

iLife upgrade makes photos, videos fun

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One of the main reasons people buy Apple computers is because they come with fabulous software for managing your photos and creating movies.

But the curse (or blessing?) of owning Apple products is that there's always a newer version right around the corner. For most people, it generally doesn't make sense to upgrade your iPod, [iPhone](#) or Apple computer when a new one is released. But [software](#) is a different story.

In January, Apple released iLife '09, a \$79 suite of applications that includes the latest versions of [iPhoto](#), iMovie, GarageBand, iWeb and iDVD. It also comes pre-installed on all new Macs.

If you are a heavy iPhoto and iMovie user, the upgrade is worth it. The iPhoto enhancements make organizing, viewing and sharing your [photos](#) easier and more fun, and the new iMovie has more professional editing tools. You must have the Leopard operating system to upgrade to iLife '09.

I'm going to focus on iPhoto and iMovie because those are the most widely used, according to Apple.

Face time iPhoto '09 gives you two new ways to group your photos: based on who is in the picture and where it was taken.

When you first launch it after you upgrade, the program will go through all of your photos and find the faces in each one. This takes a long time,

about a second or two per photo, according to Apple. Once it's finished, you open up a photo and identify some of the faces by clicking on "Name." A picture of each person you identify is added to a corkboard in the "Faces" section of iPhoto. Double clicking on a face on the corkboard will bring up a bunch of other photos that iPhoto thinks contain that same person. By confirming which ones are actually that person, you help iPhoto's [face detection](#) software get better.

The face detection is pretty accurate, but it's not perfect. For instance, it thought that pictures of my brother or my mom were me and that two unrelated people were the same person, presumably because they both had glasses. I was impressed that the software was able to correctly identify pictures of my relatives and me when we were children. Apple says you'll get better results if you "seed" the face detection by identifying more than one photo of the same person.

Going through this somewhat tedious process gives you a fun and new way to look through your photos. If you are making a slideshow or photo book and you know you want to include certain people, instead of having to look through different collections, you can instantly pull up every photo in your collection that includes that person.

Uploading

In the past, you had to download a separate plug-in to iPhoto to upload photos directly to Facebook. Now the ability to upload to the social networking site is built right into iPhoto. When you upload your photos directly to Facebook, the album title, captions and names of the people you have identified are all automatically added in Facebook and the photos can be automatically "tagged." Changes in Facebook (such as someone tagging himself) are automatically made in iPhoto as well, which saves you some time. If you have an iPhone or a GPS enabled camera, iPhoto automatically detects where the photo was taken and

labels each photo accordingly. You can see a map plotting the locations of your photos and you can organize and search by photo location. If you don't have an iPhone or GPS enabled camera, you can manually add locations to individual photos or collections of photos.

iPhoto also now lets you upload your photos directly to photo-sharing site Flickr. The places you've added to your photos will appear on your Flickr map (you have to enable this in preferences) and like Facebook, changes you make in Flickr are automatically synced so both collections are the same. You can also use places to make new travel themed photo books that display a map tracing your trip alongside your photos.

Making movies

Apple overhauled its iMovie program to help make your movies look even better. Probably the best feature is "video stabilization," which makes shaky video play back smoothly. It takes a long time to work, but it's worth it. iMovie isn't as easy to use as iPhoto, but it lessens the need for a more advanced video editing program such as Final Cut Express. Now it's easy to do things like speed up or slow down clips or take the audio from one clip and lay it over the video from another. There are lots of cool new transitions, titles and effects and themes. If you like to create digital media from your photos and videos, iLife '09 is a worthwhile investment.

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