TRY ▶ Open-Source Software

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If you need software but are short on funds, you might try open-source software. This is software in which the underlying source code is made available to users to read, modify, fix bugs, add features, and build new versions of the software. While you may not be particularly interested in programming code, you can download open source software from the Internet and use it on your home or classroom computer for free. Here are a few of the many open-source applications now available.

Audio Editing Software

Audacity (audacity.sourceforge.net) is an easy-to-use audio recorder and editor that you can use to do podcasting projects with your students or voiceovers on videos and multimedia presentations. It will run on either Windows or Macintosh computers and has all the tools you need to record, edit, and create multi-track audio files.

Draw and Paint Software

Tux Paint (www.tuxpaint.org) is a simple, easy to use, drawing and painting program for young children (ages three and up). It provides a blank canvas with a variety of brush shapes, lines, colors, and other features that children can use to create, save, and print colorful images. Tux Paint is available for either Windows or Macintosh computers.

Course Management Software

Moodle (moodle.org) is a free course management program for creating dynamic online learning environments. It is currently being used by thousands of educators across the globe to extend their face-to-face classroom activities onto the Web and to develop sophisticated Web-based courses that include discussion forums, wikis, quizzes, resource-sharing tools, and more. Visit the Moodle Web site to learn more about the software and how to use it.

Image Editing Software

GIMP (www.gimp.org) is a cross-platform, image editor that allows you to manipulate photographic images and create two-dimensional graphics. It's a lot like Photoshop with many of the same features, only it's free! Macintosh users should note that GIMP requires installing Apple's X11 on your computer, which is included in the "Optional Installs" Package on the OS X installation disc.

Web Authoring Software

Nvu (www.nvu.com) is a free Web-authoring program that you can use to create Web pages and manage a Web site. There is no need to learn HTML coding with Nvu. Its graphical interface allows you to drag and drop text and image files where you want them on your Web pages. Nvu is available for either Windows and Macintosh computers. You can find a tutorial on creating and publishing Web pages with Nvu at (www.thesitewizard.com/gettingstarted/nvu1.shtml).

Web Browsers

Since its release in 2004, Firefox (www.mozilla.com) has become one of the most frequently downloaded applications on the Internet and a popular alternative to Internet Explorer. Available for either Windows and Macintosh computers, Firefox offers pop-up blocking, tabbed browsing, and enhanced Web security. Macintosh users running OS X may want to consider the Camino browser (www.caminobrowser.org) that uses the same technology as Firefox, but is built specifically for the OS X interface. ✐

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