



*This is a ubiquitous topic. These days virtually all tablets and smart phones have inbuilt digital cameras. In the earlier devices they were considered more as novelties, but the technology developed rapidly and now it is possible to take a photograph on a smart phone that is of almost as good a quality as a mid-range dedicated digital camera. Many users find that they meet almost all of their needs.*

*This course would not be complete without looking at the capabilities of the cameras, their limitations, and how the images can be worked with. We will not go into a lot of detail as most users probably already have a reasonable knowledge of their devices.*

## Tablets and Smart Phones

How many of you own a smart phone, and how often do you use it to take a photograph? Today, in Australia, there are more mobile phones than there are people, and the majority of phones would be smart phones that include a camera. Many people prefer to use a smart phone to capture an image simply because of its convenience; it is nearly always at hand in a pocket or bag, and is less bulky than a conventional camera. Phones are fine if the objective is to simply view the images on the phone or share them on social media, and the images probably are good enough for viewing on a computer screen or 6" x 4" prints. However the management of image files on the device is restricted by the device's software, and there will be many situations where it is desirable to modify and enhance the images and to consolidate and preserve them for the long term.

These devices are the point-and-shoot cameras of today. The lenses are tiny and there are virtually no settings to worry about as almost all of the controls are set automatically. There are no buttons or menus to select from, only a few touch-sensitive spots on the screen from which basic parameters such as image shape (normal, square or panorama), time-lapse (self-timer or delay), flash activation, and shooting mode (still or video) are selected. The camera will auto-focus and detect faces, but the screen can also be tapped to set a particular point on which to set the exposure and focus. Usually there are cameras at both the front and rear of the device, the rear being the better quality.

Being an integral part of the 'computer', i.e. tablet or phone, it will immediately display the images, catalogue and store them, and enable them to be sent via email or social media to family and friends. As with many good things, there are down sides, e.g. lighting may be inadequate, shutter speeds are limited, and being hand-held the image is prone to distortion due to camera movement. One problem also is when trying to take a photograph with a strong sun behind the photographer, the screen becomes very difficult to see, hindering composition of the image.

Because the camera is part of the tablet or phone, all of its controlling software is part of the device's operating system and when the operating system is updated there are often enhancements to the camera. Also the camera is linked to apps such as Skype.

## Image storage and adjustment

The operating system decides how the image files will be arranged on saving. There is usually an app that will display the thumbnail images in an index page, sometimes referred to as the Camera Roll. At the next order of arrangement they may appear in a virtual folder that has been created for the day on which the photos were taken. Finally, selected images may be moved to albums that the user creates.

When an image is selected it can be deleted if wished by tapping on the Trashcan icon. There is also an edit button that will usually provide the following functions:

- Rotate
- Crop
- Auto-adjust the colour balance
- Manually make a change to colour and light values.

A wide range of apps is available in the device manufacturers' online store that will supplement the operating system's features. Many of these are free, including one by a highly regarded image editing software manufacturer.

## Transferring image files to a computer

Many people are content to let their files remain on the tablet or phone by freeing up storage space by deleting unwanted files as necessary. However, there are risks in doing this, the most obvious being the potential loss of valuable photos if the device is damaged or lost (see [Unit 6](#)). Also it is often desired to consolidate files where more than one camera is used at an event, and there may be a need to do more advanced editing.

There are several ways by which files can be transferred:

1. By sending as attachments to an email to yourself; make sure that the original file is sent and not reduced by the email software.
2. By saving to 'cloud' (see [Unit 6](#)) and then downloading to the computer (note that large files will consume a lot of data on your Internet plan).
3. By using software that allows synchronising with a computer. iPhoto is free and is probably the most well known, and it is available for all platforms. However it is not the most easy to use so check to see whether alternatives are available.
4. The computer's own operating system might have a utility that allows a tablet or camera to be connected to it by cable and thereby enable the computer to 'see' directly into the device's file storage card. Macs have the Image Capture app and Windows will open the phone / tablet as a folder. Organise the files as described in [Unit 6](#).
- 5.

### Activity 8.1

*Take some photos on your tablet or phone and experiment with the editing features. Then look at your devices and decide which method of file transfer suits you best. You may find this a bit tricky so don't hesitate to ask for help from the author.*

***In the next unit we look at “What Next!!” We look at other things we can do with our images apart from just storing them on our computer.***