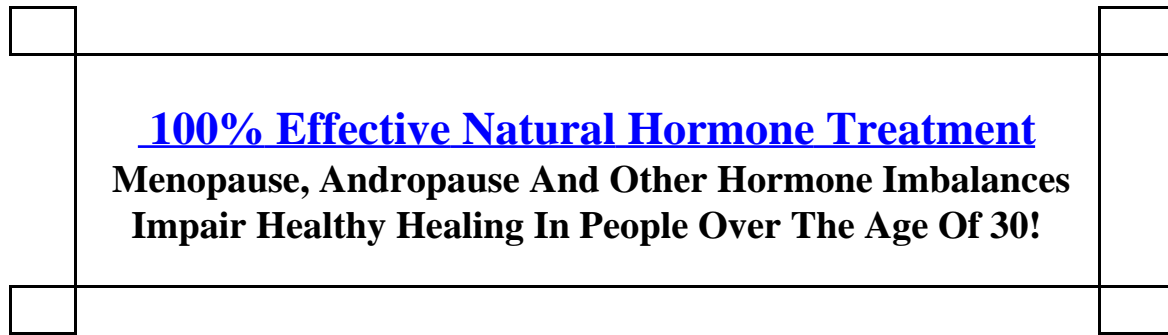


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Tips To Creating A Professional Looking Photo Montage or Picture Slideshow

By William Leung

Are you one of those people that love creating photo video slideshows, or photo montages, from

your most cherished photos? And do you ever wonder why your slideshow seems so bland compared to other professional looking photo slideshows? There are no hidden secrets to creating dynamic and interesting photo slideshows. By following just a few simple steps, you can be on your way to creating dynamic and professional looking photo montages from your favorite photos.

1. Use high resolution good quality photos.

The first and most important step in creating a good quality photo slideshow is using good photos. Nothing ruins a slideshow more than bad photos. If you are using scanned photos, make sure they are free of dust and have been color corrected. Digital photos are a better source for slideshows as they are already digitized and ready for use in your photo slideshow program. In addition to the visual quality of the image, make sure your scanned photo or digitized image is a high enough resolution. DVD video resolution is 720x480 pixels. At the minimum, I recommend using an image at least double the resolution of DVD video. I prefer 1500x1000 pixels at the minimum for all my photos. There is a reason for this preference and I'll explain later why this is important.

2. Fill the screen with the photo. Get rid of the black space.

Have you ever seen photo slideshows with photos in the center of the screen with black space surrounding the photo? When I create slideshows, the photo in the slideshow takes up the entire screen. There is nothing visible other than the photo. No black space is visible on the screen beyond the photo. In my opinion, having any black space outside of the photo makes the slideshow appear unprofessional. It tells me the photo being used didn't quite fit and centering it on the screen with black space around it was the only way the photo would work. The television and computer monitor is wider than it is tall, so horizontal photos work better than vertical photos. One reason for using photos that are at least 1500x1000 pixels will ensure your vertical photos fill the horizontal space of your monitor. One rule I go by is if the photo doesn't work, don't use it. Even if I think it's a great photo and I want to include it in my slideshow, if the photo won't work on the screen, I won't include it in the project.

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3. Limit the number of transition wipes.

Some photo montage programs come with a hundred different types of transition wipes. To many, that may be cool and the more wipes the software offers, the better the program may seem to be. When I view a photo montage that uses 20 different transition wipes, it draws importance away from the photos and viewers notice the transitions more than the images. Transition wipes should appear seamless and unnoticed. In all the photo montages I create, I use no more than 1 or 2 transition wipes, and most of the time, it's just a simple fade in fade out photo transition. Using all the transition wipes your software comes with may be a cool thing, but the focus of the slideshow, which are your photos, is lost when this is done.

4. Make sure your viewers process the images by having an adequate hold time.

When you view a slideshow, have you ever experienced photos going by too quick and missing what you just viewed? Your audience needs to see and process the photos in you slideshow in order to enjoy and remember it. In the photo slideshows I create, I make sure each of my photos hold for 5–7 seconds, depending on the tempo of the project. And this hold time does not include the 1 second transition in the front and end of each image. You will need to decide what a good hold time will be. Too short and the viewer misses what was just shown. Too long and it feels like awkward silence.

5. Zoom, pan, and hold are keys to a dynamic photo montage.

I'm sure you've seen photo montages that have images fade in and fade out for 10 minutes and that's pretty much all the photo montage does with the photos. After just 3 minutes of watching, I'm sure it gets a little monotonous. The photos may be interesting, but you might as well flip through a photo album if that is all your project does. To keep things interesting, I use a combination of 3 things for each image in the photo montage. The photos will zoom in or zoom out; pan up, down, left or right; or hold in place for the duration of that image. Combining these 3 techniques for your photos will create a dynamic and interesting photo montage. Regarding the zoom technique, having a higher resolution image, I recommend 1500x1000 pixels, will ensure your image doesn't lose quality when zooming in. Image quality will be one less thing to be concerned with when working on your slideshow if you have good photos. Use good quality photos right from the start and you won't have to go back and rescan or find replacement photos later. One final thing to remember is not to over do it. Keep in mind how much you zoom or move the image. Your viewer needs to be able to see the photo and if you put too much movement in the photo, he or she will miss what you're trying to show. And mix up the movement. I typically zoom and pan four or five photos, and then hold one or two.

6. Try video intros and video endings in your slideshows.

If your slideshow program allows the use of inserting video into the project, try using specific video introductions in your project. For example, if you're creating a slideshow from pictures of your daughter's first birthday, find or create a video introduction that says "1st Birthday." If you don't know how to create a video intro, there are websites that specialize in providing videos for photo montage enthusiasts. One such website is

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www.instantimagers.com

. They have a large library of video intros

with affordable pricing. And the best thing is, you can download the video right after purchase without waiting for a cd to be shipped. Of course, check to see that your software will accept video files.

7. Keep the project at a respectable length.

You may have hundreds of photos you want to use and want the slideshow running forever, but a good slideshow run time should be 10–15 minutes. Anything longer than 15 minutes will slowly cause your audience to lose interest the longer the show runs. The creator of the slideshow may think its okay, but this will not be the case with your audience, the people you want to impress. In this case, too much of a good thing does ring true. I use about 3 songs in most of my projects. The average song is about 3.5 to 5 minutes long. Sticking to this format will keep your project within the 10–15 minute length. Add a fourth song if the playtime of your current 3 songs are too short.

8. Finish it off with a DVD box cover & disc art.

For the final touch, find artwork and print out a DVD cover that can be inserted into the DVD case. And if you have a DVD disc printer, print a nice design on the disc for that final professional touch. Again,

www.instantimagers.com

has a number of designs for the DVD cover & disc art. They have a great

number of designs with different themes. Having some artwork for your DVD cover & DVD disc will

look much better than having just a black DVD case and a white DVD disc. Not to mention, your family and friends will be very impressed!!!

I hope the above tips will help you in creating better photo montages. Try different things and see what works for you.

William Leung is the owner of

www.instantimagers.com

and has over 10 years of graphic design

experience. He also possesses skills in web development, design, and multimedia design.

Launch of Amara Flash Photo Slideshow Software

By Amara software

Launch of

Amara

Flash Photo Slideshow Software

is a new, no-nonsense software program that lets users

quickly create a Flash slideshow, using their favourite pictures. By just following the easy steps on the clear user interface of the software program, users can create a Flash photo show with an unlimited number of slides, and even with their own background music.

does all the work, users don't need any programming skills

or knowledge of Flash. In today's world where everything must be quick and easy, Amara Flash Photo Slideshow Maker saves people time and effort but they'll still get professional results.

The

Amara Flash

Photo Slideshow Software

lets people use all kinds of picture formats in

the slideshow, such as GIF, JPEG, BMP and PNG. With many creative slide transitions to choose from, and options to individualise the slideshows through speed control, transition time and border options, the Amara Flash Photo Slideshow Maker is the tool of choice for website owners and webmasters who want to add a professional-looking slideshow to their site. The slideshow maker creates an SWF file that can be used for other purposes and in other programs as well, such as PowerPoint, Macromedia Flash and Director, HTML editors, etc.

In addition, users can choose their preferred size for the slide show, and they can add a different URL link to every picture, if they like.

The Amara Flash Photo Slideshow Maker can be used as often and for as many different slideshows as people like, and created slideshows are easy to update, because they are automatically saved within the software program. Besides slideshows you can also create Flash banners, Flash ads, and Flash intros with the application.

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Amara Flash Photo

Slideshow Software is a shareware program, so anyone can first try out the free shareware version before deciding to buy it. The free, unregistered version can be downloaded for free from the Amara Software website, and it is fully functional, but slideshows created with the free version will contain a visible watermark. To get the registered version without the watermark, users can buy Amara Flash Photo Slideshow Maker for just US\$29.95 through their secure payment service link on the Amara Software website. Once they've bought it, users will get free updates!

More information about Amara Flash Photo Slideshow Maker is available on the website, where you can also see some working examples of a photo slide show created with the program: www.amarasoftware.com/flash-slide-show.htm. For any other questions, please e-mail the program's creator at amara@amarasoftware.com

Amara Software

is the developer

of no-nonsense Flash programs, making it easier for people to create Flash elements for their website. Other Flash programs by Amara Software are:

Amara Flash News Ticker
(www.amarasoftware.com/flash-news-ticker.htm)

Amara Flash Menu and
Flash Button Maker (www.amarasoftware.com/flash-menu-builder.htm)

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