

**Free Software Recommendations**

from

**Producing Multimedia Content Using Free Software  
Workshop**

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## 1 Overview

This document describes free software that is included on this CD. This CD is provided to make free and/or open source software accessible to people who do not have adequate Internet access to download it. The emphasis is on multimedia editing tools for Windows operating systems.

If you do have adequate Internet access, you may wish to check for newer versions of these programs at the time you intend to use them, and periodically in the future. A good resource for finding virus- and spyware-free software for any operating system and purpose is [www.download.com](http://www.download.com).

## 2 Audio Tools

### 2.1 Audacity – Sound Editor

Audacity is a free audio editor that is available for Windows, Macintosh and Linux. The Windows 98/ME/2000/XP/Vista version is included; please visit <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/download/> for other versions.

Audacity needs special attention when installing it because it relies on third-party software, which is also included on this CD. The installation instructions follow below.

*For more versions, information, or plug-ins visit <http://audacity.sourceforge.net>.*

#### 2.1.1 Installing Audacity Audio Editing Software on Windows

1. Click on the install file, audacity-win-1.2.6.exe, and follow the instructions to install audacity on your computer.
2. Copy the file, lame\_enc.dll, into your "Program Files\Audacity folder (or the folder where you installed Audacity).
3. The first time you use the "Export as MP3" command, Audacity will ask you where lame\_enc.dll is saved. Browse to the file you saved in Step 2. You will only have to do this once.

#### 2.1.2 Plug-Ins

You can download and install plug-ins to add extra effects to Audacity, or to add more audio generation and analysis capability. Plug-ins appear at the bottom of the "Effect," "Generate" or "Analyze" menus. To install new plug-ins, place them in the **Plug-Ins** folder inside the Audacity installation folder. On Windows computers, this is usually under "Program Files."

A set of LADSPA plug-ins is included on the CD. Others are available online.

## **2.2 Skype**

Skype is a great communications tool. For people with high enough Internet speeds, it can replace telephones with free computer-to-computer voice calls (called VOIP, or “voice over IP”).

If the person you want to call has adequate Internet access and a Skype account, you can call them for free using Skype-to-Skype computer calls. If they do not, you can use the “Skype Out” feature to phone them on their landline or cell phone. This costs money, with rates similar to long distance phone cards. The costs for calls to North America are very inexpensive – about 2 cents per minute – whereas the costs for calls in other countries can be much higher. Please note that calling Africa from North America may cost 30 cents/minute, whereas calling in the other direction is 2 cents/minute. Therefore when possible, use the least expensive routing.

You can also use Skype for conference calls, and to record audio interviews conducted by telephone or computer-to-computer Skype calls. This is very helpful for generating audio content for your multimedia peacebuilding activities!

You must sign up for an account on [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com). You can also find more information and purchase phone credits there.

## **2.3 Juice**

Juice (formerly iPodder) is an open source client for subscribing to and downloading podcasts. Versions exist for Windows, Mac, and Linux. You need a separate mp3 player to listen to the podcasts.

## **3 Video Tools**

### **3.1 Windows Movie Maker**

This software is included in Windows version 2000 and above. It is a basic, free movie editor that is great to get started with. It is not included on this CD because it is available with Windows. You can find it in the “Start > All Programs” menu.

### **3.2 Ultra Video to Flash Converter**

This tool will convert a video to flash video (flv) format for upload to a website. It degrades the quality, but it makes the file smaller, and embeddable within the website without launching an external player such as Quicktime.

### **3.3 FLV Player**

This player allows you to watch a flash video without needing to embed it into webpage.

### **3.4 Sony Vegas Pro 9**

This is a great light-weight video editing software. It allows you to extract your audio track so your videos can do double-duty as audio features. It offers more editing options than Windows Movie Maker, it supports High Definition formats, and it is inexpensive.

There are several versions of the editor at various price ranges. The one included on this CD is \$55.

For more information: [www.sonycreativesoftware.com](http://www.sonycreativesoftware.com),  
<http://www.sonycreativesoftware.com/products/vegasfamily.asp>.

### **3.5 Virtual Edit 1.25 – Video Editor**

License:Free to try; \$39.99 to buy

Windows 98/Me/2000/XP

I have not tried this editor, but I have included it because it has good reviews, and a very inexpensive price tag. You might also consider using Windows Movie Maker (free, and included with Windows 2000 and above), or Sony's Vegas editing software, which is good.

#### **3.5.1 Publisher's description of Virtual Edit**

Virtual Edit is a video-editing tool aimed at ambitious content creators to video novices who want to produce professional video content on a limited budget. With Virtual Edit you can edit your holiday video footage, your wedding video, or your university media-production project. You can then use your imagination to add real-time video effects, transitions, music, and titles to enhance your creation. Virtual Edit uses a graphical time line to represent transitions, which may be viewed in real time, giving you the ability to preview edits immediately. You can also import nearly all types of multimedia data, including DV, MPEG, AVI, WAV, MP3, BMP, and JPEG, which can seamlessly be edited together.

Virtual Edit comes in two versions: Virtual Edit Lite is the basic tool for creating simple video sequences and is free to download, and the full version of Virtual Edit enables video effects, transitions, and titles to be rendered into output files.

#### Virtual Edit Evaluation Version

Virtual Edit Evaluation Version is free to download for evaluation. You can experiment with all of the features offered by the full version of Virtual Edit, but you will not be able to render advanced transitions, clip effects or titles into output files.

[Download here for free now](#) *(included on CD)*

#### Virtual Edit Full

The full version of Virtual Edit has unrestricted functionality to add advanced transitions, clip effects and titles. Buy Virtual Edit today and maximise your creativity by enabling these features.

[Buy here for \\$39.99 now](http://virtualedit.net/buy.htm) (<http://virtualedit.net/buy.htm>)

### 3.5.2 CNET Editor's review of Virtual Edit

You can compile video files of various formats into a finished product with Virtual Edit. The installation flies by, and the software launches on your desktop in seconds. When you start by creating a new project, the program opens all its options--and there are a lot of them. The software basically splits your video file into two video tracks, a key track, and an audio track. The program simultaneously opens two windows, the graphical edit scale and the clip browser. The graphical edit scale lines up tracks one after another, whereas the clip browser displays brief information on a video file. You can edit any part of the file and make changes to any track. However, the program does not have many editing tools. In general, the program's output looks good, although it would be much better with additional functions. It aims mainly at the consumer and student audience.

### 3.5.3 Installation Instructions

1. Install the program provided on the companion CD.
2. If you wish to use advanced (paid) features, click the "Buy" button and purchase a licence. Usually this will provide you a key by email that you can use to unlock your software. Ensure this is the case if you cannot download 6 MB for a new version.

[Buy here for \\$39.99 now](http://virtualedit.net/buy.htm) (<http://virtualedit.net/buy.htm>)

3. You need a software component called the Indeo compressor to use it. It is not supplied, you must already have it on your PC. Most versions of MS Windows are shipped with Indeo V3.2 or V5.x video compressors. If necessary, you can download it for \$15 from <http://ligos.com/index.php/home/products/indeo/>

For more information see <http://virtualedit.net/>

## **4 Image Tools**

### **4.1 FastStone Image Viewer 3.6**

Windows 98, ME, 2000, XP, Vista

I highly recommend this software. It is extremely handy for browsing images. It quickly allows you to resize and optimize photos for the Web without obvious image degradation. You can also use the draw tools to add captions or annotations, and create slideshows.

There is a portable copy, FSViewer36\_Portable, which can be run from a USB drive in Internet cafés. Start the program by double clicking the file *FSViewer.exe* in the *FSViewer36\_Portable* folder.

There is also a multilingual copy, which includes Chinese (Simplified & Traditional), Danish, Dutch, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.

A tutorial is included on the CD.

#### **4.1.1 CNET Editor's review of FastStone Image Viewer**

For a free program, this multipurpose image tool strikes us as a good find. Although the main interface looks too cluttered with buttons at first glance, the three main windows are intuitive enough once get your bearings.

Clicking a thumbnail puts a larger view of the shot in the lower-left pane, and you zoom in simply by dragging the mouse around. Though its image-editing tools can't compete with those offered by a full-featured suite, there's still enough here to make a decent amount of tweaks to your shots. You can resize, crop, remove red-eye, and adjust color, brightness, and contrast. You'll also find a few simple effects and filters, including Lens, Waves, and Morphs. Other nifty features include multiple folder slide shows, batch cropping and Windows Vista support.

FastStone Image Viewer for Windows can batch-convert files into a number of popular image formats including GIF, BMP, PSD, and PNG, and the slide-show creator allows you to apply transitions, specify the interval between images, and add your own MP3s as a soundtrack. We can recommend this program to everyone but professional designers.

*For more information visit [www.faststone.org](http://www.faststone.org).*

### **4.2 Paint.NET**

While I haven't used Paint.NET, it seemed useful as I was browsing the other software included on this CD.

#### **4.2.1 Publisher's description**

Paint.NET is free image editing and photo manipulation software designed to be used on computers that run Windows. It supports layers, unlimited undo, special effects, and a wide variety of useful and powerful tools.

#### **4.2.2 CNET Editor's review of Paint.NET**

Don't 'shop it - Paint.NET it!

If you just want to retouch images a bit, Photoshop is overkill. Check out Paint.NET, an open-source freeware editor with all the essential tools, including those for cropping, rotating, resizing, adjusting colors, and creating collages.

Paint.NET supports the most popular image formats--JPEG, PNG, GIF, TIFF, and others--but not superhigh resolution ones like RAW. However, you'll find such basic effects as Red Eye Removal, Emboss, Mosaic, and Oil Painting, and a few higher-end features such as Clone Stamp, Lasso Select, and Magic Wand. Like a full-fledged graphics package, Paint.NET even supports layers and an actions manager. The interface is very convenient, and the panels are semitransparent, so you won't need to hide them.

Version 3 fixes many old quibbles. Multiple-image editing is done through a convenient thumbnail manager in the upper-right corner of the app; blurry tool icons have been sharpened as well. Paint.NET is far better than Microsoft Paint, and given its free price, it's a no-brainer for anyone who does a lot of minor graphical tweaking.

#### **4.3 Serif PhotoPlus 6.03**

Windows 95/98/Me/NT/2000/XP

##### **4.3.1 Publisher's description**

PhotoPlus has the features you'll need for importing or creating pictures and animations as well as for manipulating colors and effects and final exporting. Built-in support for TWAIN scanners and cameras makes it easy to bring in your own photos, while comprehensive import filters let you open just about any standard bitmap image. Once you have your image in PhotoPlus, you can enhance and alter its onscreen appearance with a diverse toolkit of functions and effects. A full range of export options (with special attention to Web graphics), plus powerful optimization capabilities, round out this high-performing package.

##### **4.3.2 CNET Editor's review of PhotoPlus**

At its essence, PhotoPlus is a Photoshop clone without the most advanced features, for a fraction of the price. The interface is almost identical, from the tool icons to the layers pane. PhotoPlus allows working with several layers and supports masks, but you can't add new toolbars. Using layers, you can create and edit animations for the Web, and a number of filters are here. The set of tools is not as large as Photoshop's, but it's enough for retouching photos. Web designers will appreciate the tool that allows you to immediately view how JPEG compression will impact image quality. The trial version disables some of the tools and filters. In our opinion, PhotoPlus will be more than enough for home users and intermediate Web designers.

For more versions or information visit <http://www.freeserifsoftware.com>.

#### **4.4 Serif DrawPlus 4.0**

Create or modify drawings and animations. Easy to use. Award winning software. Read, write many formats (photo and animation as well as vector: JPG, BMP, EMF, WMF, PNG, and more). Includes clipart, fonts, and wizards. Easy line/curve drawing; full transparency, blend, and fill features, all anti-aliased; animation (onion skinning, backgrounds, overlays, and frame management). Registration required.

Windows 95/98/Me/NT/2000/XP

For more versions or information visit <http://www.freeserifsoftware.com>.

#### **4.5 Ulead GIF Animator 5**

License:Free to try; \$49.95 to buy

Limitations: 15-day trial

##### **4.5.1 Publisher's description**

Ulead GIF Animator 5.0 makes it easy to create fast-loading, high-impact Web animations. Version 5.0 cuts production time in half with simple drag-and-drop object-based editing, round-trip auto-updating from external image editors, and tweening features. Advanced optimization delivers the smallest possible file sizes, while output to video, EXE, and Flash formats makes it one of the most versatile animation tools available.

##### **4.5.2 CNET Editor's review of Ulead GIF Animator**

This tool creates Web-optimized animations more effectively than a general image editor does. Ulead GIF Animator's clean interface keeps you oriented among the multitude of tools, frames, and objects. You can edit images within GIF Animator or invoke an external editor. Adding banner text with neon, scroll, or zoom takes mere seconds. The 130 transition and filter effects make creating animations easier. The program optimizes the GIFs in a variety of ways for faster download, and preview helps you to judge whether the quality remains high enough. You can also view animations directly in the browser. Besides GIF, you can output your work as Flash, video, or even standalone EXE files. The start-up wizard ensures that designers of any level, from beginner to expert, will find GIF Animator worth its price.

## **5 Website Tools**

### **5.1 NVU HTML Editor, CSS Editor**

This editor was recommended to me, although I haven't tried it.

### **5.2 CoffeeCup Free FTP**

This is a good program for those who need to upload or download files from websites. It is only useful for webmasters and technically-minded people.

### **5.3 CoffeeCup HTML 2007 – Website Editor**

This is a good program for those who need to create basic, HTML-based websites. It is not recommended for interactive websites such as blogs, online communities, etc. – easier options exist for these (including free basic sites by Blogger, Google Groups, Yahoo Groups, etc., or Drupal for a customizable website built by a technical expert). It is only useful for webmasters and technically-minded people.

## **6 Other Tools**

### **6.1 Open Office – Word Processor, Spreadsheet, Presentations, etc.**

Open Office is open source software that provides many of the programs included in Microsoft Office, including a word processor, spreadsheet, drawing program, presentation program, and database program.

It is compatible with MS Office Word, Excel and PowerPoint documents.

Version 2.4 is included on the CD.

For more versions or information visit [www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org).

### **6.2 PDF995 – Free PDF Creator**

PDF995 is a free program which converts documents into PDF files. It installs as a printer driver, and to convert your document to PDF, click "Print...", then choose "PDF995" as the printer. This software is compatible with Open Office Writer and Microsoft Word.

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### **6.2.1 Installation Instructions**

You must install both the software and the printer driver.

A PDF editor and manager are also included on the CD.

For more information visit [www.pdf995.com](http://www.pdf995.com).

### **6.3 Adobe Acrobat Reader**

Many files are converted into Adobe's Portable Document Format (PDF), especially for online distribution. The current software to read these documents is provided on this CD.

### **6.4 Second Life**

Second Life is an online "virtual reality" world. It is like online chat on steroids – a very immersive, multimedia meeting experience. In Second Life, you create an "avatar," or a cartoon image of yourself, you can move to different rooms, cafes, and meeting places, you can text chat with other people who are near you, and you can use voice chat. You can also create your own virtual offices, share multimedia files here (such as videos and slideshows), or use voice chat.

I attended a Peace Conference in Second Life in July 2008, and found it a very interesting venue for an online conference.

Interacting in Second Life requires high-end computers that can render graphics quickly, and fast Internet speeds, so it is not suitable for all users. However, as it requires a large client software download that might be difficult to access for some people, I included it on this CD.

## **7 Online Resources**

In addition to desktop software, there are online resources that are helpful for communications and collaboration. A few of these are mentioned here.

### **7.1 Blogger**

[www.Blogger.com](http://www.Blogger.com)

Blogger offers a free, quick and easy way to post a blog and begin publishing immediately.

### **7.2 Gabcast – phone-based podcasting**

[www.gabcast.com](http://www.gabcast.com)

Gabcast allows you to record an audio blog or podcast episode by phoning into a free number (depending on your location). There are basic free services, and more advanced paid services.

### **7.3 DimDim – online conferencing**

<http://www.dimdim.com/>

This website allows you to webcast and collaborate online with to up to 20 people for free. Participants must have adequate Internet speeds.

### **7.4 KeepVid – download YouTube and other online videos**

[www.keepvid.com](http://www.keepvid.com)

This is a free tool to save online videos, such as YouTube and Google Videos, to your computer.

### **7.5 Zen Mix – photo/flash video mashup**

Combine online flash videos with images to make fun mashups, which can be saved to ZenMix.

<http://www.zenmix.com/zenmix/>

### **7.6 Global Voices**

This international resource aggregates and translates blogs, podcasts, and video from around the world. Share your content with them, or volunteer to translate others' content into new languages.

[www.globalvoicesonline.org](http://www.globalvoicesonline.org)