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Canvastic 1.1

By [Charles G. Doe](#) - Posted Mar 1, 2005 [Print Version](#) Page 1 of 1

REPORT CARD

Overall Rating:	4 Stars
Installation:	A
Content/Features:	A-
Ease of Use:	A
Product Support:	B

Company: Canvastic, LLC, 12635 Flagg Dr., Lafayette, CO 80026; Phone: 303/359-9836; Fax: 303/942-3667; E-mail: sales@canvastic.com; Internet: <http://www.canvastic.com/>.

Price: \$69--single user, school license. \$99--single user, consumer license. \$699--lab pack, 35 seats. \$949--site license, each building. This pricing is for downloaded versions; CD delivery costs an additional \$50. Additional pricing plans are available.

Audience: K-8 students.

Format: Internet download or CD-ROM for Windows and Macintosh computers: publishing tool program.

Minimum System Requirements:

Windows systems: Pentium 3 computer (Pentium 4 recommended) with system 2000, 128-MB RAM.

Macintosh systems: OS X computers, G3 processor (G4 or better recommended), system 10.2.8, and 128-MB RAM. Macintosh OS 9 computers require a G3 processor, System 9.1x or better, and 96 MB of RAM.

All systems require 50-MB hard disk space and the latest version of QuickTime. The installation file in the download requires Acrobat Reader. Both QuickTime and Acrobat Reader are already on many computers and are easy to get at no cost, if needed.

Description: Canvastic is a publishing tool that combines paint, draw, and text tools and can be used to create single page-sized documents or slideshows. The program offers easy-to-understand text, draw and paint tools, and a clear interface. Canvastic is customizable for use with younger students and has none of the "toy" features that are common with paint programs for this age group. The download package includes backgrounds, clipart, templates, and some sample lessons in several content areas.

Reviewer Comments:

Installation: I downloaded and installed this program on a 966 MHz Windows computer with no difficulty, other than the time involved in



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a long download since I am in a rural area and still connect to the Internet via modem.

A download demo version is available that doesn't allow printing or saving. Once the program fee is paid, a user name and registration code is sent via e-mail; both are easy to enter and fully enable the program. **Installation Rating: A**

Content/Features: Canvastic is a good solution to some of the problems found in working with K-8 children and computers. Many of the available programs are very complicated and, by the time students learn how to use them, there is often little time left to do anything. In addition, many similar programs contain features that kids love, such as amusing tools and funny sound effects, but these actually distract young learners from staying on task, especially in a lab situation.

The tools found in Canvastic are the same as those found in adult programs, and since the tools do basically the same thing, this program is far better at preparing students for the tools they will be using as adults. Overall, Canvastic presents a simpler graphic/text publishing program that students can learn to use faster, with fewer distractions, and that will lead to projects that are produced more rapidly.

The "preference sets" for customizing Canvastic are probably the program's most useful feature. These offer various combinations of screen resolution, tool and color selections, palette positions, and so on. Canvastic comes with seven preference sets that are easily customizable; teachers can create new ones tailored to the age and skill of their students. The slideshow creator and the templates and lesson ideas are very helpful as well.

Upon starting to work with Canvastic, the user chooses a preference set. The program then opens to a work area that includes color and tool palettes, as well as preview, browser, and choices palettes.

The browser palette shows thumbnail (small) pictures of open Canvastic documents. The choices palette displays various icons, depending on the tools to be used. To keep younger students on track, teachers can remove most of the choices and perhaps some of the palettes to focus students only on the tools being taught.

A text tool creates moveable text boxes; text in various sizes is easily included in any project. Finished Canvastic documents can be saved in various formats for use with other programs.

The program includes a nice selection of clipart that easily can be increased by adding appropriately formatted documents to the correct folder. Students can place the clipart in documents by clicking on the clipart button in the tools palette, selecting the clipart that appears in the Choices palette, and stamping it on to the document.

Both the draw and paint toolbars have a paint button, although it usually isn't displayed in the draw toolbar for younger children.

Despite its good basic conception and operation, Canvastic does have some limitations. When both draw and paint tools are included for older students, two clipart buttons appear, one for draw and one for paint. The art can be moved in either draw or paint modes, but only clipart placed with the draw tool can be resized.

In addition, the program does not include a minimize button, and the program window cannot be minimized. The "X" button used for

closing windows on Windows computers remains, but here the button only closes the paint or draw window, not the tool bars and palettes. To close these, the quit command in the file menu must be used.

I like the idea behind this program and, generally, the way it has been implemented. However, the software is still fairly new and some awkwardness remains to be ironed out. Fortunately, the Canvastic developers are hard at work, already upgrading the product. A new edition, Version 2.0, will be available during the summer of 2005 and will be free to registered users. **Content/Features Rating: A-**

Ease of Use: This program is very easy-to-use. The idea of limiting the bells and whistles in the form of "toy" features, as well as limiting additional unnecessary and potentially confusing features, is a good one. **Ease of Use Rating: A**

Product Support: Canvastic is a relatively easy program to use and most users won't need technical support.

Technical support is available by e-mail at support@canvastic.com and online in the form of pages covering known issues and quick fixes. A company phone number (not toll-free) appears on the Web site. E-mail users are asked to include information about the best means of return contact, including telephone numbers and the best times to be reached by phone.

At the time of this review, the download package included documentation that explained program installation only. Questions about various program features were answered with online documents. I ran into some awkward and inconvenient moments with the online help features.

Since this program is aimed at students, a one- or two-page help sheet in the form of a PDF file that could be printed and used with students would be helpful. **Product Support Rating: B**

Recommendation: I highly recommend Canvastic for use with children in K-8 schools and in some secondary applications. The program may seem a little expensive to purchase for individual home use when compared to most children's software, but the price seems realistic when compared to standard paint or draw programs.

The basic no-frills tools and options, along with the ability to easily modify choices for various age levels, result in a program that makes creating and completing projects easier than with many similar programs. **Highly Recommended.**

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