

Today we will be looking at several tools to help you develop your e-Learning content. Most were fairly expensive. However, we are seeing more and more tools released at a relative term.) The biggest problem we see is in finding the tools, and finding the right and websites we visit.



There are a few topics I'll cover today.

The first goes without saying. We are all looking to reduce our already small budgets in any way possible now. Originally, I was going to ask how many people have had their budgets cut or reduced from last year and how many of us will still be asked to perform at the same, or even higher, levels than we did last year.

Because of that, I want to show you how I choose to rate the tools I'm showing today. These are by no means perfect, but I want to verify their usefulness. To that extent, I want to rate these tools so you have an idea of what you might run into.

Finally, and mostly, we are going to look at various tools to aid us in the development of an e-Learning program, regardless of the delivery method.

How I got to know about these Free tools?

- College
- Industry



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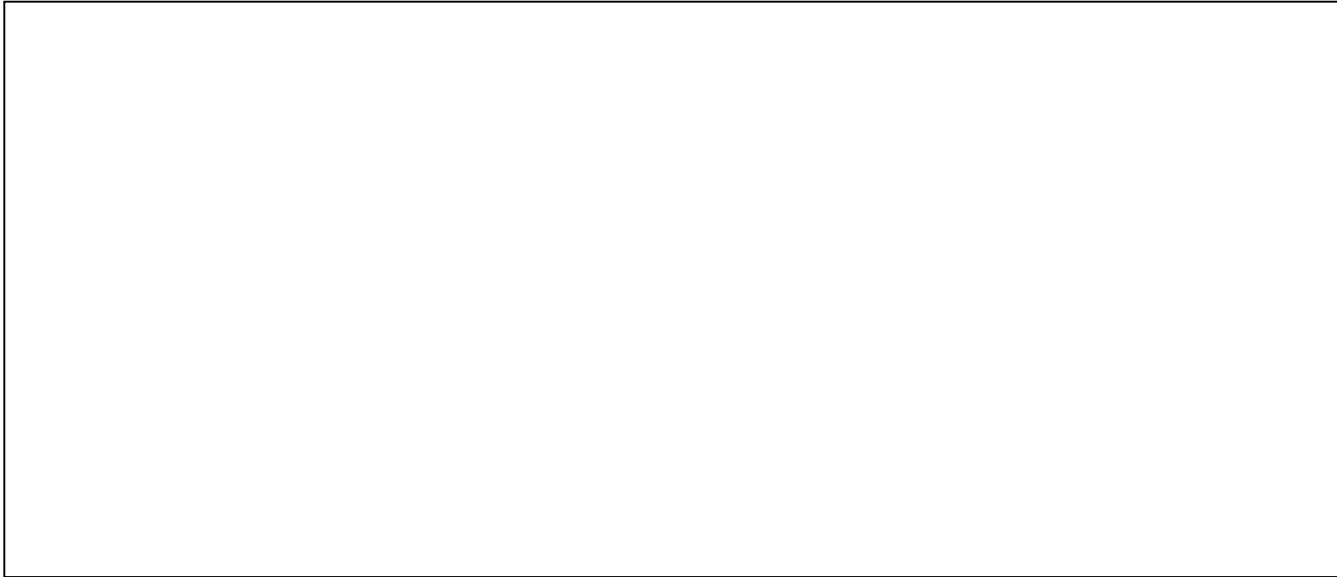
Free and Low Cost Alternatives for Developing e-Learning
Using Low Cost Software Makes Cents!

My experience as a trainer has been in both the college setting, and in industry. While I thought I would have lots of money to build training resources in college, I found that the education department didn't get as much as one would expect.

Instead, it was the the football team.

Similarly, when I left full-time academia, I found that training departments often didn't get the budget they needed. So we learned to beg, borrow and (well I wouldn't say) steal what we needed. This included finding free resources whenever and where ever possible.

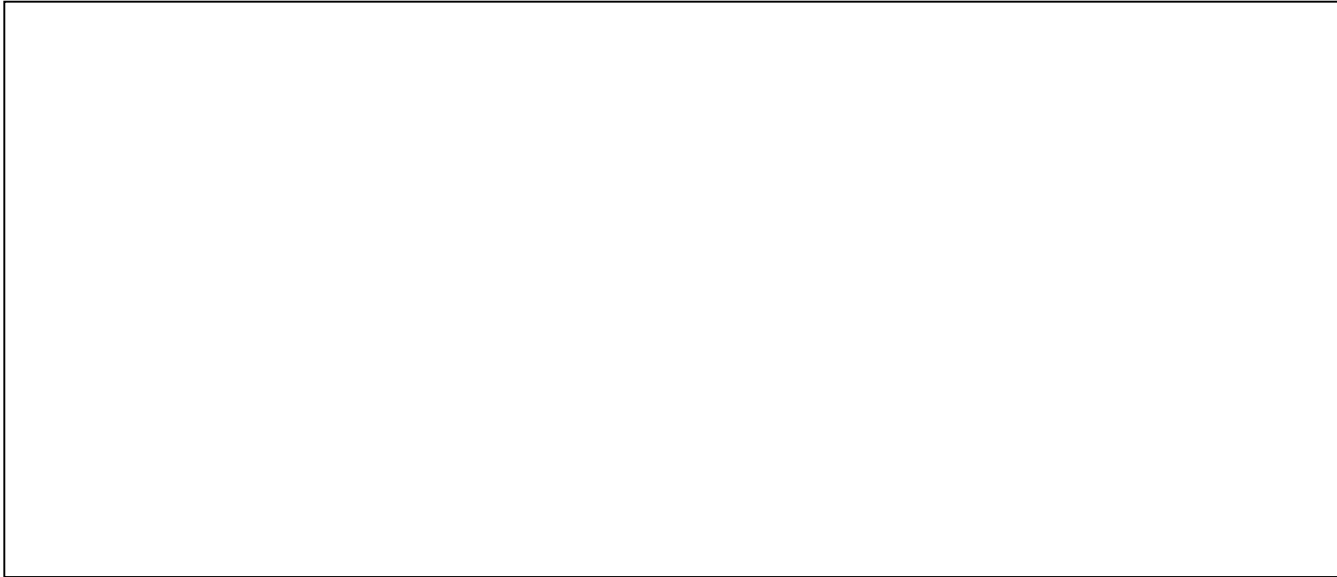
I work as an LMS Admin, and help develop tools in the training department. When I was hired in industry, they hadn't had a designer/developer like myself, so they didn't know what I needed. So while I had the normal Office Suite, and similar applications, I didn't have a lot of tools I would need to use build the resources my team could use. Therefore I



The first thing we are going to look at is how powerful is this tool. Is it free because it can't do anything

Can it do other things for me, being a proverbial power tool in my toolbox.

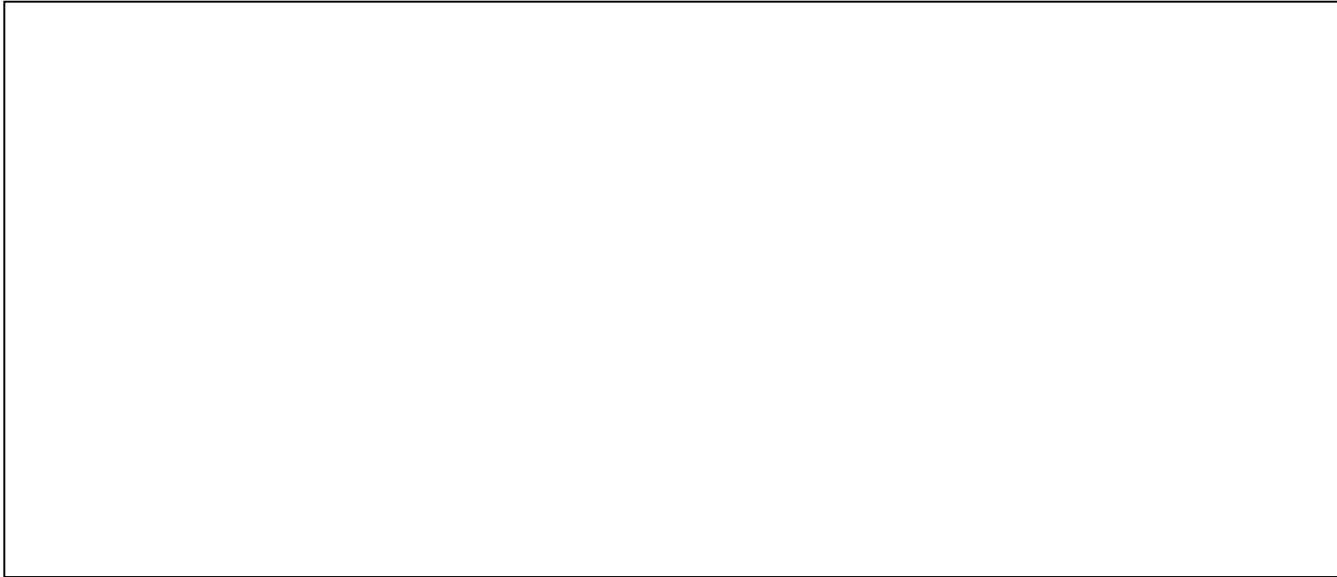
Each item is going to be rated on a scale of one to five, and for strength we are using the dumbbell show



The next thing I care about, is how complicated is the tool. It is has seeming thousands of buttons, and a

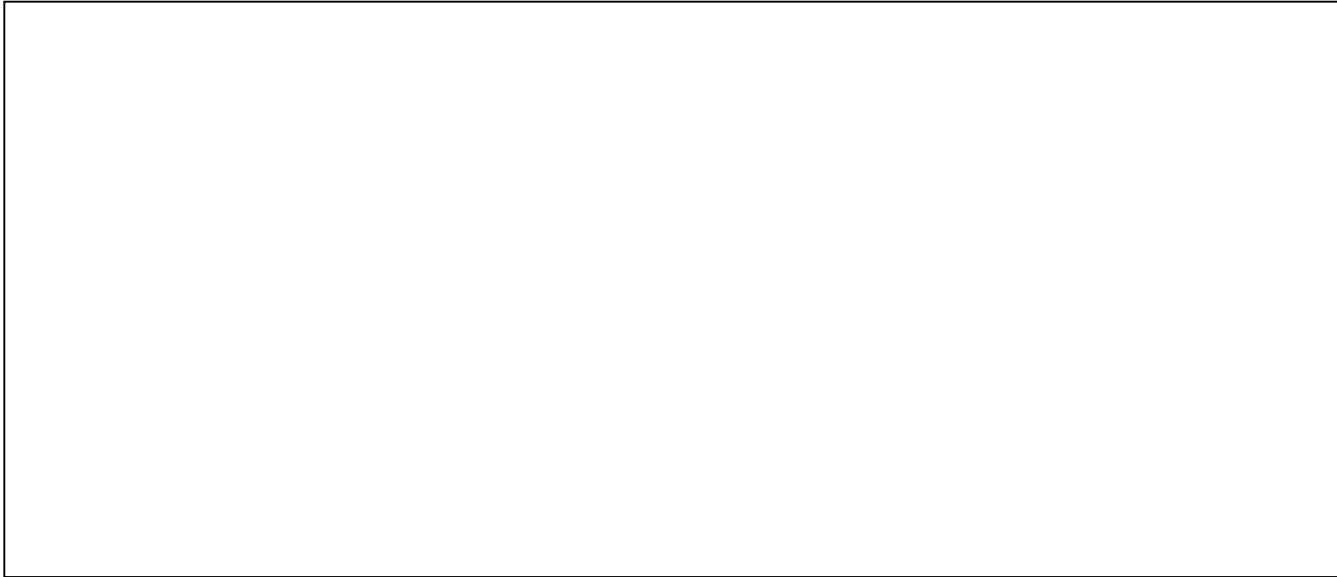
If I want it to be working for me today, then I need it to be a no-brainer.

So the next measurement I want will signify with the “No Brainer” icon.



Finally, the last piece is going to be a measurement of cost. This is always the most difficult, as cheap for because of their complexity, and the number of people who need them. On the other hand, some tools ha

We'll use a dollar sign to signify the relative cost of an application against it's peers. And a crossed out



I've found that a little bit of planning can go a long way. Of course, I've found this out only after years o
Those were left for developers and project managers.

However, the more complex the training, the more I need to plan out that project.



~~Any sufficiently large project needs to use a tool to track and manage its progress. Otherwise, I know, I~~

Gantt project (link available with the handout) is a free tool which allows you to perform some of the functions, as well as the time, link task together, and determine the percent completion of any task, or sub-ta

I found this very useful when I was putting together a large project which ran over the course of several 1

Now it won't tie in with other Microsoft apps like Project, but it is still a very functional tool, and it cost

So we'll give it the free seal. Next, it is very powerful, and you can do a lot with it, so 4 out of 5 on the s

However, with that strength came some complexity. Especially if you've never had a chance to work wi
it a 3 out of 5 for the no brainers.



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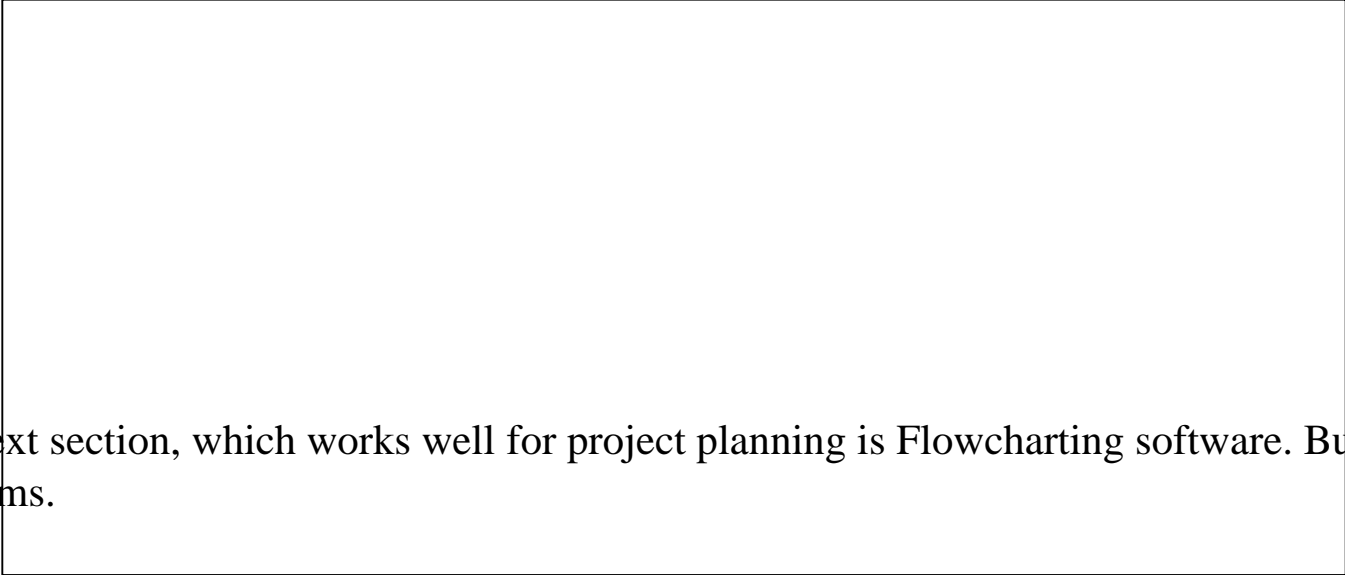
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The next section, which works well for project planning is Flowcharting software. But even better, is over diagrams.

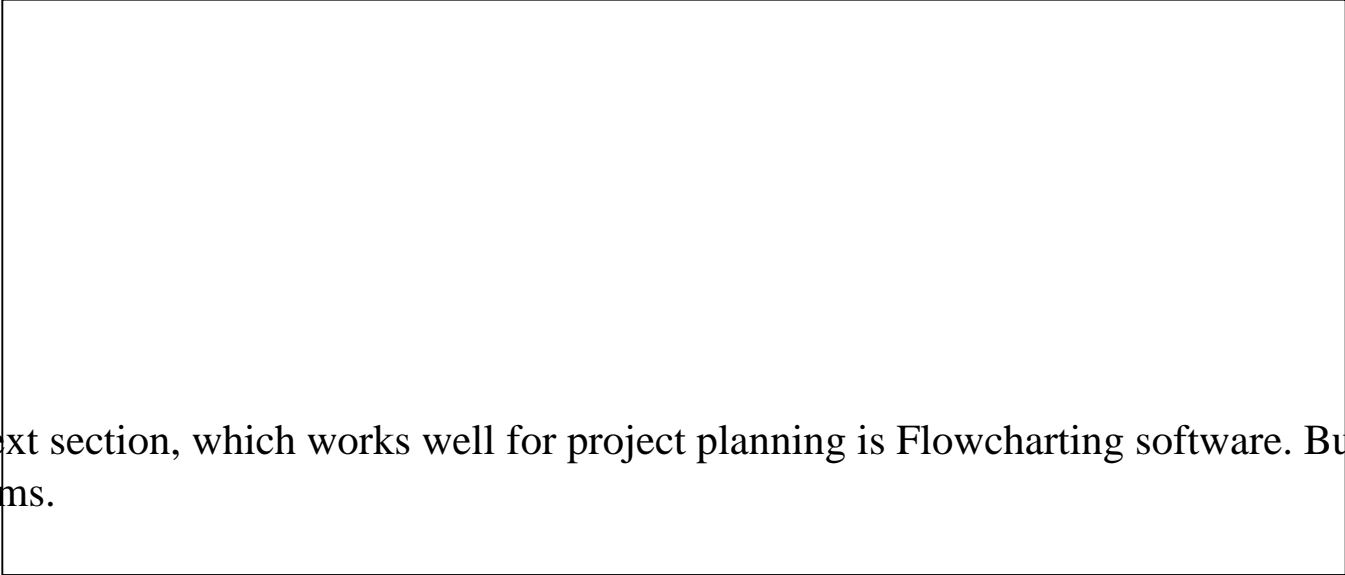
One of these is Smart Draw. Smart Draw is regularly updated, and originally was for doing business graphics for your graphic designers or content developers to build. Likewise, it still has flowcharting ability so you can have passed.

Smart Draw's other abilities include forms, newsletters, and more. While not directly related to eLearning something like this, we can put up flyers, and table top displays in addition to posting content on our LMS.

Now Smart Draw is a commercial software. So it does cost, however you get additional features like the other packages, it is cheaper, starting at about \$149 for a single user, and multi-user licenses are cheaper.

Given how much it can do, I give it 4 out of 5 for strength.

Smart Draw is one of those software packages that is easy to learn, but hard to master, as you can start using more about it. I'd download the 7 day trial if you have a few minutes to get a feel for the software before



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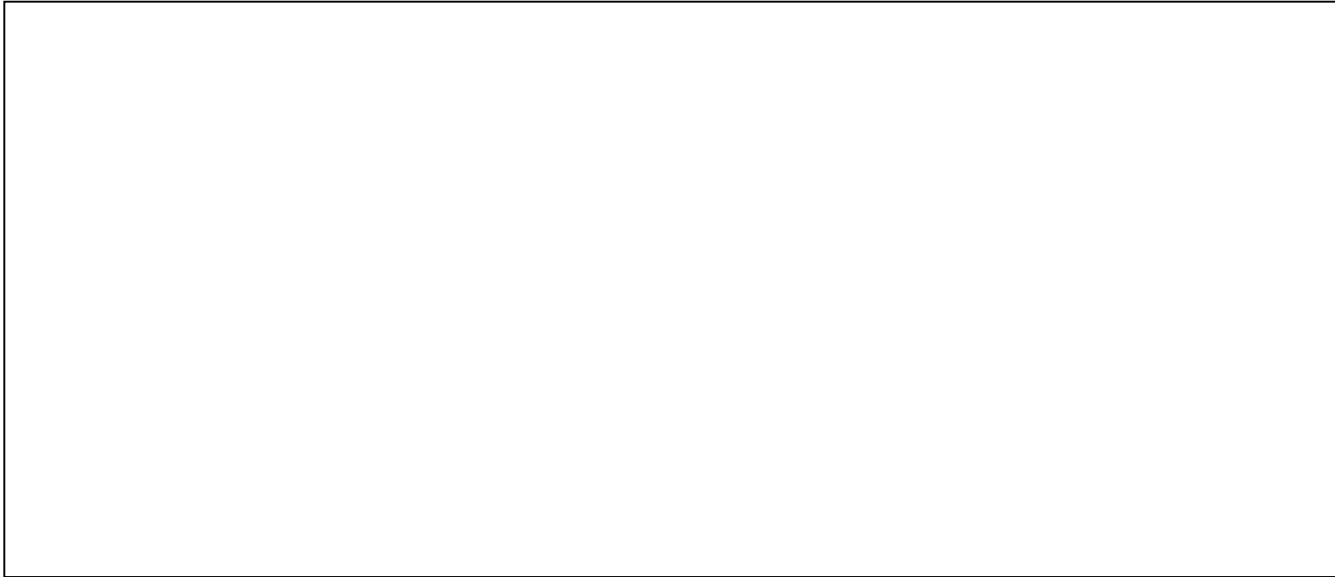
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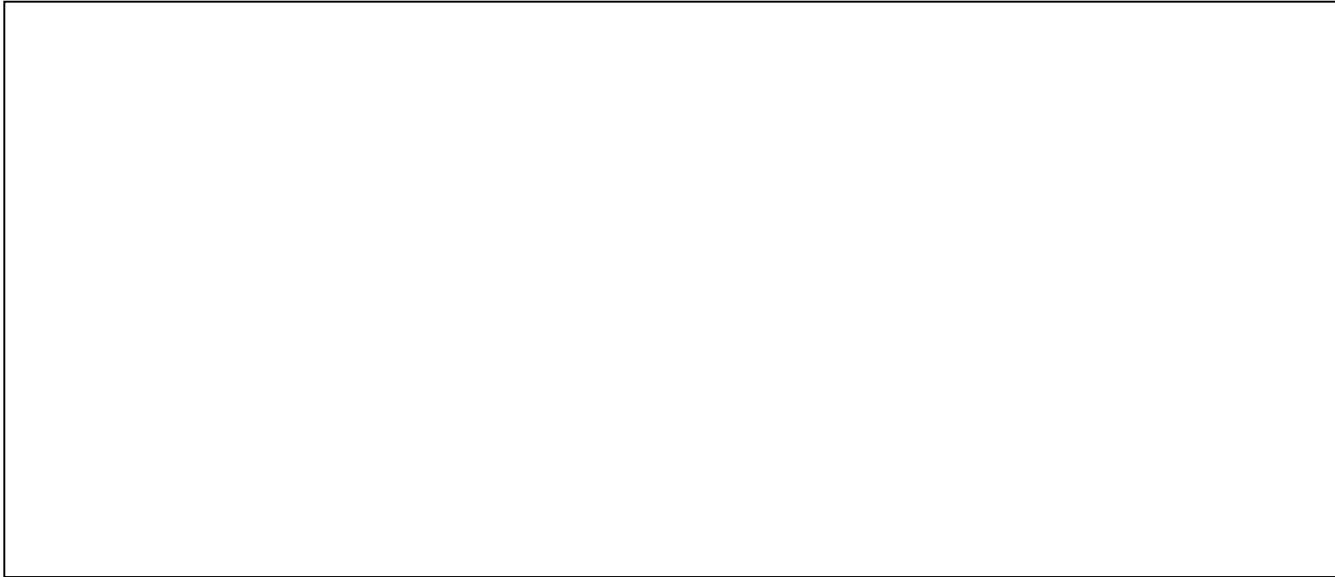
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Next we will look at a similar tool to Smart Draw. However, with Flowchart.com, the difference is that it is a web-based tool, so you can use it from any office, and you don't have a laptop to take home, you can still do your work. The other big advantage, is that it is a web-based tool, so you don't have to worry about what you can and can't install on your computer. With a web based tool, you don't have to worry about updates or security.

Like Smart Draw, it does more than just flow charts, you can also perform hierarchies, decision trees, and organizational charts.

One thing I have noticed, is you will find it runs faster in a browser like Firefox or Chrome by Google because it doesn't essentially download the project files each time, so it can be a little slow when you first login. As you make more diagrams, it will get faster.

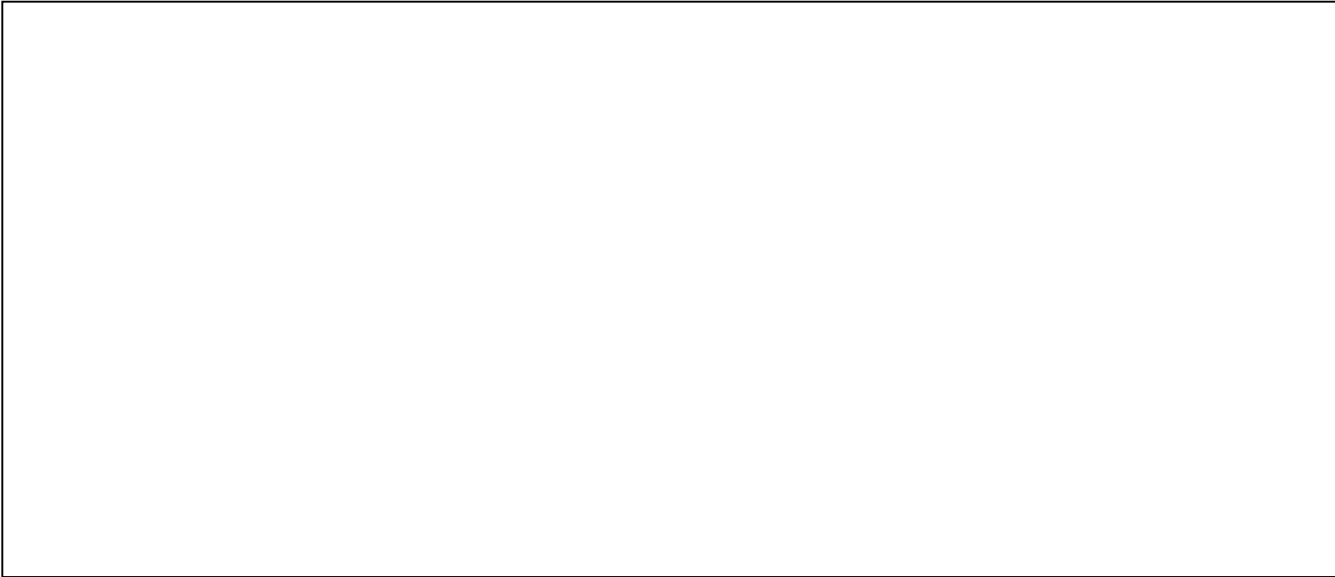


OK, so lets see how it rates:

Right now it is in Beta, but it is also free. This may change when it comes out of beta testing. But for now

It also has a interesting feature, since it is web based, that will allow other people to sign on and work on it. It doesn't have quite as many features as Smart Draw, so we will list it as a 3 out of 5 for strength, but over

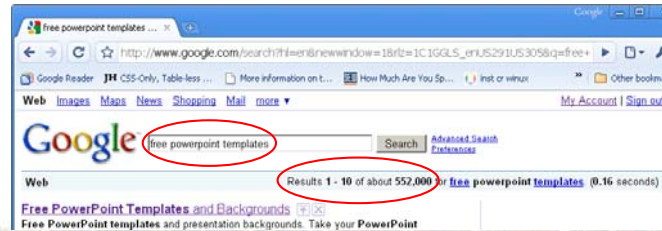
It is fairly easy to use. Especially if you have had any experience with diagramming software before, but it is not necessary. I'll rate it a 3 out of 5 for ease of use.



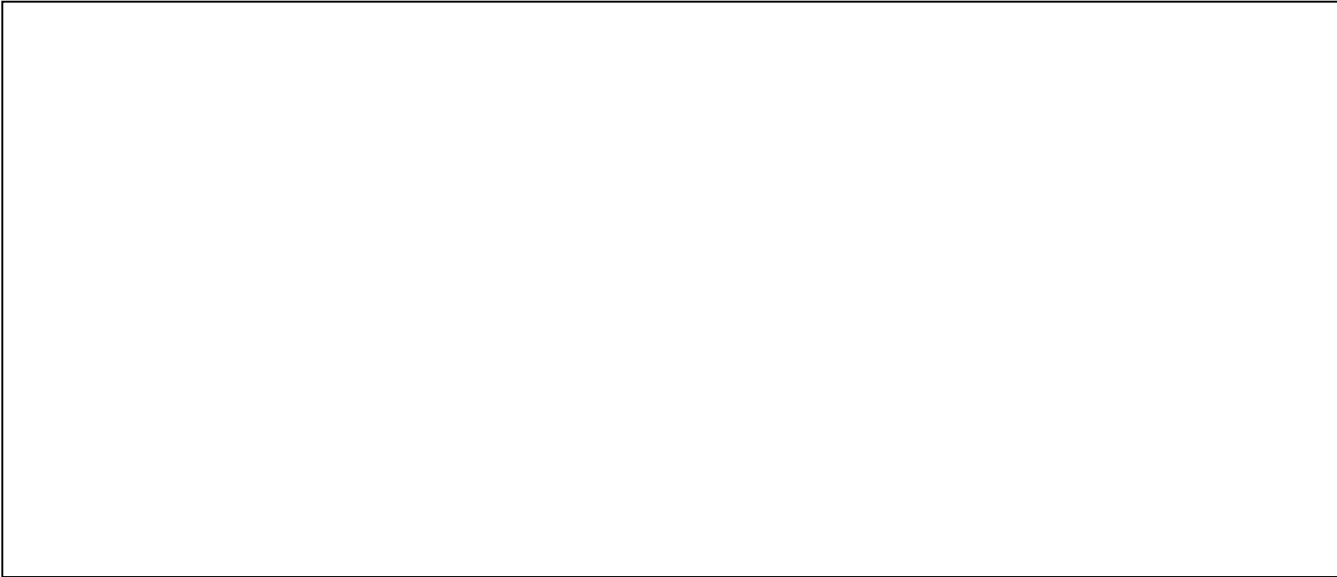
Now we want to look at putting our content together. We have the concept, the flowchart, etc, but now v

PowerPoint (& other) Templates

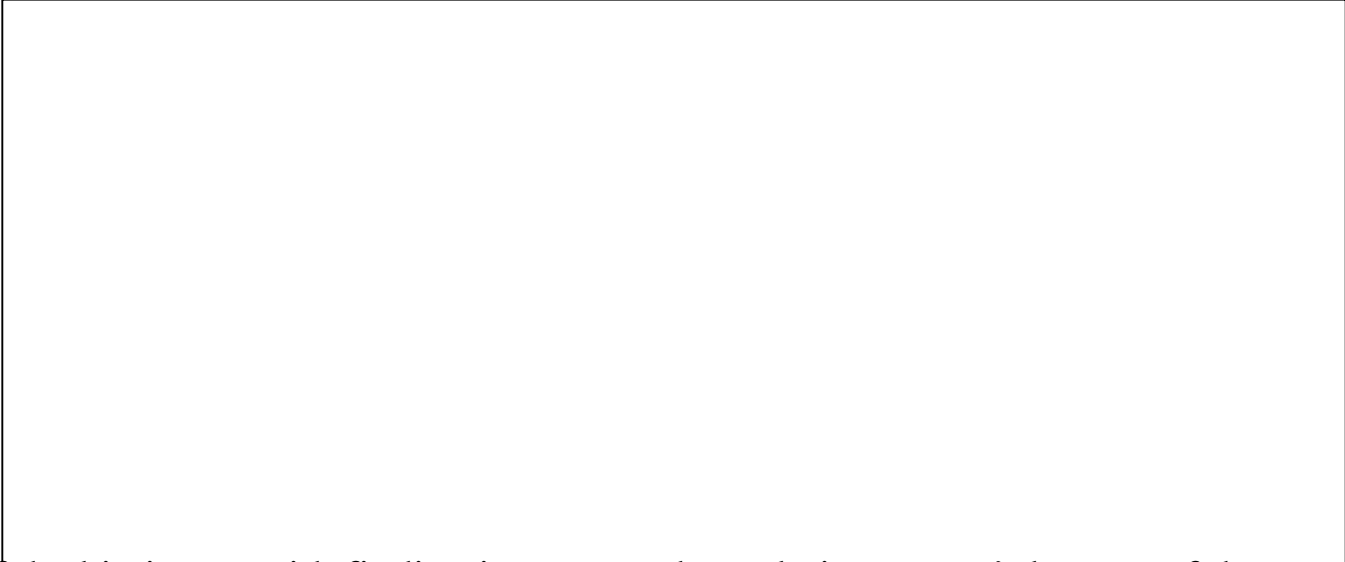
- There are literally tens of thousands of sites which cater to providing Power Point templates for free, or at a low cost.



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Photos are the most common example. We've forever needing photos of people, equipment, or relationships



One of the big issues with finding images on the web, is you can't be sure of the copyright of the image. you notice a lot of the images I present are crediting a photographer. I'll explain this in a little bit. But not dollars for not having the right license of a photo, even if it was done as an honest mistake.

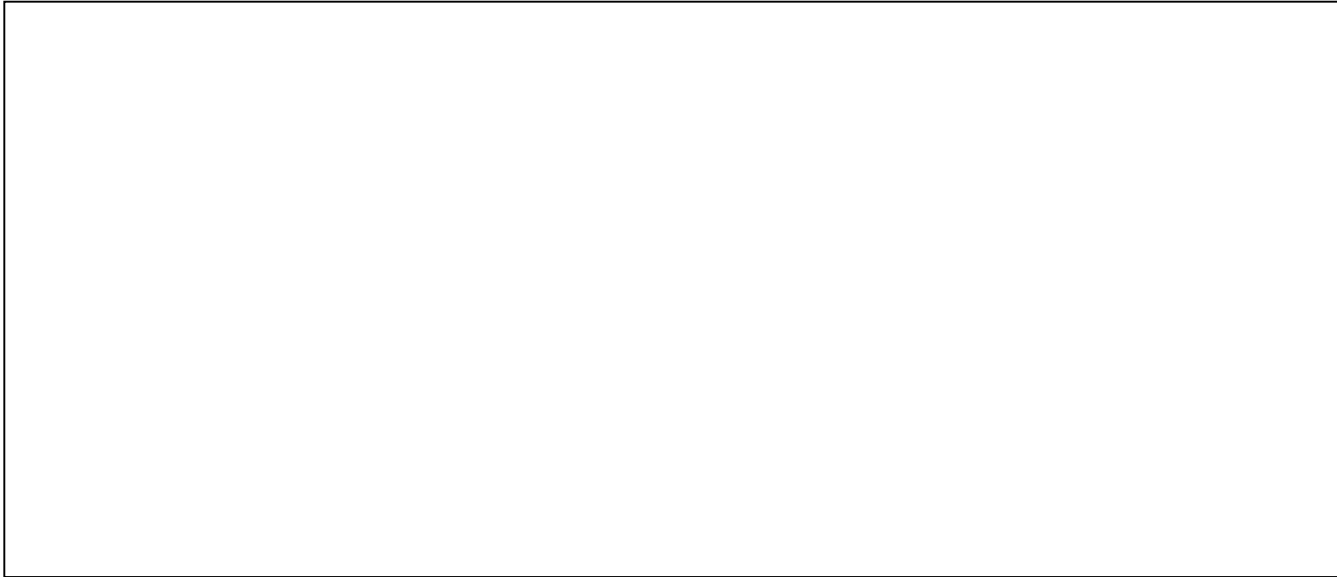
A bigger issue is if you search for "Free" images, they seem to always want you to pay. What is up with that?

Well this gets into the many different ways photos are licensed. Here are a few things you need to know.

First is the Royalty based license....

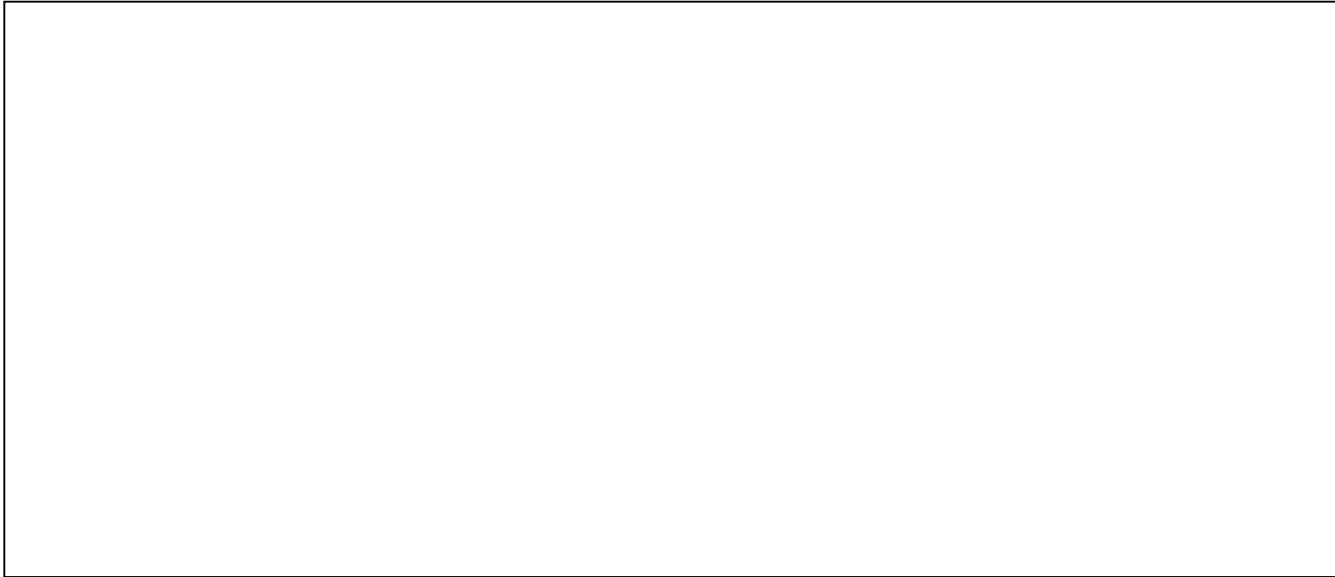
Next is the Royalty Free license...

And finally, is the Free license...



Fotolia and iStock Photo are two well known websites where you can go and buy stock photos are reasor the size of the image, smaller images are cheaper. For eLearning content, you will **almost** never need so

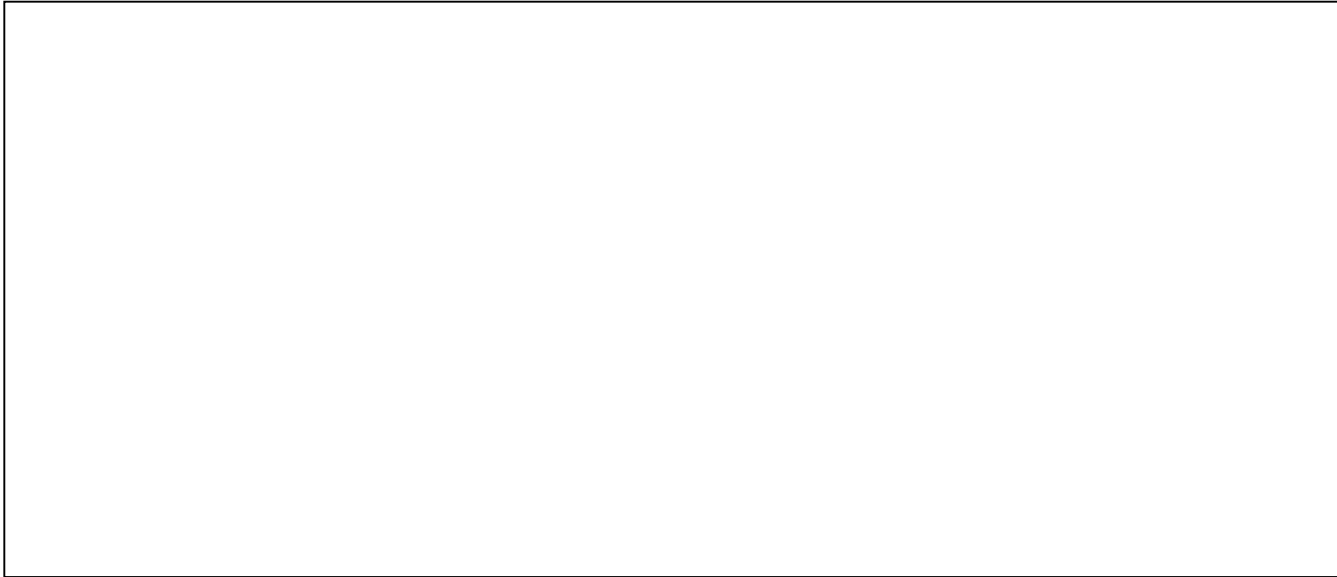
Links to these are available on the handout provided with this session.



There are some other sources you might want to be aware of. Stock.XCHNG, and Flickr both allow host

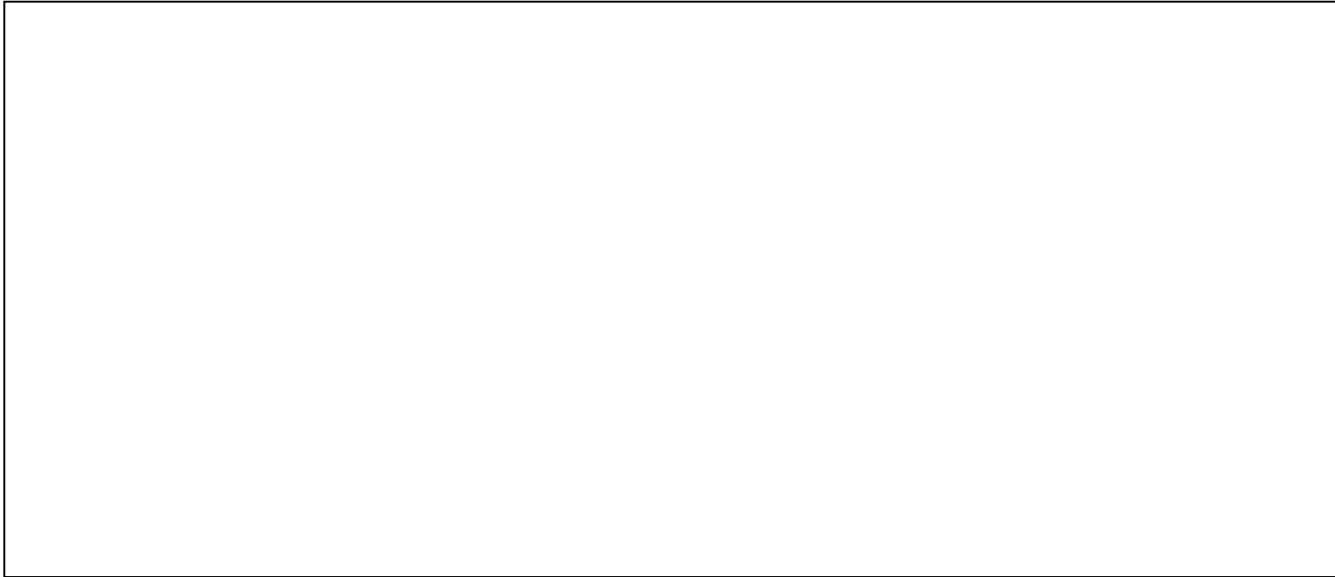
The key thing is to know how to search. With Flickr, you want to go to the advanced search page, then g

Creative commons provides a method for designers, photographers, and others to release their work to th
kids class project, you don't have to check commercially, but if you want to use it at your product launch
person's tag. This is a link back to their flickr account.



Now I sometimes have to admit, and maybe you do as well, but I won't ask...I get a little focus on a solu

When putting together this presentation, I was needing an image for my little no-brainer icon. I searched and come up with a different idea, when I realized I was squeezing my little stress toy, which happens to my phone, a camera I keep in my car, a couple of cameras at home if I just went looking for them...and i department will, and they can lend it to you for 5 minutes. We've used this many times before to take vi

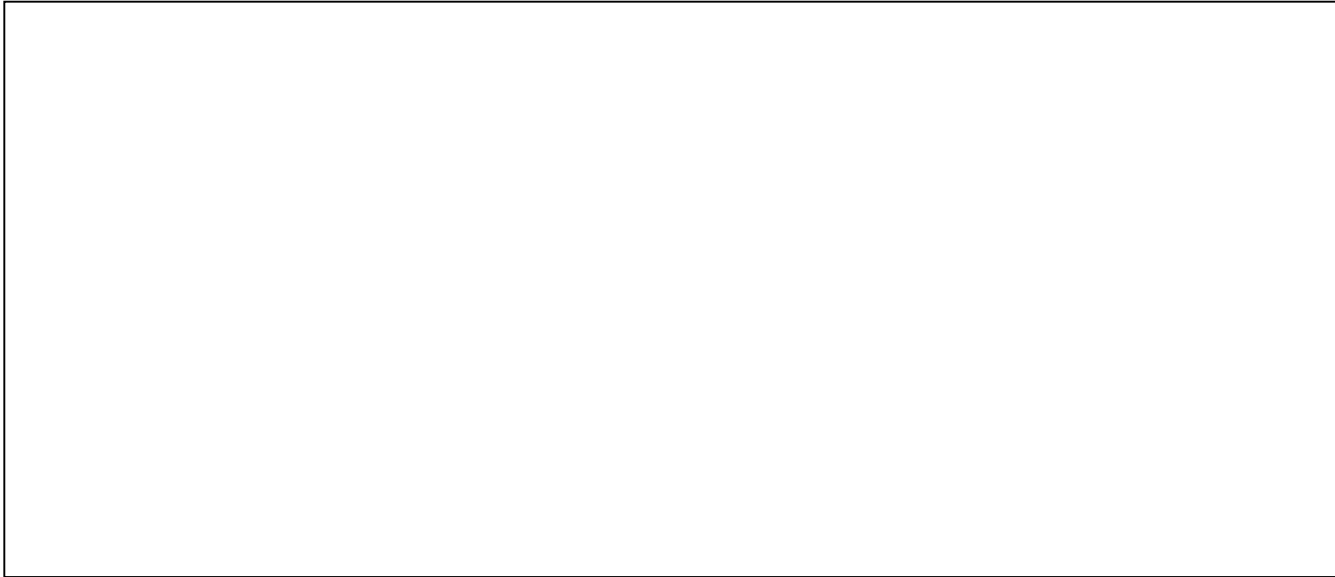


Now I work for a software company, so screen shots are always a must for us. We need them for everything. In a software company, often there is a need for basic training to cover new employees on your companies culture. We have found that a lot of recent college graduates have never used Outlook before and have issues with it.

There are numerous companies which provide a way to capture an image of your screen. Most of these companies are free.

Most capture software allows you to provide annotations, like arrows or captions to highlight an important area. When the capture ends, you can save the image to a file or copy it to the clipboard.

SnagIt is a very common application on the PC, with several features like if a window is not big enough, you can zoom in on it.



Jing Project, which also captures moving screen shots, can capture still screen shots. Once selected, it al

Although the easiest one to use, is the one which many people don't know about, and it comes built into ; you are a Windows user, holding the Control Key when you click the print screen button will capture the

But sometimes we get busy, and forget. Recently I was helping a co-worker. She wanted to grab a chart was starting to fret. So we just grabbed a screenshot, cropped the image in a image editing application (v software. I've also used it to send a quick screen shot of an app to a client I'm training to ensure they see

And since it comes with your operating system, IT can't complain about having to install extra applicatic

Screen capture in the last few years has taken on another stance. Not just for still screen shots, but videos

This has been a major step forward, and opened up numerous additional training resources. Unfortunately

Luckily in the past year, there have been some cheaper alternatives to come out. Each has their own adva

Mimic is a nice example of an application which while still a little expensive, gives you multiple output c

Price 4 out of 5 as it is a little high compared to some others, but still cheaper than others

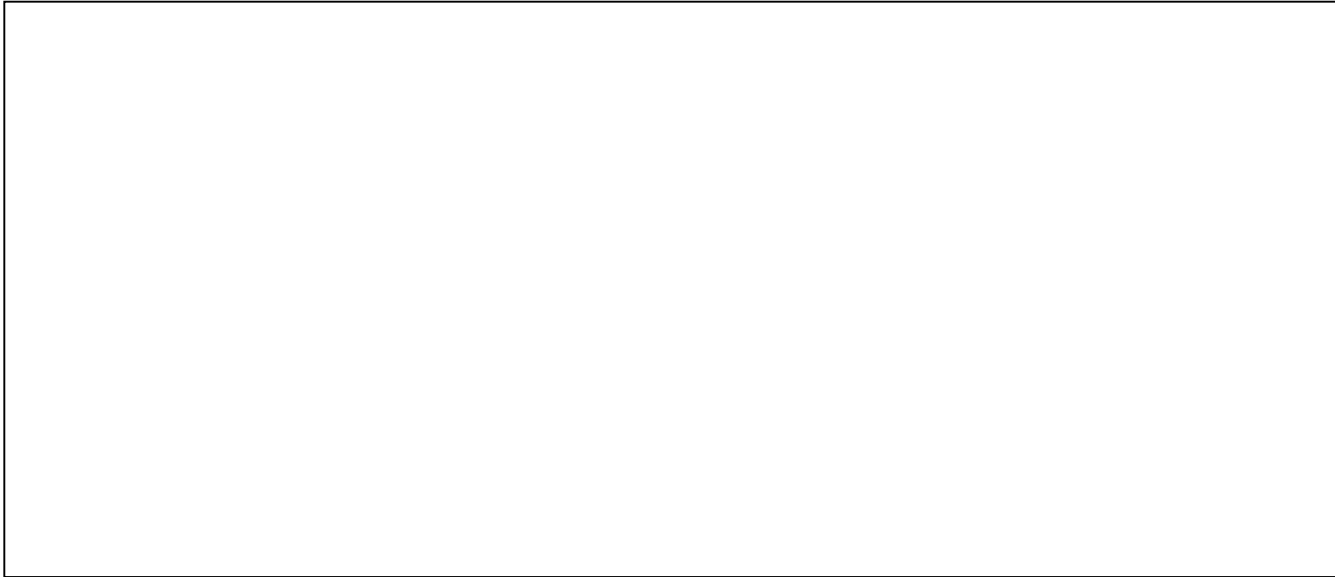
Features, 4 out of 5

Ease of use 4 out of 5, you'll be recording basic items in just a few minutes, and able to use more advanc

Screen Mimic allows the standard options such as basic transitions, audio voice over, and other similar fe however it works on Macintosh OS X, systems, and cost less than some of the Window's versions.

Price 2 out of 5 – fairly inexpensive

Feature Strength 3 out of 5



Next we'll look at Jing Project. This was just recently released, and come from the same company that n application. It only allows recordings of up to 5 minutes, and doesn't allow editing.

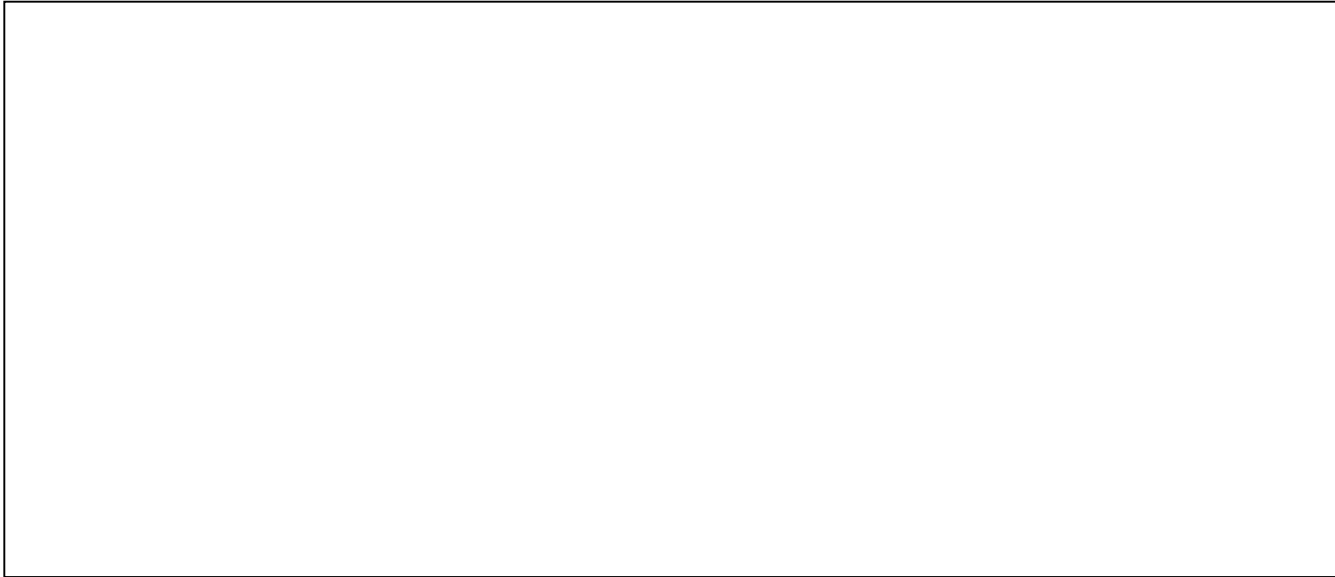
However, it does allow audio narration during recording, and automated uploads to a file sharing site. Th messenger or similar type app because when you upload the video, it automatically gives you a link whic Jing watermark, and improves the upload ability (now to YouTube) and increases the file transfers from 1

It also has the added feature of being available for both Mac and PC.

For professional use, I'd say the pro version is a requirement, so we'll give it a 1 out of 5.

The features are a bit limited, so only 2 out of 5

It is real easy to use, of 4 out 5



Wink is a truly Free application. It also supports Linux and Windows, so if you have any Unix/Linux ba

The interface is not nearly as polished as some interfaces, however, it runs well and offers lots of features including mouse position.

While recommended for smaller recording sections I.e. parts of a screen, not the whole screen, it does a g

No charge,

4 out of 5 in feature strength

2 out of 5 in ease of use, but give yourself a day to play with it, and you'll be working around no problem

Free Imaging Software

- Gimp

- <http://www.gimp.org/>
- For Windows, Linux, and Mac OS X
- Lots of plug-ins to extend its ability
- Provides many of the same features as Photoshop



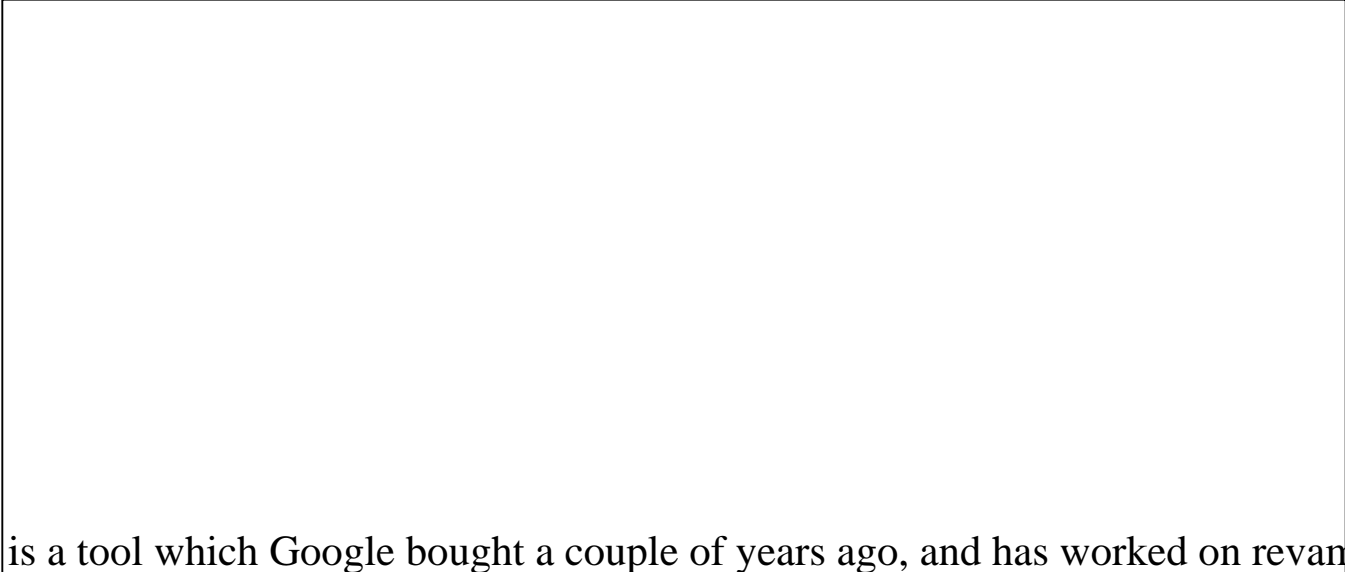
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Once we have our captures, either from a screen, a camera, or stock photo, we will need to edit these images together. We'll look at 3 free image tools, each with their own strengths and weaknesses.

Gimp has been around for years, and has a full feature set to prove. Additionally, features not in the core program, and often be found as plug-ins – which are little add in programs which enhance the ability of Gimp.

The fact that Gimp is free, and gives you so much functionality is very enticing for many people.

Gimp is available for the 3 main operating systems, and is almost as powerful as Photoshop, some would even argue more, so full 5 out of 5 in strength.



Picasa is a tool which Google bought a couple of years ago, and has worked on revamping. It has great capabilities for searching for photos quickly. It does this by allowing you to tag photos with key words, then search for your own photos for “meeting”, “interview”, “manager”, etc, and find some images without having to go to another website.

Picasa also allows for basic editing within the application, however, it is limited to editing large portions of an image. If you right click on an image, you can choose to open the image in a preferred image editor like the one we’ll list later.

Picasa, like many of Google’s products, is free.

What it does, helping you find images you already have, it does well, and does fast. Other things, it does not do as well.

We’ll also list it as 4 out of 5 for ease of use.

Free Imaging Software

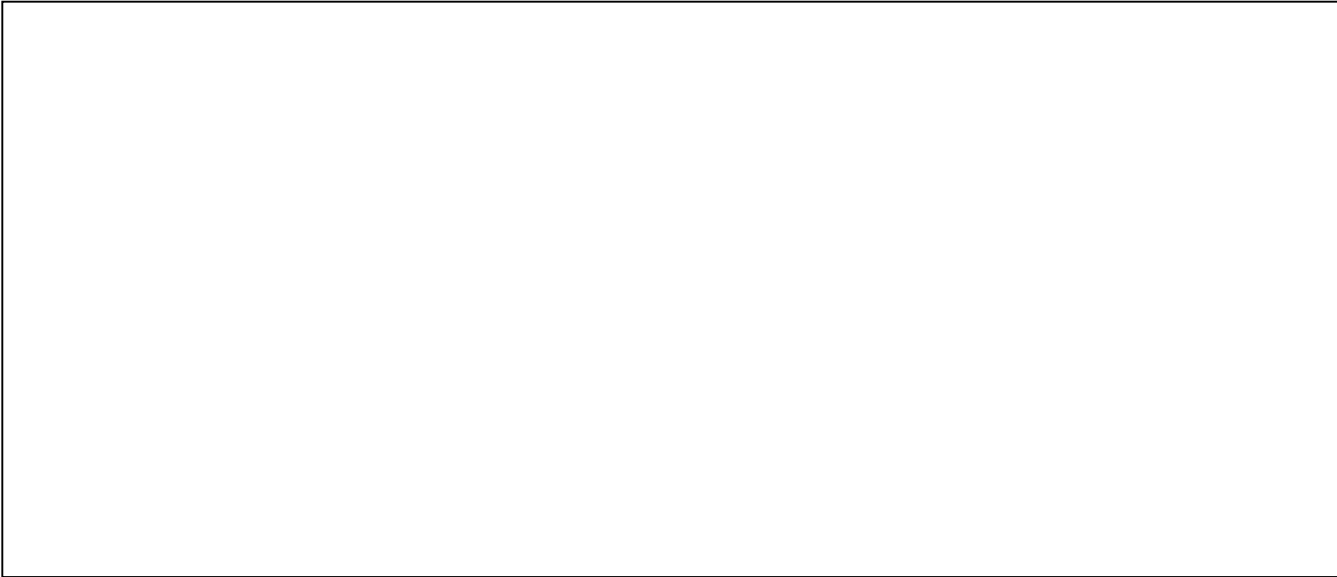
- Paint.Net 
 - <http://www.getpaint.net/>
 - For Windows only
 - Like Windows Paint, *on steroids*
 - Easier to use than Gimp/Photoshop, but not as powerful

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Paint.Net is a nice little program for doing simple edits to your photos, such as cropping, changing the color balance, or adding captions and highlights. It can also do much more, such as remove red eye, and add other effects.

It works well for these features, and this is what I've experienced a majority of the time I need to do to prepare files for my learning content.

Originally, I would have to use Windows built in Paint program. However, as anyone who has used it much before, you know how limiting it can be. Paint.Net is like Paint, but on steroids. Not the bad kind that baseball player's use, but the good kind which makes our programs strong.




Let's take a quick look at a live Demo of Paint.Net. I love the little sign on the install, if you paid money

Free Imaging Software

- **Paint.Net** 
- <http://www.getpaint.net/>





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You will need to download the .Net framework to your computer to make Paint.Net work, however it is free just like Paint.Net, so no cost.

While most of the time, you'll be doing simple edits, there is more that you can do of course. For most things, I'll give it a 3 out of 5

You can be up and editing in Paint.Net in a matter of minutes, so it is nice and easy to use. And the more you use it, the more features you'll learn about. We'll give it a 4 out of 5 for ease of use.

Web Based Imaging Software

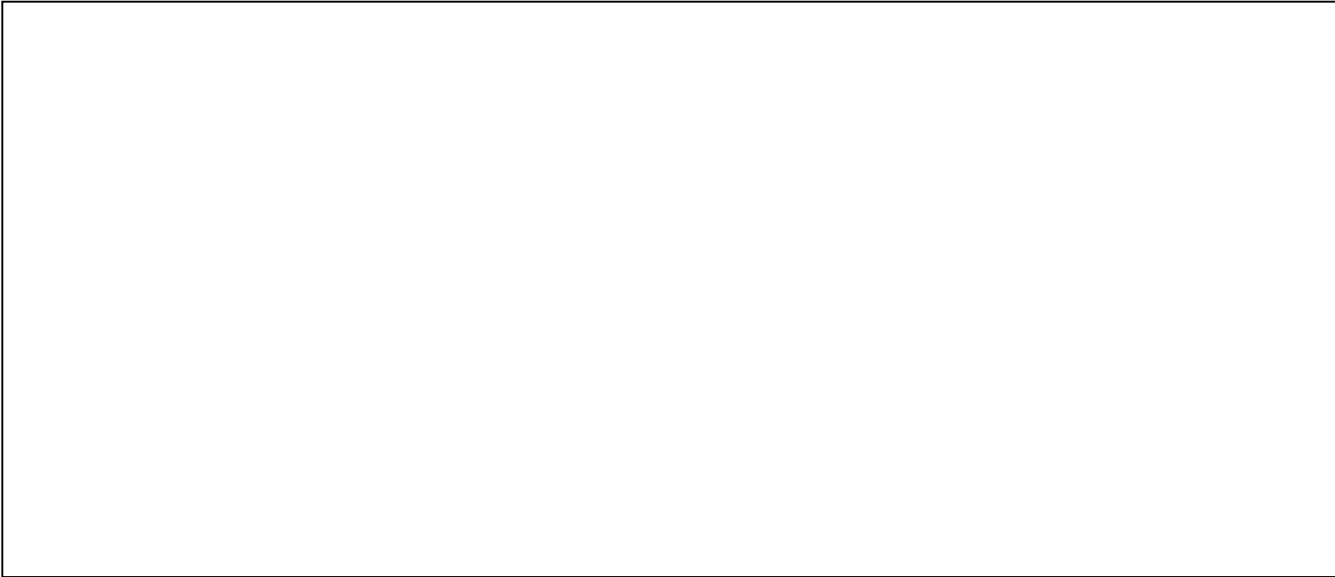
- Aviary
 - Multiple types of imaging tools: photo editing, pattern making, etc.
 - Small Subscription Fee
 - <http://aviary.com/home>
- Sumo Paint
 - Photo Manipulation and Painting
 - Free
 - Requires no sign-on
 - <http://www.sumopaint.com/>

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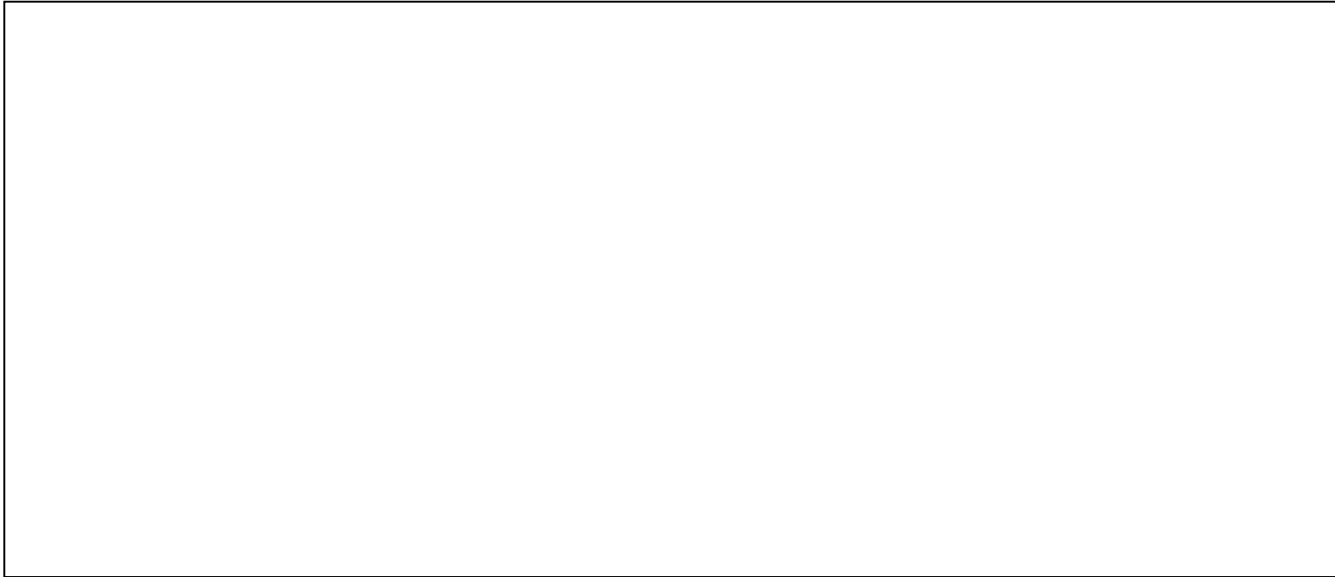
There are several web based image editing tools, most of them are currently free or a low cost. Web based imaging software has several advantages, and disadvantages over installed software. First, since you don't have to install anything, your IT department is less likely to complain about potential viruses, licenses, etc. Of course you do have several limitations in speed, upload/downloading of the image, and feature set, but for basic image manipulation, and them some, these web based tools do provide options that may not be otherwise available.

Most of these offer more than enough power for your standard uses a training department will need them for, cropping, changing the brightness/contrast, etc. However, they don't offer the full functionality of Photoshop, but we don't need that much control either.

Likewise they are fairly easy to use, as long as you are patient enough while they download.



Most people I've noticed generally either develop their on-line content in PowerPoint, or an app specific not for formal learning, or if your budget for distribution has been reduced.

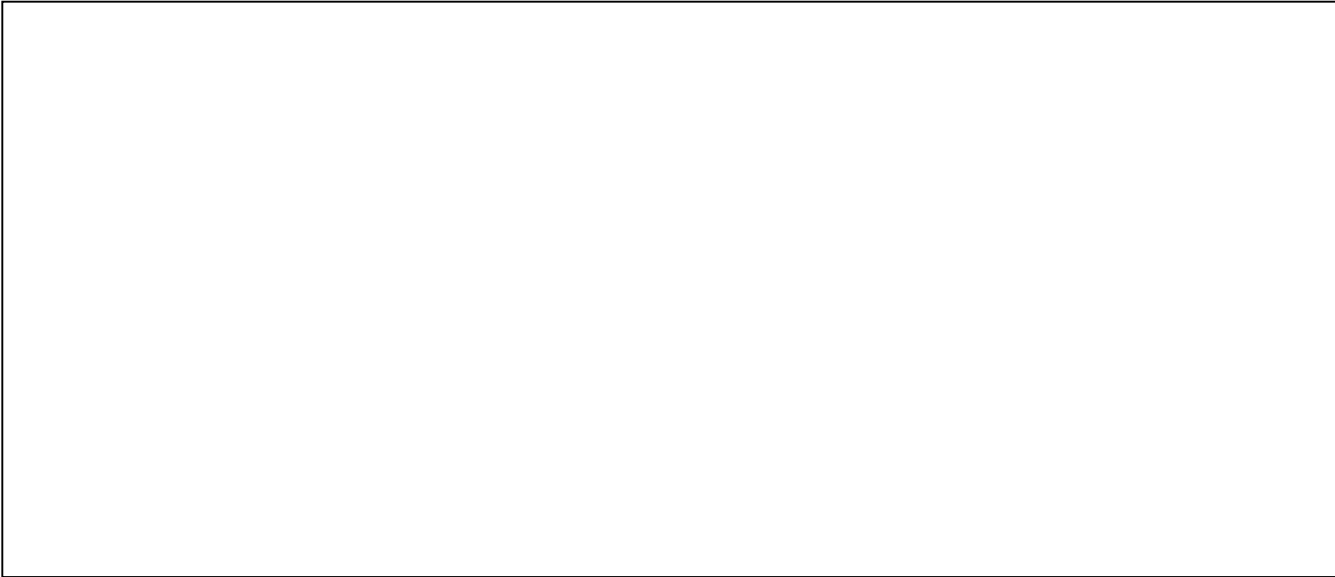


One of the most common formats to output our learning is PDF. Whether it be for distributing slides, no department will have only 1 or 2 copies, so everyone has to funnel it through those few people.

There are numerous free PDF converters available. On my machine I use CutePDF, which looks like a pro. It has several advantages, such as it can read some PDF documents, and is a full suite of Office tools, such as a word processor, which didn't have Microsoft Office available.

The last one, which many people don't know about is actually Microsoft Office 2007. If you have Office 2003 files, you can convert them to Office 2007 files, which takes about 2 minutes, and run the install program. We installed it for our team after we upgraded. Conversion takes about as long as saving the document normally does.

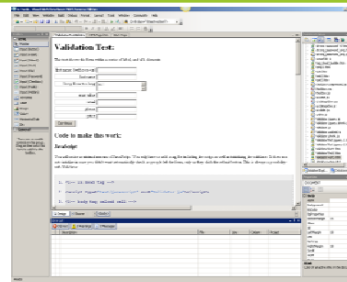
There are of course many more, but we won't get into those, as we could spend all day just talking about



Now many of us won't have to do much web development, however, I've noticed a lot of the application so we have to convert all of the http to https.

Free Web Editors

- MS Visual Web Developer Express Edition
 - WYSIWYG editor
 - Can do full web programming as well as simple pages

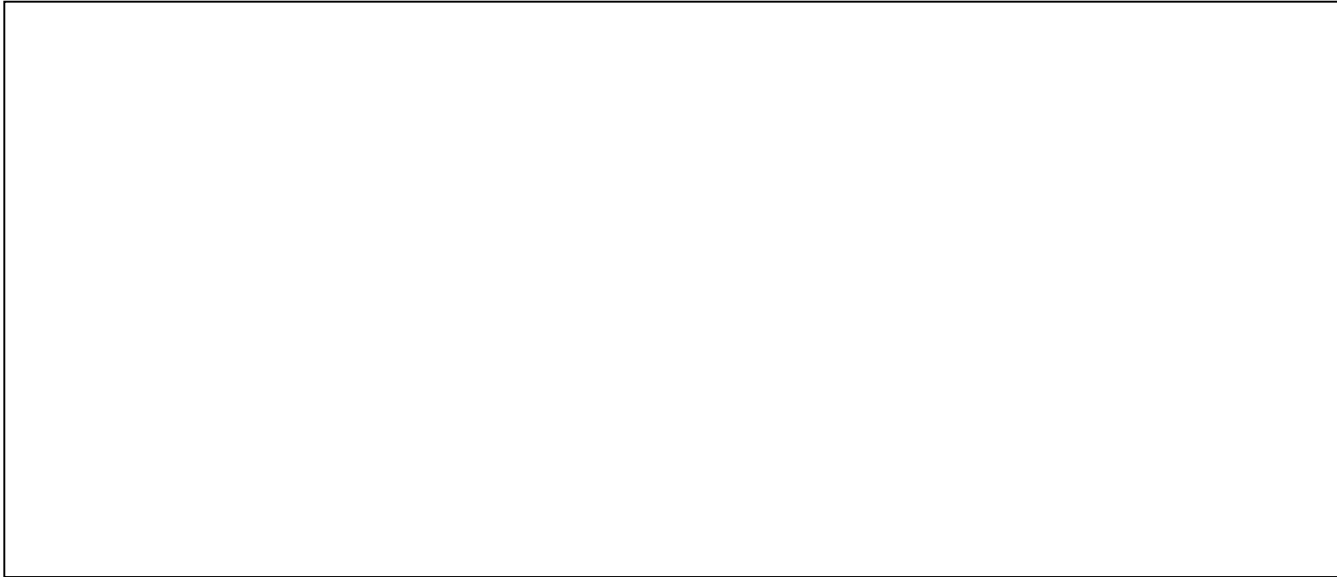


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If your looking an easier to use web design tool, I'd recommend Microsoft's Visual Web Developer Express Edition. This is a WHYSIYG (What You See Is What You Get) editor which is actually a free product from Microsoft. While not as powerful as their full fledged development tools, it still provides a lot of functionality which the average person needs. Add to it a simple editor which makes creating web pages as easy as typing in Word, and you have the starting of a descent application.

If you are so inclined, you can edit in code as well as design mode, and it even supports editing for full .Net web applications, but that is usually best left to your web programming team.

So this application is Free, and being from a name like Microsoft, means that your IT department will probably have less to say about you installing it.

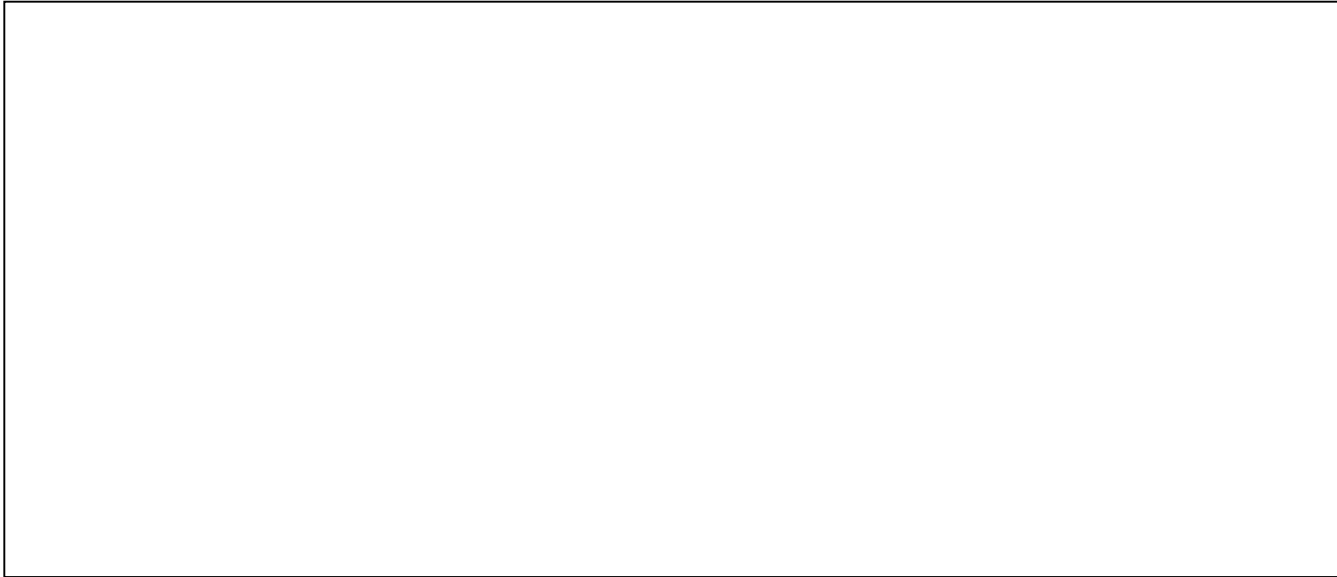


Next we'll look at some simple web conferencing applications. These are much simpler than something cheaper alternative. The 3 I reviewed, include Yugma, DimDim, and Yuuguu. They each allow up to 20

Each has a free version for up to 20 connections, while paid versions allow additional connections and fe

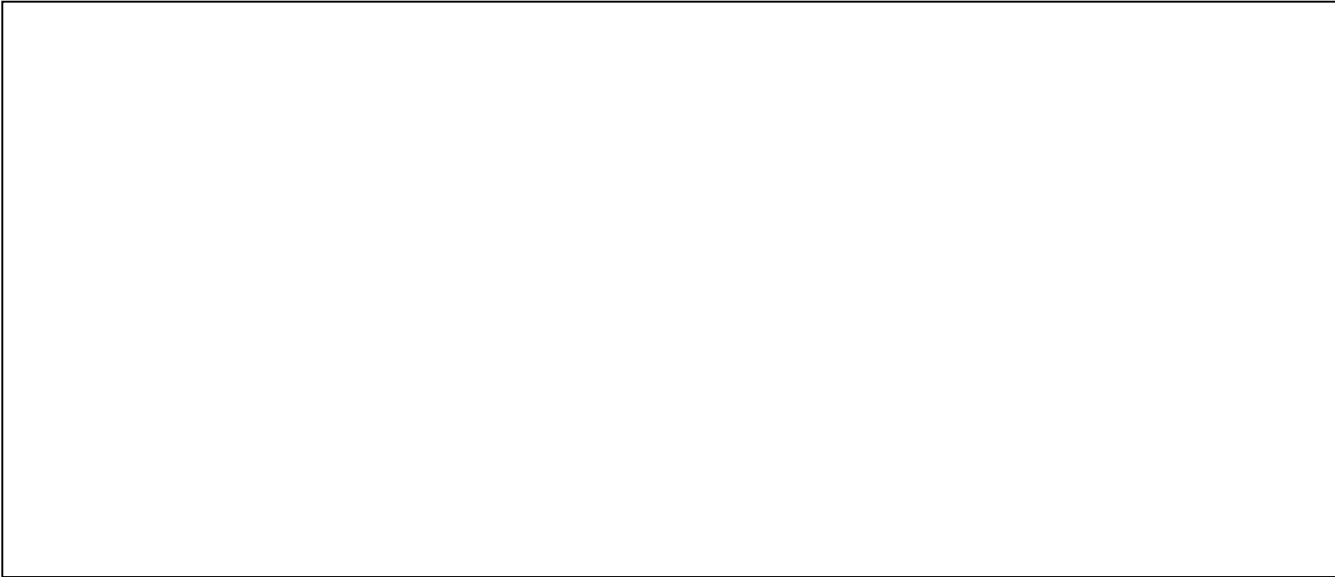
I have used Yugma and DimDim, and each was easy enough to create an account, and start a meeting.

Each has their own advantages and disadvantages which have to be weighed.



Learning Management Systems can be one of the largest expenses for a school or business running from Moodle, and based off of the Joomla Content Management System.

It, like all LMSs, does take a bit to run, and given it's design, runs better on a Linux server. However, it interdepartmental LMS, this would clearly work, as the cost to run one is low.



Before we go, I'd like to ask if there are any questions which you might have regarding the applications v

Feel free to place comments/questions in the chat section.

