

Software; Without It Nothing Would Work

Just think without software nothing would work. It's the be all and end all of how we interact with computers. Beyond the rather boring element of the operating system itself, I mean who wants to get excited about Windows Vista, software allows you to manage your music, edit your photos, write documents, view the web. It's everywhere. So what makes a good software package and what are the ones you should be using to do the task at hand? Here are some suggestions for both PC and Mac users:

Storing and managing photos. When it comes to storing and managing your photos on your computer there are lots of options both online and offline. Online there are a number of photo services such as Photobox or Kodak's EasyShare gallery, including the newly launched Adobe Photoshop Express service, and that's before you start looking at Flickr from Yahoo and Picasa from Google. Offline and one of the best solutions for the PC is Adobe's Photoshop Elements software. Simple yet effective there is plenty here for the digital photographer. The interface is clean and crisp and there are some really good features like the photo merge option and the flash based web galleries that will make this appeal to lots of people. On the Mac the best option for consumers is Apple's own iPhoto application. Although you can now get Adobe's elements for Mac, iPhoto does virtually everything you need including allowing you to make and publish your own book or website.

For Music. Chances are you have a large music collection and there are two really good music programs for the PC and the Mac to help you manage it. For the PC it's the incumbent music application; Windows Media Player 10. The software will manage you music, let you connect it to virtually every MP3 player (apart from Apple's iPod) to transfer songs and also is again virtually guaranteed to work with music subscription services (although again not with Apple's iTunes) so you can buy tracks or rent tracks online. On the mac there is really only one option, Apple's iTunes. It allows you to manage your music, is the only player to work with the company's iconic iPod MP3 player and also allows you to buy video and music through its iTunes store, which has recently become the number one music store in the US.

For the Office. Like storing and managing your photos, there are a number of solutions on and offline to help you write documents, manage spreadsheets and give presentations. Microsoft's office for Windows and Mac is very impressive, offers lots of features and will get the job done. The trouble is that it's also very expensive. If budget is tight, as in non-existent then you can opt for Google's online offering, which has the benefit of being able to be managed by a number of different workers at the same time. Alternative there is Open Office a free office application that offers a document writer, spreadsheet program and other bits and bobs so you can still write letters of resignation or find out much you've got in the bank.

For Surfing. Although there are plenty of browsers for surfing the web and the market leader is Microsoft's Windows Internet Explorer you really want to be surfing the Internet using Mozilla's Firefox. Firefox is an open source browser that allows you to bolt on third party applications it's the way to surf the web quickly and effectively, and tab browsing, if you aren't already using it, will revolutionise the way you surf the internet forever. Without these essential pieces of kit undoubtedly our computer usage would be considerably more difficult.

About the Author

Technology expert Thomas Pretty looks into the importance of [software reviews](#) when purchasing programs for your computer.

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