

## Hands On with ZoomAlbum

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Falling neatly into the concept of “small is beautiful,” ZoomAlbum offers an interesting alternative to the standard photo album. Measuring a mere 3” x 3” (4” x 4” books are also available for professional photographers and retailers), these petite hardcover photo books can be carried around in pocket or purse so your clients can easily share their special events (wedding, the kid’s championship soccer game or dance recital) with friends and family.



Initially popular with the scrapbooking/crafts crowd, the simplicity and added sales potential of ZoomAlbum has been attracting wedding and event photographers as well. These mini books are a great source of extra revenue and I haven’t met anyone who hasn’t been impressed with the quality of the books and how quickly they can be assembled. Yes, these are do-it-yourself projects though ZoomAlbum has partnered with a number of retailers who will assemble the books for you (more on this later).

### How It Works

Available in kit form, you get a software application for layout and adding text, a sheet of glossy photo paper with an adhesive back and either a solid-color cover or the materials to make a wrap-around photo cover.

The software is both Mac and Windows compatible and simple to use. Just select twelve photos for the book, drag and drop them into the order you want, choose a layout (and optional frame), add text and you’re done. Then run the sheet of supplied photo paper through an inkjet printer (ZoomAlbum recommends Canon or Epson printers). If you’ve opted to do a photo cover, you’ll have to go through the whole process again with a single image for the cover.

Assembling the book is actually fun. Essentially, you’re making a folded book out of a single sheet of paper, which is much easier than it sounds. Folding directions are included on the

backing sheet and ZoomAlbum also has a couple of videos on its site if you want to see the book assembly in action.

Once the page is folded, just slip it into the cover and you're done, although adding an embellishment such as a piece of decorative paper or ribbon adds a nice touch. Putting together the wrap-around photo cover is a little more tedious for first-timers, though.

## **Book Building**

With experience in bookarts and origami, I was excited to put together a couple of books for myself. Once the software was installed, I started looking for images that would work best with the book's square format.

The software was certainly beginner friendly and offered a good variety of font options for text. It's not Adobe InDesign or Illustrator, though, nor was it meant to be but I was a little frustrated at not having more flexibility. Still, there were enough tools to effectively get the job done.

I used the Canon Pixma Pro 9500 and the Epson R1800 for printing and encountered no real problems with either. It took a little extra effort to keep the paper straight, though.

The glossy, heavyweight paper delivered decent image quality but I found myself wishing there were other options. I'd love to see a matte or fine art paper option or, barring that, a semi-gloss.

## **Easier Than It Looks**

Folding the book took little effort and the directions are simple to follow. Everything is cut and scored so there's no need for tools other than your hands. The adhesive is somewhat forgiving so if you don't get the fold perfect, you can correct it if you act quickly.

Attaching the first and last pages to the inside front and back covers took more concentration to align and I have to admit that my samples weren't perfect but they still looked good. The wrap-around photo cover required the most precision and time—you should watch the video on the ZoomAlbum site before you tackle this type of cover. It's not complicated but it can be a little confusing at first.

Once you get the hang of it, assembling a book doesn't take much time at all; maybe a few minutes at best. But the end result looks like it took a lot longer to put together.

Don't panic if ZoomAlbum sounds like more work than you're able or willing to do—especially for large orders. Contact Ellen ([ellen@zoomalbum.com](mailto:ellen@zoomalbum.com)) for information about fulfillment orders for 3" x 3" and 4" x 4" books. She'll set you up with the kits and/or put you in contact with someone who will assemble the books for you. Alternatively, you can do a trial run by ordering from the website in quantities as small as three books or as large as 72.

## **The Bottom Line**

ZoomAlbum is the perfect balance of handmade customization and quality and ease of production making it one of my favorite products for both personal and professional use. Don't let the size of these little books fool you – there's big earning potential with these high-quality mini-albums.

**Pros:** Attractive and high quality look and feel; good add-on or substitute for album orders; can be customized, easy to create, fulfillment services available

**Cons:** Software is a little clunky; wrap-around photo covers require precision; cover colors are limited; available only in glossy photo paper

**Pricing:** (direct from [www.zoomalbum.com](http://www.zoomalbum.com)):

Solid color covers (3" x 3"):

\$29.95 for 3

\$161.73 for 18

\$575.04 for 72

Photo covers(3" x 3"):

\$32.95 for 3

\$177.93 for 18

\$632.64 for 72

**Further information:** [www.zoomalbum.com](http://www.zoomalbum.com)

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