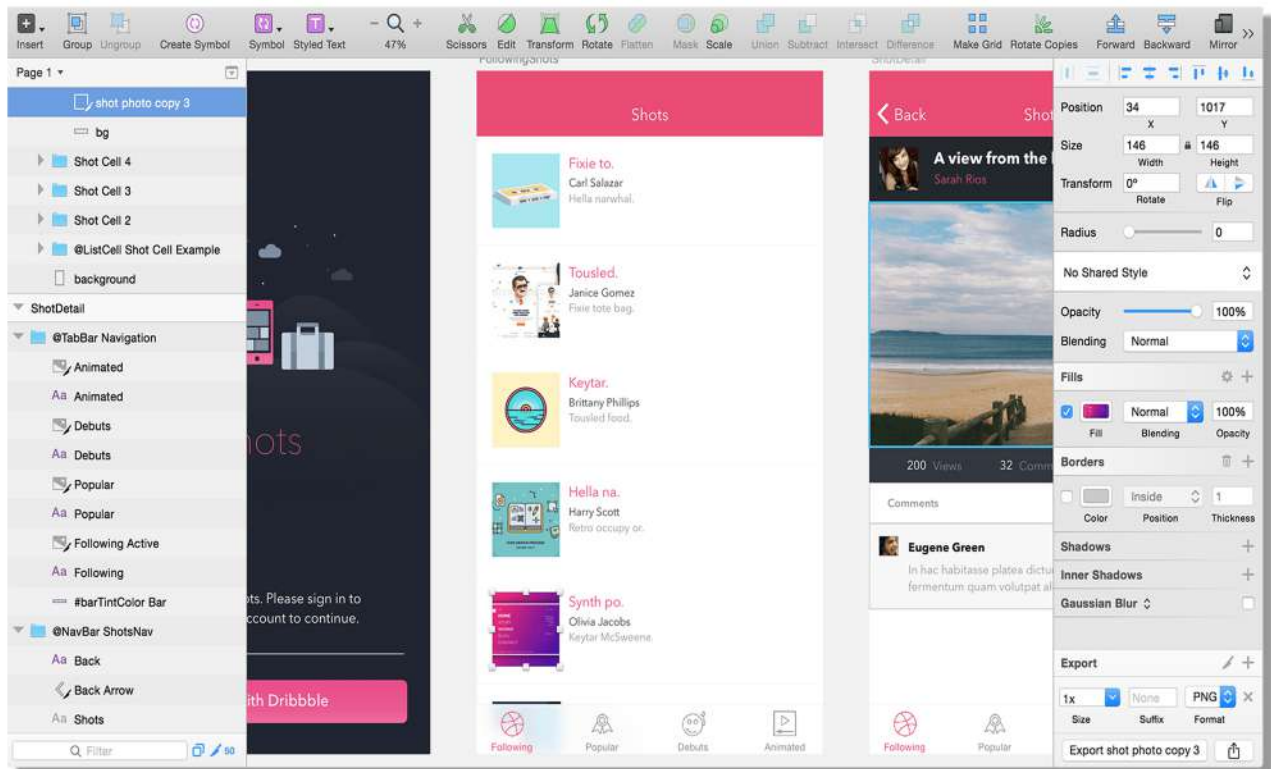
**OS:** Windows ( 8.1 or Later, OS X 10.12 or later & Linux)

Krita is a primarily drawing and animation focused programme but it still offers all of the basic selection and design tools not too dissimilar from other editing softwares. Krita requires double the memory required compared to its other more drawing focus competitors meaning that if you don't have a more modern system you could experience some dips in performance while using the program.

It is a completely free program with an option to donate to it's developers to further support its development. Donating doesn't change the program in any way; it is merely a way to support the creators of it if so inclined.

Krita also offers paid versions on the Steam Store, Epic Store and Windows Store starting from £6.99 if you'd like to keep the program compiled in your selected library of choice.

# 5. Sketch



(Image credit: Sketch)

## Pros & Cons:

- + Professional Tool
- + Clear UI design
- + Good for graphic work
- No Raster editing

**Price:** £6.49 (Billed Monthly)

**Free Trial:** Yes

**Free Version:** No

**OS:** Mac

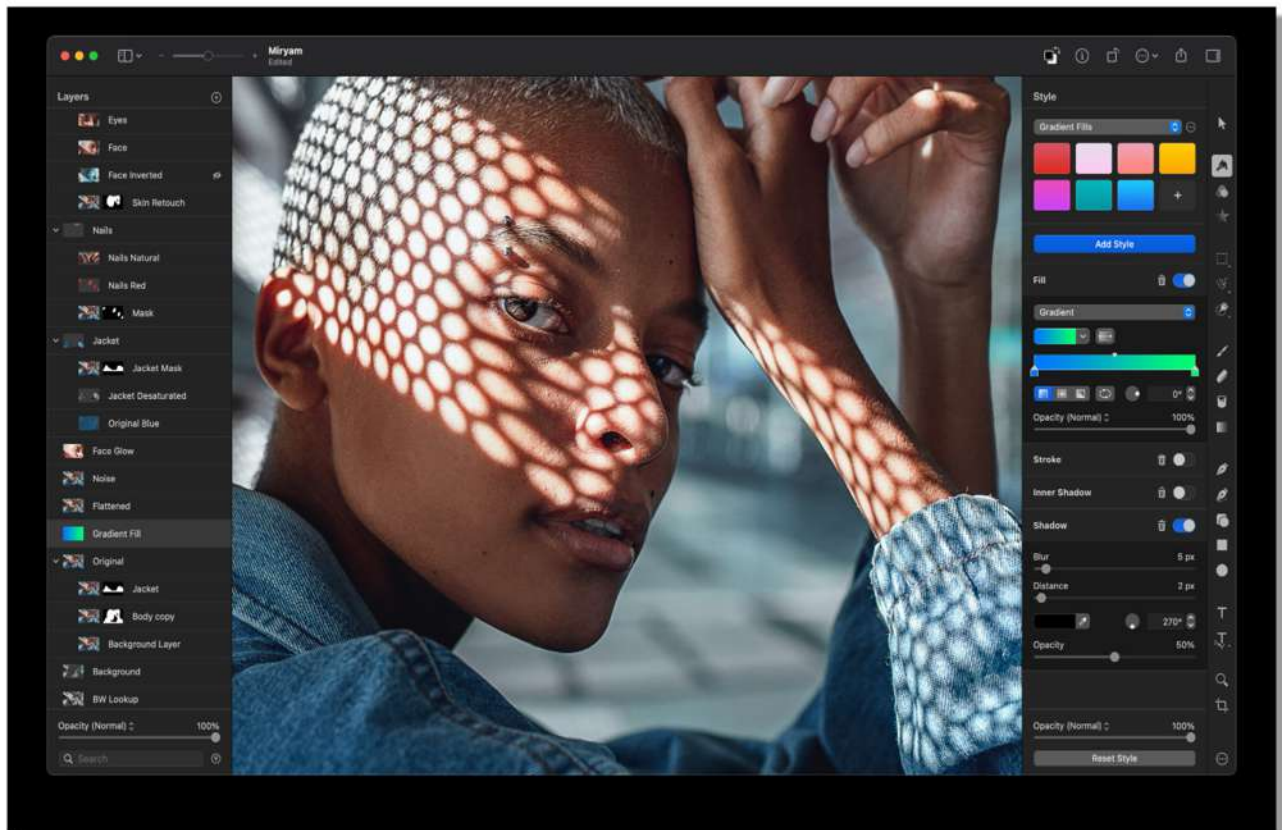
Sketch is a professional graphic design app, it's perfectly built for designers and is well known amongst the graphic design community. You are able to share and let others test your projects.

You can make designs using shapes or make your own shapes, or if you prefer, a pencil tool. The app can also use community made Sketch Plugins, giving it another way to be more functional. It can handle both small, and complex projects very easily. There are also lots of tutorials and resources online to help you with the programme, including learning how the software can be used for website design.

Some negatives about the app is that you are restricted on the free trial and don't have access to all of the features. Collaborations can be laggy and harder to share, unlike in some alternative apps. Sketch is only supported on Mac, so while it does offer team project capability, you are limited to one platform. There is also an issue with some newer updates becoming incompatible with older files, so file management is more of an issue with Sketch. Overall though, a good app for graphic design and easy to use.



## 6. Pixelmator Pro



(Image credit: Pixelmator Pro)

### Pros & Cons:

- + Simple to use
- + Good tools for photo editing
- Limited features compared to others
- Not so good at graphic design

**Price:** £34.99 (Single Purchase)

**Free Trial:** Yes

**Free Version:** No

**OS:** Mac

Pixelmator is a cheaper alternative to Photoshop, it's been around for a while and offers the Pixelmator Pro as a more modern and updated version of the app. The primary use of the app is image editing. It's similar to the older version but with less issues and a more refined UI. It's a basic editor with very limited features but that also makes it very simple to use, it's better for quick, simple edits rather than bigger projects. It's very cheap price is what makes it a good option too, it has such a simple interface making it easier for beginners to pick up and learn.

One downside to the app is it is not capable of any graphic design, it also misses the mark when it comes to needing some of the more complex features and options for image editing. Overall it is a cheaper alternative to most apps with a single time purchase, although many free apps can do what this app can with more features too.

## 7. FireAlpaca



(Image credit: FireAlpaca)

### Pros & Cons:

- + Easily added brush tools
- + 3D Viewing options
- + Light performance
- limited editing tools

**Price:** Free (Paid Option available)

**Free Trial:** No

**Free Version:** Yes

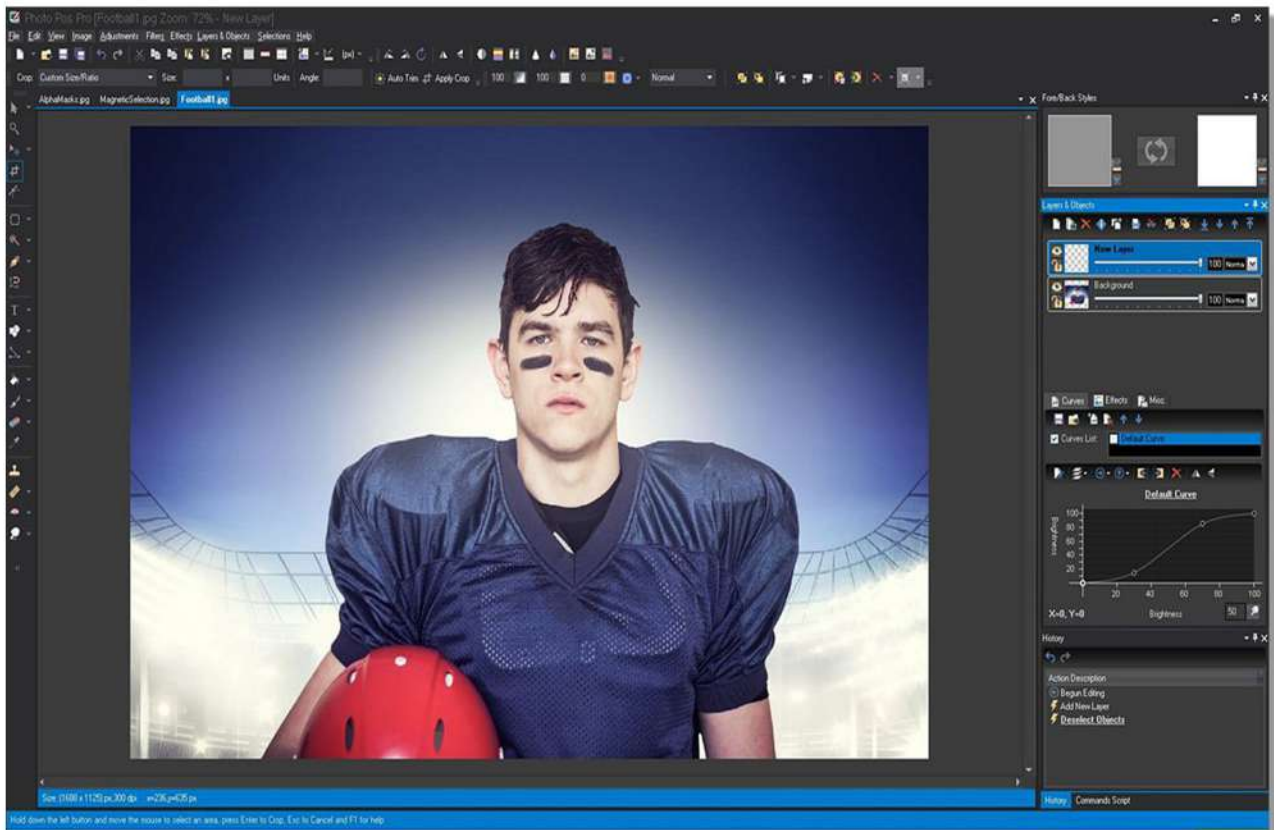
**OS:** OS X (10.7 or later) & Windows (Vista or later)

FireAlpaca is an amazingly simple and easy design program made for users of all skill levels. FireAlpaca offers "Light performance" allowing it to be utilized by a lot more devices than some of the more advanced options that may fall flat or even fail to work at all on older devices.

FireAlpaca also offers a paid for version available on the video game marketplace Steam for £29.99, unfortunately the Steam version is only available for Windows version 7 or above and does not support Mac at all. The paid for version promises to be advertisement free and even more memory efficient than it's free counterpart allowing you to multitask between multiple programs more fluidly.



# 8. Photo Pos Pro



(Image credit: Photo Pos Pro)

## Pros & Cons:

- + Customizable interface
- + Supports Raw and PSD files
- Limited filters
- Limited keyboard shortcuts

**Price:** Free (Paid Option available)

**Free Trial:** Yes

**Free Version:** Yes

**OS:** Windows (XP or later)

Photo Pos Pro is a feature rich editing software offering great tools for both design and editing. While it lacks the deep customization options that many of the other programs offer, it is still an excellent tool for making adjustments to pictures, graphic design work or personal enjoyment.

Photo Pos Pro offers a customisable interface in the form of their "Novice" and "Pro" options. The novice options offer a simplified layout only displaying the basic tools, making it a lot less intimidating for new users to learn, while the pro option gives the user full access to the wide range of tools provided.

Photo Pos Pro also offers a "Premium Licence" option for a one time purchase of £33.16 giving you access to latest updates introducing powerful new additions to an already wide selection of professional tools.

## 9. CoralDRAW Graphic Suite



(Image credit: CorelDRAW Graphics Suite)

### Pros & Cons:

- + Professional tool
- Expensive

**Price:** £299 (Annual)

**Free Trial:** Yes

**Free Version:** No

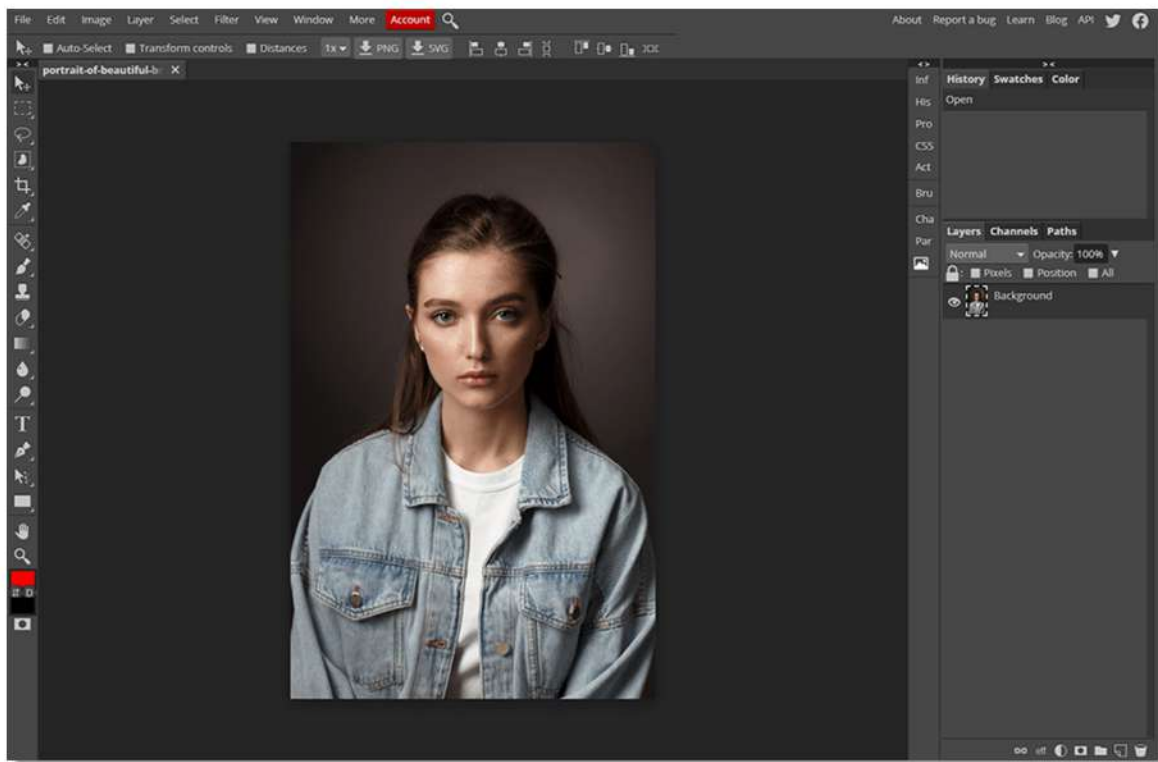
**OS:** Windows

CorelDRAW is one of the newer graphic design softwares, it was published in 2021, it's very expensive with a one-time purchase price of £599, or an annual subscription of £299.

It is an easy software to learn, especially if you have used other graphic design software before, it's easy to create high-resolution graphics and takes no time at all. The user interface is easy and not so intimidating. The programme also makes it easy to move graphics around and is good for custom designs to be put on merchandise.

Some of the negatives: When exporting to PNG sometimes it just doesn't work and takes a few tries. There is also a lack of longer and in-depth tutorials online. Unfortunately, it doesn't work well with Adobe products and the trace feature isn't the best and could use improvements. Overall, it is a good graphic design app with a few issues and a crazy price, it is newer so things can be fixed and new features could be added in the future.

# 10. Photopea



(Image credit: Photopea)

## Pros & Cons:

- + Cross-platform
- + Has a free version
- Ads with free version
- Lacks some advanced features

**Price:** £6.50 (Billed monthly)

**Free Trial:** No

**Free Version:** Yes

**OS:** Any Device (Web-based)

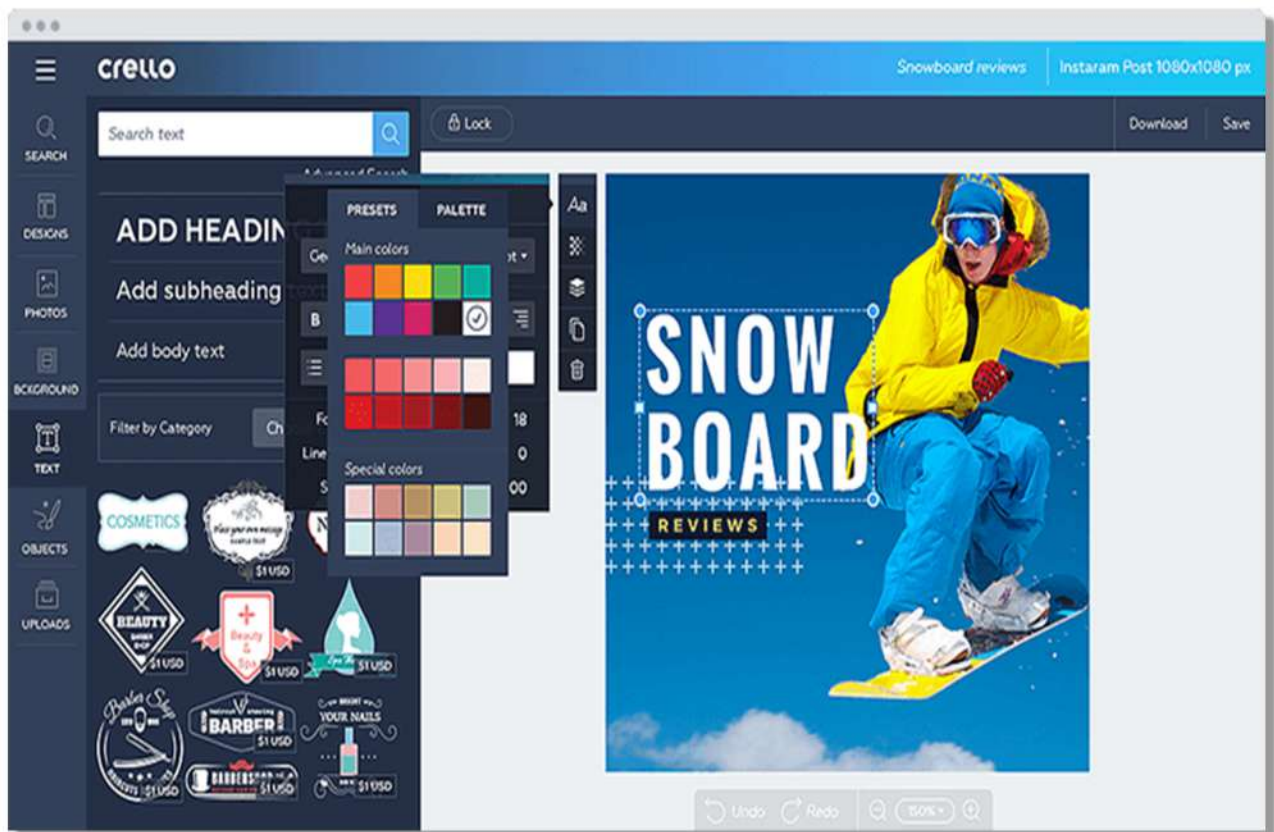
Photopea is a simple web based image editor, it's cross platform meaning you can switch to another device and still be able to use this software. Even though it's web based it's still pretty powerful and can handle a decent amount of editing.

Photopea is designed to be a more advanced editor with pro tools, very similar in design to photoshop so if you've used photoshop before this should be simple to get the hang of. Due to being a web browser it can be used on any device just by going to the website, and has a fast load up time. Workflow is unlikely to be interrupted with Photopea, as you only have to load up a webpage and it doesn't require signing up or logging in. It's also almost an exact clone of Photoshop and can edit Photoshop files.

It doesn't have every advanced feature that photoshop has but still has enough features to be a good editor. If you have the free version you will be getting a few ads in the way whereas the paid version has no ads. Overall if these things don't bother you or you want to pay the cheap subscription for no ads, Photopea is a great choice as an image editor.



# 11. Crello



(Image credit: Crello)

## Pros & Cons:

- + Easy editing features
- + Thousands of templates
- Limited free features

**Price:** Starting at £5.77 (Billed monthly)

**Free Trial:** Yes

**Free Version:** Yes

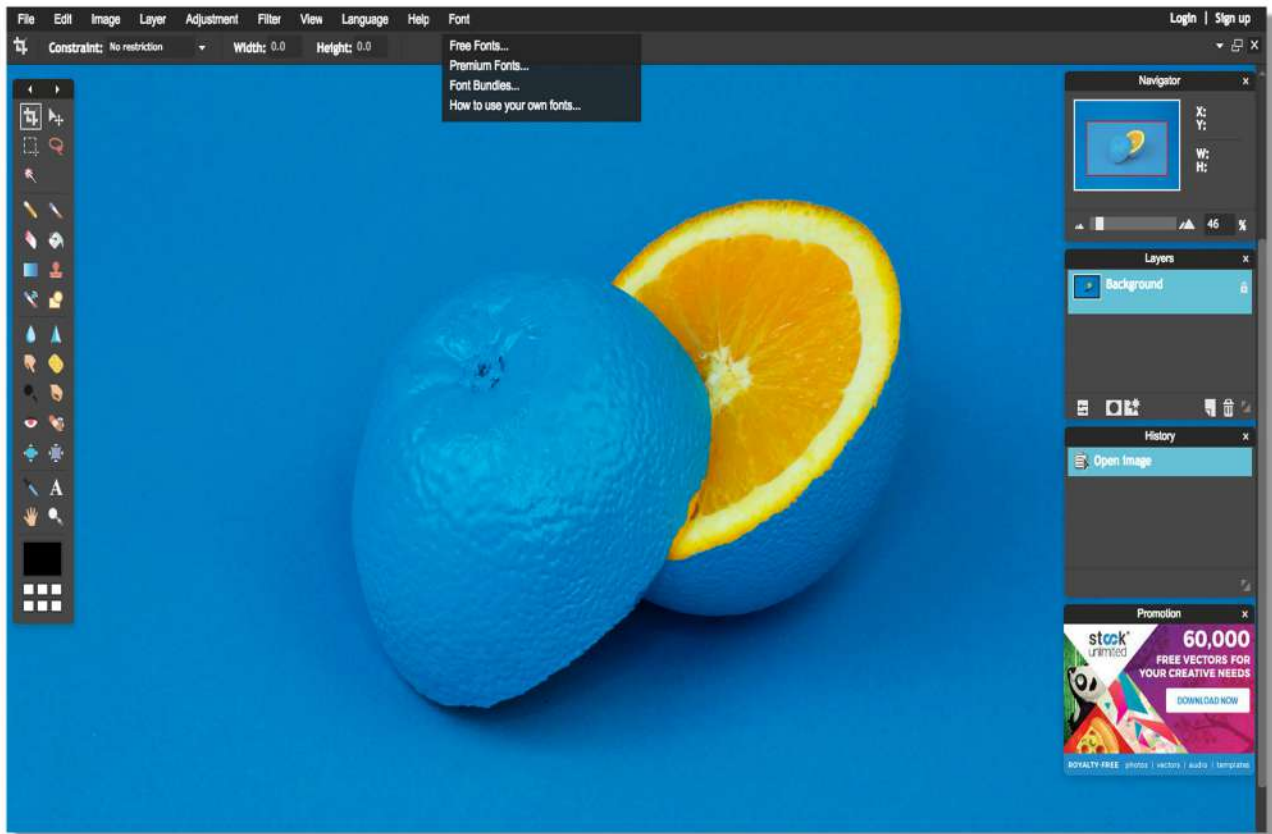
**OS:** Web based, iOS and Android

Crello is a web based editing service that allows you to easily edit photos, design digital media and animate. They offer app variants on both iOS and Android available from the Google Play Store and iTunes App Store respectively.

The main downsides of the "Free" version compared to the "Pro" version is the ability to easily remove the background of images and create branded content with easy to use brand kits. The pro version of the program also allows you to invite other members of your team to work on the same piece allowing changes to be made easily between team members.

Crello's main selling point is that its pre-made templates allow for the creation of articles or marketing material within minutes.

## 12. Pixlr



(Image credit: Pixlr)

### Pros & Cons:

- + Free to use
- + Simple to use
- Limited features
- Doesn't support raster graphics

**Price:** Free (Paid Option available)

**Free Trial:** No

**Free Version:** Yes

**OS:** Any (Web-based)

Pixlr is a free web based editing software, this is very similar to photoshop so might be familiar to some, making it easy to pick up and learn. The only main drawback is that it is more limited compared to some of the other editing softwares. With a host of basic features, you can do all of the things you'd want to do with a standard image editor. Because it's web based it makes it very easy to edit a quick post or picture remotely and away from home using iPads and other devices.

As with all free things it does have ads which can sometimes be in the way. Overall it's a good editing software for quick posts and images, and for more simple projects.

## 13. Procreate



(Image credit: Procreate)

### Pros & Cons:

- + Very popular, lots of available resources online
- + Great support for iPad, apple pencil compatibility
- Only iPad and iPhone Compatible
- Lacks some professional features

**Price:** £10 (Single Purchase)

**Free Trial:** No

**Free Version:** No

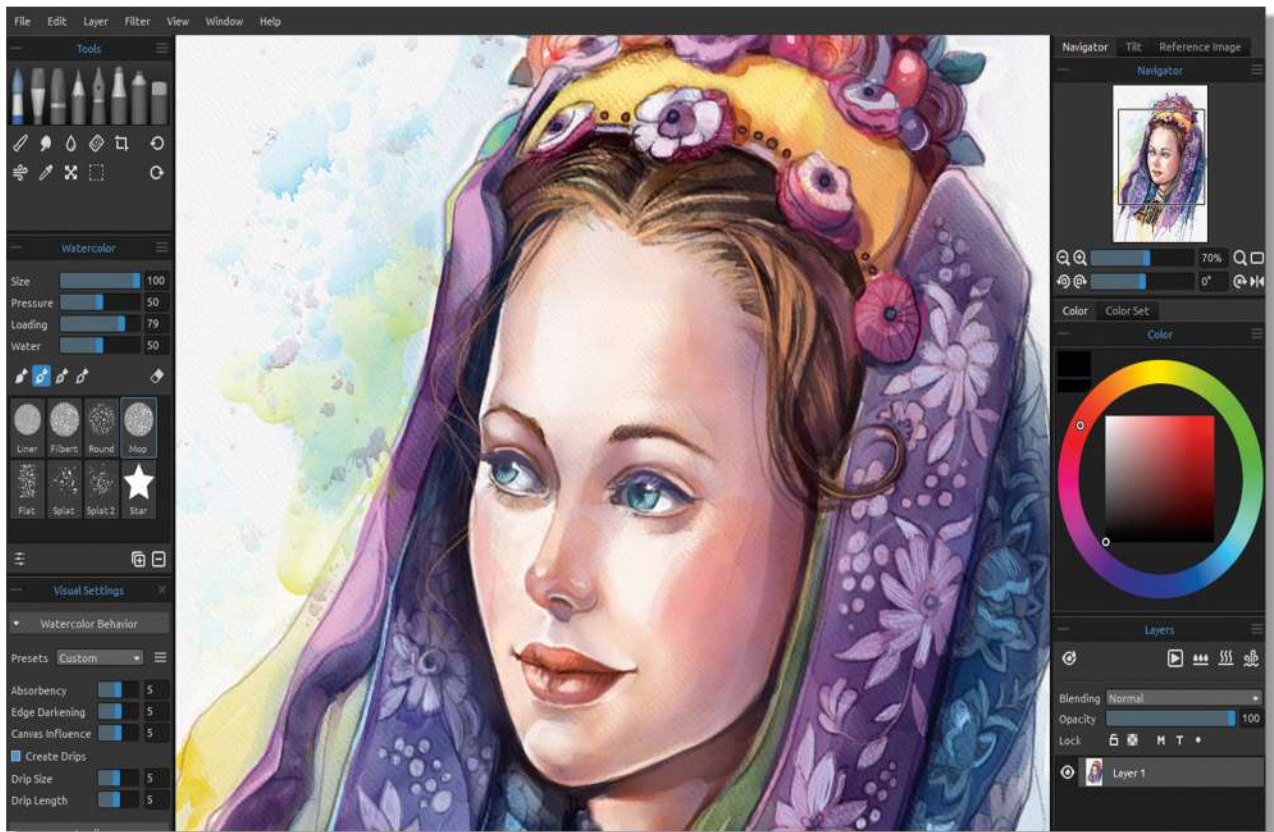
**OS:** iOS

Procreate is a highly professional top pick for painting and art creation. Being an Apple design award winner in 2013, the software is very popular and has lots of tutorials, tips and resources created online. Their focus on art creation is the main appeal of this software, as it comes with great compatibility for the iPad and apple pencil. This is used for digital art creation by drawing directly onto the iPad, just like many other graphic tablets which facilitate drawing in this way.

While Procreate is a great choice for drawing, some features are lacking when it comes to art manipulation. The relatively simple and easy to use software does what it does well, featuring the main tools that you might need. If you're on a budget and want an easy app to jumpThe software runs very well and is fast and is great value for £10.



# 14. Rebelle 4



(Image credit: Rebelle)

## Pros & Cons:

- + Mimics real paint brush
- + Tilt option for running paints
- + Popular, with online resources
- Slight learning curve

**Price:** £90 (Single Purchase)

**Free Trial:** No

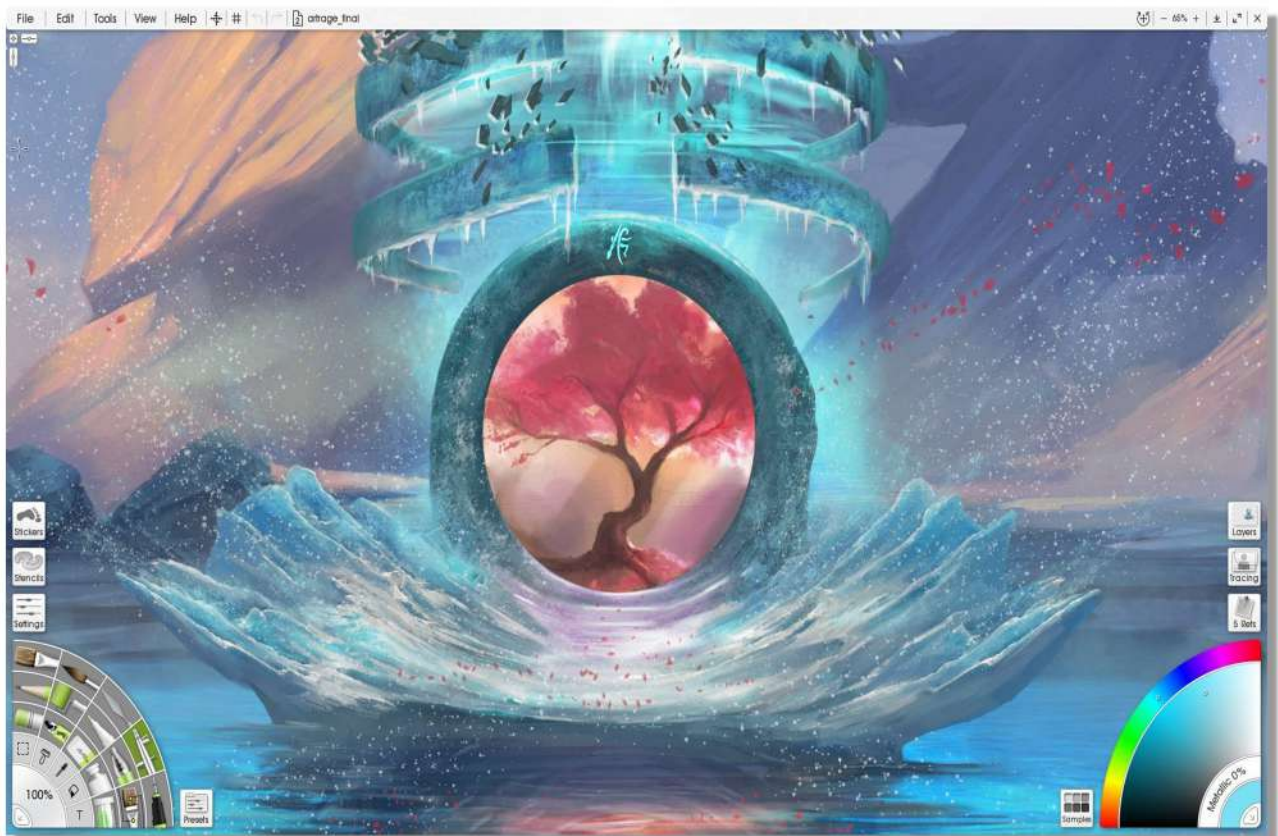
**Free Version:** Yes

**OS:** Windows and Mac

Rebelle is a great choice for realistic acrylic, watercolour, other painting mediums and it's authentic paper based art in the digital world. The company has won awards such as The Platinum Award in the 2016, Hermes Creative Awards, Imagine FX Artist's Choice award, the PC Revue Editor's Choice Award for Uniqueness, the Best in Class Award from 3D World and the Mac Informer Editor's Pick.

A major pro of Rebelle is it's realistic brush effects which shine when compared to other softwares. It also has realistic blending styles like actual water colours, and has many other advanced features which is no surprise. New versions of the software stay true to a familiar layout, which helps to deliver a smooth experience for existing and upgrading users. Rebelle still continues development and releases new versions and features, while still keeping the platform usable and user-friendly from iteration to iteration.

# 15. Artrage



(Image credit: Artrage)

## Pros & Cons:

- + Easy to learn
- + Very strong selection of painting tools
- Separately sold iOS and Android apps

**Price:** £63 (Single Purchase)

**Free Trial:** Yes

**Free Version:** No

**OS:** Windows, Mac, iOS, Android

Artrage is a multi-featured programme with an emphasis on giving you access to as many options and tools as you need to be as creative as you want. The programme advertises an impressive range of "realistic oils, pencils, watercolour, canvas textures and other traditional media painting tools". Even while offering this variety of features, the programme is clear in design, and easy to learn and pick up. The interface is minimalistic, with a focus on workflow. The most popular tools are readily available, allowing you to customise your readily available toolset for a comfortable experience.

There is support for computers and mobile devices, along with a free trial. The free trial gives you an unlimited amount of time to explore the app, but does lock many "professional" features. The computer version comes at a cost of £63, but Artrage does offer a much more affordable £4 edition for their mobile app, on Android and Apple.

---

# Final Recommendations

After going through this list we have chosen our top 3 overall choices, these focus on being the best at what they do. Some may not be good for digital design, while being better in other areas: These are our recommendations!

---

## - Photoshop

Focus: Photo Editing

Photoshop has always been known to be one of the best tools for editing and some graphic design, it's versatile so anyone can use it for a variety of applications. Adobe has advanced AI editing tools unlike other apps making it easy when cropping, selection and image correcting. It's a very professional tool, but just like most professional tools, it does have a high price of £9.97/mo. If you're a student, business, or teacher then it can be cheaper in the long run. The app does take a while to learn and can be very daunting, but we still very highly recommend Photoshop.

## - GIMP

Focus: Photo Editing

GIMP offers a large amount of features for a free app, it's already a very good pick for those reasons alone. The tools you can use are very similar to Photoshop, and can do mostly everything you want; it can even be set up with an Adobe interface if you're most used to Photoshop making it easier for switch users. The app has been made to use all of the popular formats to help make things easier. Just like Photoshop, this app will be hard to use at first for beginners, we would still highly recommend using this as a free alternative to Photoshop!

## - Sketch

Focus: Digital Design

Sketch is a professional graphic design app, it's perfectly built for designers and is well known amongst the graphic design community. With a low price of £6.49/mo, it also comes with a free trial which allows you to see if it is to your liking. You can use prebuilt shapes, custom shapes and pencil tools. Due to the app being fairly popular there are lots of tutorials online to use. One large downside is that the software is limited to only Mac computers, and will not work on any mobile platforms or standard Windows machines. If you have a Mac then we would recommend this app as it's cheap and works well for digital design projects; and with the big community using it you can find lots of help in using the app online.

---