

Creating a Photobook

Coffee-table style photobooks are one of the hottest new products for showing off your photography. The option to create a book has been around for several years in the wedding photography industry, but has been too expensive for everyday use. Prices have come down significantly and more great options for creating books are becoming available every day.

Creating your own personalized book is really quite simple. There are many options to create books online. Website that offer good photobooks that are not too expensive are:

Shutterfly.com
MPix.com
PhotoWorks.com

They all provide everything you need to create your book. With these options they print and assemble the book for you.

Software to layout and design your book

I used the Apple iPhoto program for my first book. I was blown away by how easy it was to create and how good the quality was. For this option you must buy the software (sorry, Mac only), design the book on your computer, click a button to send the files to Apple, then wait about a week for your book to arrive. My first hard-cover book cost me about \$50 and was on my doorstep in about a week from the time I clicked the send button.

I also learned that I could print directly from iPhoto to my desktop printer. So with the right kind of printer and paper you can match the quality of the Apple book without sending it to Apple. I'm not sure if its much cheaper since ink is getting so expensive for desktop printers and paper is an issue.

You can also use just about any kind of page layout program to do the layout and design. Microsoft Publisher, Quark XPress, Adobe InDesign, or even just Photoshop alone can be used to set up your pages.

I Googled "photobook design software" and found 38,200 results, so you can easily do some research on this yourself.

Printing your own book

Your printer

How you design and print depends a lot on what kind of printer you have. If your printer doesn't print 8.5x11 borderless, your best bet is to go with a plain white background so you don't need to worry about the printer margins. If you can print 8.5x11 borderless, you'll be able to get a little more creative with your designs and backgrounds.

Paper you use

Don't bother to go to your local office supply store to find photobook paper. I've spent at least \$50 investigating those options. You really need paper that is THIN and can be printed on both sides. I ordered two complete paper sample packs from Digital Art Supplies and Red River Paper. Both have excellent options for photo books. I especially liked Mitsubishi dual-sided semi-gloss or matt and Tetenal 130 dual-sided (hard to find in the US). Red River Paper makes a matt paper called 32lb premium matte CS2. It comes in boxes of 100 sheets for about \$20 plus shipping. They also make a thicker version if you want heavier pages.

Digital Art Supplies in San Diego
1-877-534-4278
<http://www.digitalartsupply.com>

Red River Paper in Dallas
1-888-248-8774
<http://www.redriverpaper.com>

Printing your book

If you want two-sided pages you are going to need to print back-to-back. I have found this to be really confusing and I screwed up a bunch of pages because of this. Figure it out with cheap paper and a simple test grid page (that uses less ink than photos) before you attempt to do this with the better quality paper.

Assembling and binding your book

Even before you begin designing your book you need to have a pretty good idea about how you are planning to bind your book. If you like the look of the hard cover books that Apple delivers, but want to print your book at home, you can get something very similar from a company *Unibind*.

They sell a kit called the "Create A Book" binder, which includes the cover plus the device to heat-seal the pages into the cover. This is the unit I have bought and you are all free to use. Its very nice! However, they did not include the paper to print onto, so you'll need to buy your own paper. I bought more covers (8.5x11 landscape format for 8.5"x11" paper) at Office Depot on sale for \$2.50 +tax each. They were being closed out. Normally they retail for about \$19 each. I have about 8 of them on hand and will let them go (first come) for what I paid for them. If you want a special color, size or option you can buy your own covers online. Here's one company I spoke to that sells them in ten-packs, but I'm sure there are others.

<http://www.mybinding.com/.sc/ms/ch/Unibind-Photobooks.html>

This is the device I have: <http://www.myphotobookcreator.com>

These are the covers you should be looking for:
<http://www.unibind.com/PhotoBook/index-USA.html>

Unibind is also coming out with a book cover that does not require the binding heat unit, but once sealed you cannot un-do anything and I have yet to see any of them on the market.

Again, I need to emphasize the importance of knowing ahead of time what kind of cover you want to use. With the hard covers you must remember to leave about 3/8" to 1/2" on the inside edge of each page so the book cover has something to grab on to.

Other book options

You can also buy the Epson "Story Teller Photo Book Creator" for about \$20. I got one at Fry's. Canon also makes something similar. The paper they include is more like photographic paper than it is like book paper. The Epson version can be printed only on one side. The software that comes with it is only compatible with Windows so if you're using a Mac you'll need to set up your pages manually. The Canon version I'm pretty sure is two-sided, but is still a thick photographic paper.

You can Google "digital scrapbooking" and find hundreds of other creative ideas.

What we'll do at the party

OK, let's be honest! This party I'm having might be just as much about showing you how to create a photobook as it is about having a party. But I will have the Unibind system here and I will show you many other options. So if you can't get your book together by then, or just prefer to wait till you learn a little more about it, that's OK too. Just come for the party!

I will bring the binder to future OCUPS meetings if someone needs to bind a book. Its small and simple, so that's not a problem.

I will be in Socorro until Feb. 1 so I'll be unavailable to answer questions. Please do RSVP to let me know if you're coming.