# Pixlr: Basic Photo Editing

When starting at Pixlr.com you have two options for editing or creating pictures. **Pixlr Editor** is a full-featured photo editing suite and **Pixlr Express** is a streamlined editor with less features but is still useful for quick changes. Both are located at www.Pixlr.com.

For this class we'll be using and discussing the **Pixlr Editor**.

Everything we cover in this class can be applied to **Pixlr Express** but you'll find some of what we cover is not in **Express** and that the tools that are there will look different.
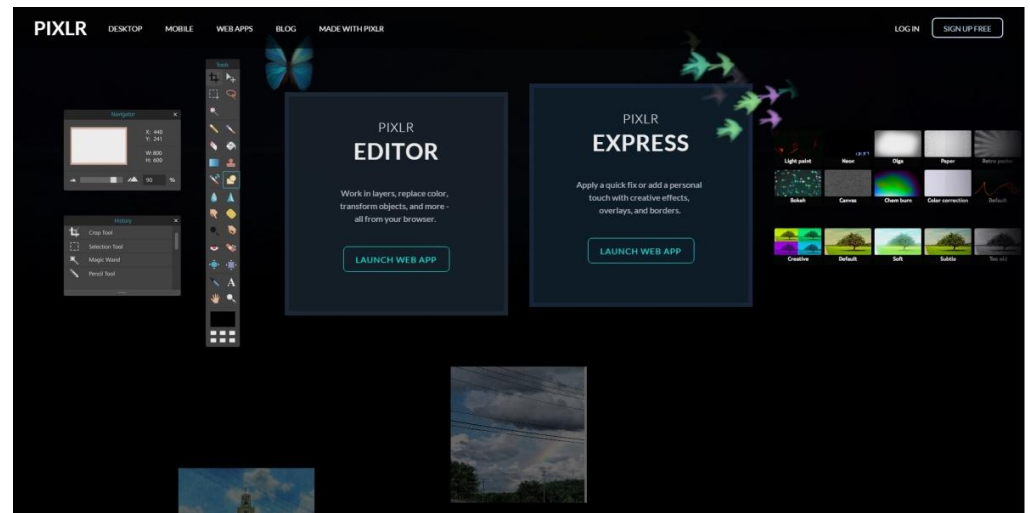
When you select the **Editor** you'll get a few options to start with.

You can create a new image from scratch, open an image that is on your computer, import an image using a URL you have copied, or if you have an account with Pixlr you can open an image you have uploaded with them using their Library feature.

For this class we'll practice creating an image from scratch, we'll try editing an image we have saved to our computer and we'll practice importing an image using a URL.
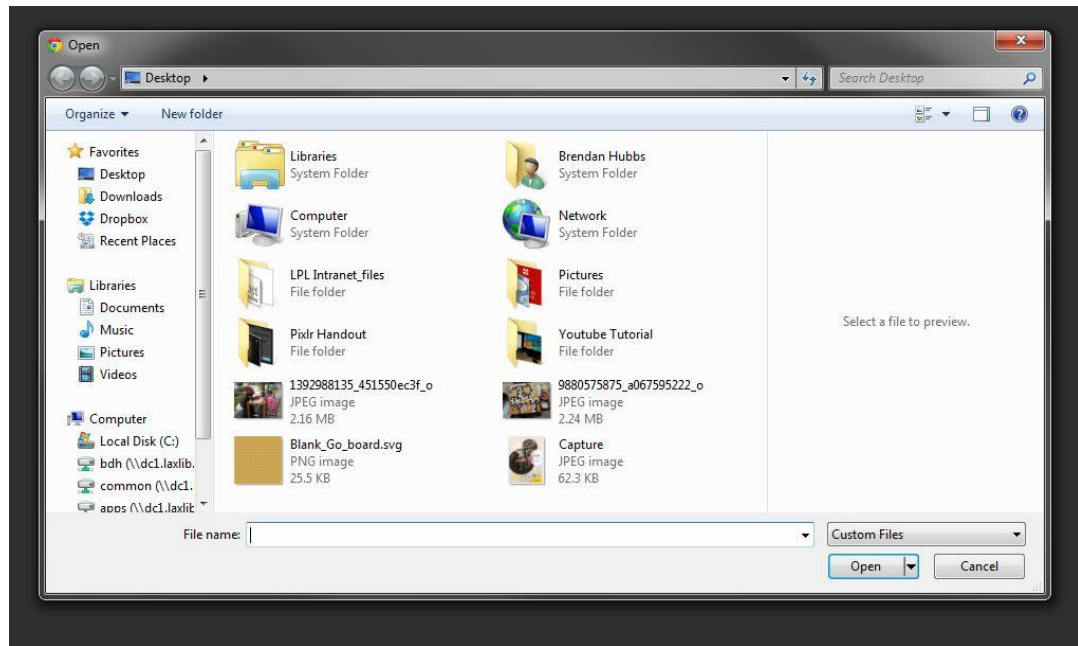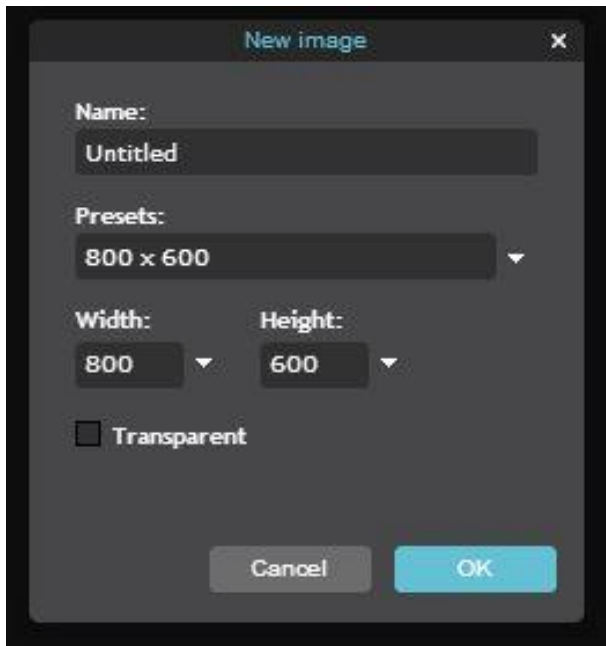
The above images show the windows that open when you select **CREATE A NEW IMAGE** (on the left) or **OPEN AN IMAGE FROM YOUR COMPUTER** (on the right).

When you **CREATE A NEW IMAGE** you are given some options to start with. You can start by naming the file and selecting the size of the "**canvas**" you'll be starting with (you can change this later as well). The **canvas**, named after what you would paint on in real life, is sized using pixels (the tiny parts of the screen that make up the larger picture). You can find tools online that can help convert pixel measurements into inches.

Tip: It's always better to start big and make your image smaller later. The way computers work making a large image smaller will keep the picture looking nice, but if you try to make a small image larger the image will look fuzzy because the fine details are not in the image. Sadly we cannot enhance photos and images like they do in TV and movies.

When you select **OPEN AN IMAGE FROM YOUR COMPUTER** you get a window that allows you to find files from your computer. Finding the file depends on how you like to store your images on your computer. Maybe you like to have one folder with all of your images, or you like to keep the image you want to work with on the desktop so it's easy find. There's no wrong way to go about this, it's whatever works best for you.
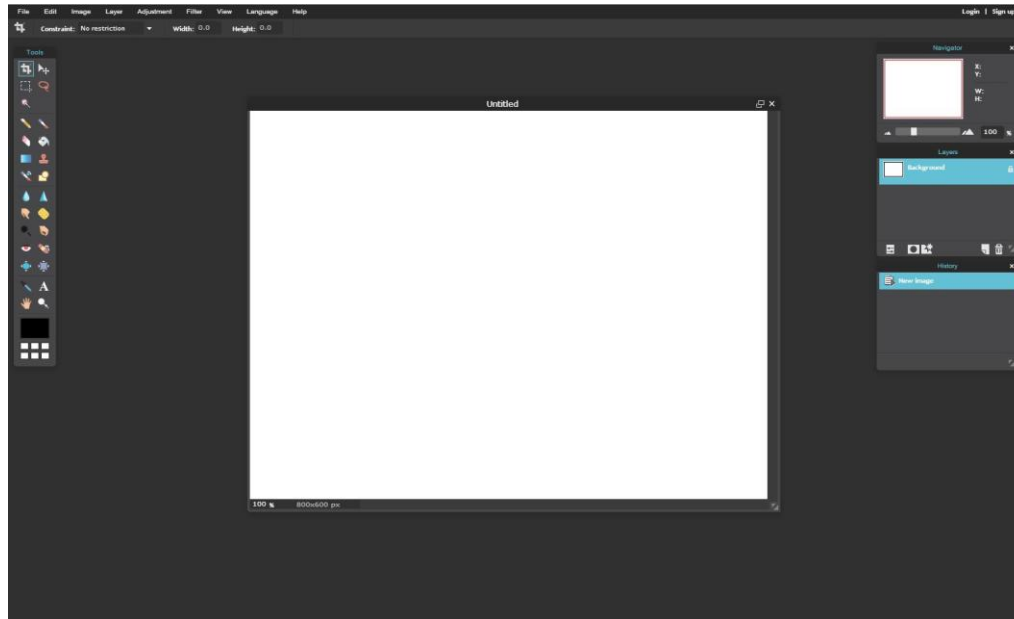
Here is a view of what the **Editor** looks like in your web browser. In this image you'll see the **canvas** which is the large blank screen in the middle. Around it are other windows:
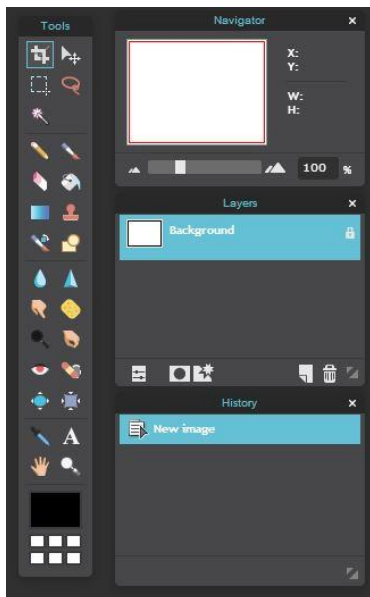

On the left is the **Tools** window: This window contains most of the tools normally associated with editing an image. If you've ever used Microsoft Paint you'll have seen many of these tools.

Top right is the **Navigator** window: This window allows you to zoom in and out on the canvas as well as help you move around to different parts of the image as you're zoomed in. This is useful for doing detailed work where you need to be zoomed in extremely close.

Middle right is the **Layers** window: Layers are like putting different sheets of invisible paper on top of your image. This allows you to add elements to your image without affecting the actual image at first.

Bottom right is the **History** window: History allows you to go forward or backwards with your changes. It's like undo and redo but more powerful.

1 – Crop Tool: Reframe your entire canvas to a desired size and remove everything else.	15 – Move Tool: This lets you move whatever you've selected around the canvas.
2 – Marquee Tool: Use this to select rectangular areas of a layer or the canvas.	16 – Lasso Tool: A free-hand version of the marquee tool.
3 – Wand Tool: Will make a marquee-style selection based on values (i.e., tone and color) that are similar to the area clicked.	17 – Brush Tool: Much like the pencil, the brush lets you draw freehand, but with many more options.
4 – Pencil Tool: Draw on an image or layer free hand.	18 – Paint Bucket Tool: Dump a big mess of color onto a layer or on your background. If you want more control over how messy that paint dump is, adjust the tolerance.
5 – Eraser Tool: Use the erase tool to remove details. You can also erase details from a specific layer.	19 – Clone Stamp Tool: Lets you sample pixels in one defined area and replicate those pixels elsewhere
6 – Gradient Tool: Use this tool whenever you want to create a gradient — a gradual colored shading — of two colors.	20 – Drawing Tool: Use this to create basic geometric shapes like lines, rectangles, rounded, rectangles, and ellipses.
7 – Color Replace Tool: Replaces areas under your brush with a new, desired color — while preserving the underlying texture and shadows.	21 – Sharpen Tool: Sharpening increases the contrast between pixels, which has the visual effect of bringing out details and highlights.
8 – Blur Tool: Make things blurry.	22 – Sponge Tool: Enhances or sops up color, depending on your settings.
9 – Smudge Tool: Effectively combines pixels of different colors to produce an effect that can look like smudged paint.	23 – Burn Tool: The opposite of dodging, burning lets you darken an area.
10 – Dodge Tool: Use the dodge tool to lighten specific areas.	24 – Spot Heal Tool: Can help remove scratches or blemishes by simply clicking on the area.
11 – Red Eye Reduction Tool: Easily corrects the annoyingly common red-eye effect.	25 – Pinch Tool: Lets you distort an area as if it were being seen through a concave lens.
12 – Bloat Tool: Lets you distort an area as if it were being seen through a convex lens.	26 – Type Tool: Lets you add characters, letters, words, numbers, etc.
13 – Colorpicker Tool: Lets you sample colors from your image for use with other tools.	27 – Zoom Tool: Using zoom, you can either click to zoom or draw a rectangular area to zoom into.
14 – Hand Tool: Use the hand tool to move your image around, especially useful if you are zoomed in.	28 – Set Main Color: Your color palette contains the color you're currently working with.
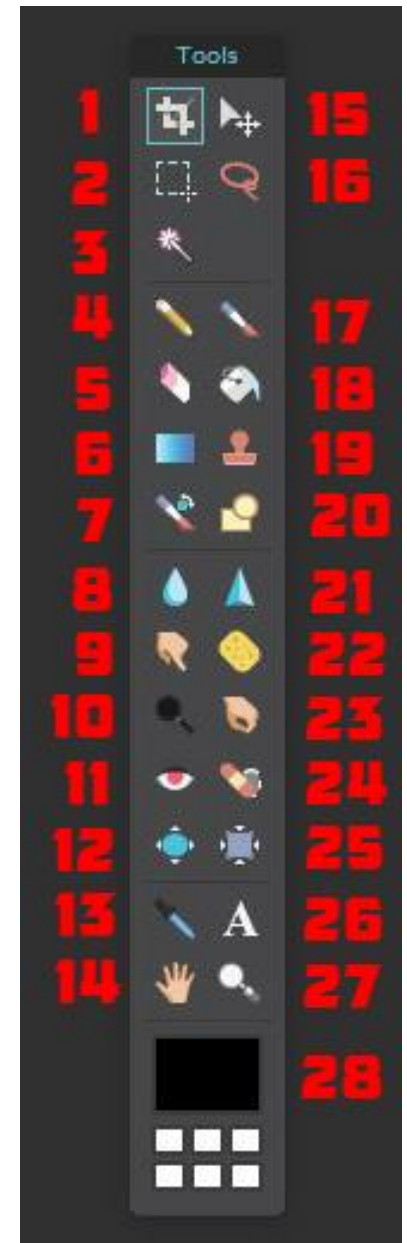
Edit Menu

The **Edit Menu** contains a few important tools, but the most important ones can be accessed by hotkeys (keyboard shortcuts).

Undo and **Redo** are useful but are not as powerful as using the **History window** to go back through changes. Think of these as quick help features if you don't like what you just did.

Cut, Copy, Clear, and Paste are all pretty standard, **Clear** being the kind of odd one out, it deletes what you have selected. You've likely used these in other programs.

Free transform allows you to rotate and manipulate the size of the image.
Free distort allows you to pull and fold the image using the four corners of the image.
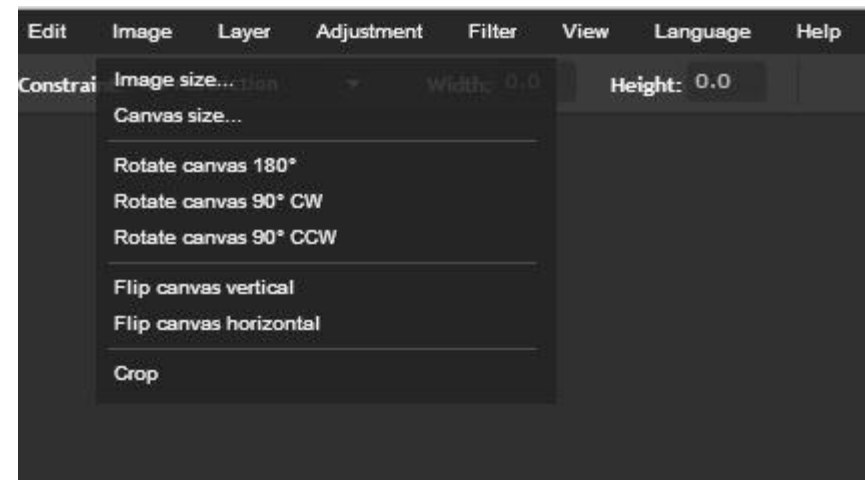
Define brush allows you to make custom brushes. Think of this more as a stamp you've made that you can use as you need.
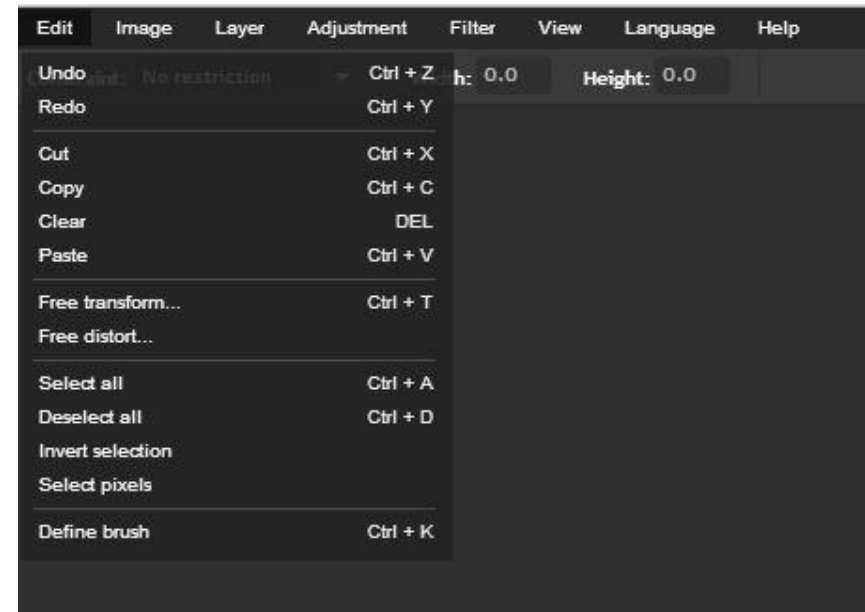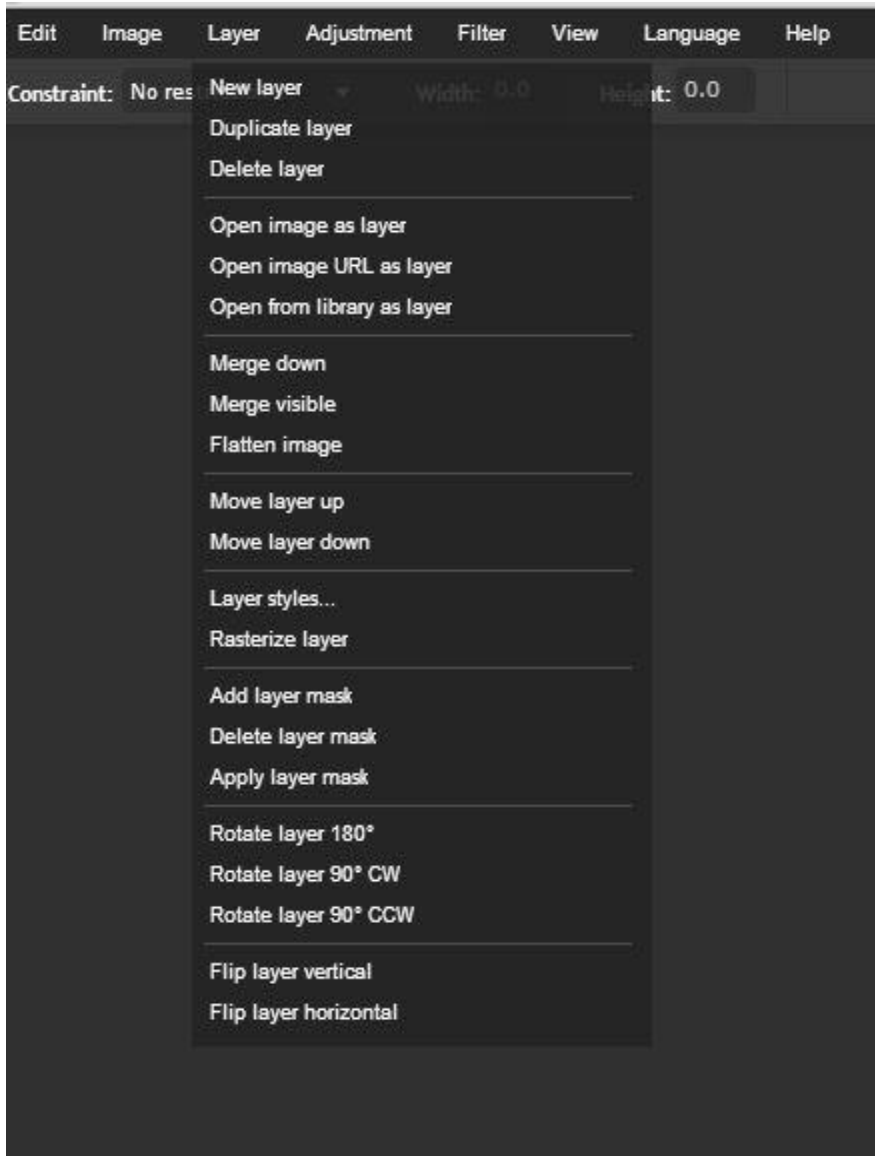
Image Menu

In the **Image Menu** options you'll find ways to resize the **image** as well as the **canvas**. The **image size** is the size of the image you're working on, but the **canvas size** is the area you have to work on. Think about the image being what you would paint and the canvas is what you paint on.

You also have options to **rotate** the canvas by set degrees. You can also **flip** the canvas on the **vertical or horizontal axis**. Imagine this as putting the image to a mirror.

Edit	Image	Layer	Adjustment	Filter	View	Language	Help

Constraint: No res | New layer | Width: 0.0 | Height: 0.0

New layer
Duplicate layer
Delete layer

Open image as layer
Open image URL as layer
Open from library as layer

Merge down
Merge visible
Flatten image

Move layer up
Move layer down

Layer styles...
Rasterize layer

Add layer mask
Delete layer mask
Apply layer mask

Rotate layer 180°
Rotate layer 90° CW
Rotate layer 90° CCW

Flip layer vertical
Flip layer horizontal

Layer Menu

The **Layer Menu** is where you are able to manipulate layers. **Layers** as we mentioned are different levels or sheets of invisible paper to work on. If it makes more sense think of them as tracing paper or the plastic sheets people used to use on overhead projectors.

This menu gives you the option of **opening a new image** directly into the one you're working on **as a new layer**. This is nice if you don't want to open a bunch of images in different windows.

Merge and **Flatten** are nice when you're towards the end of your work or if you want to place two or more layers together so you can edit what's on them as **one single layer**.

Moving layers up or down is adjusting where they are in the stack of layers. If one layer is on top of another its content will cover what is below it.

Layer styles give you a few options to stylize the layer you're working on. It's best to play around with the styles to learn about them.

Tip: Rasterize layer and **masks** are a little beyond the scope of this class. We recommend checking out video tutorials on YouTube as these are more complicated.

Rotating and flipping layers works the same as if you were rotating or flipping the canvas, but you're only manipulating the layer you're currently working on instead of the whole project.

Tip: The **first layer** in every image is called "Background" and is locked for editing; double click the lock icon by the layer to edit it. It's now called **"Layer 0."**
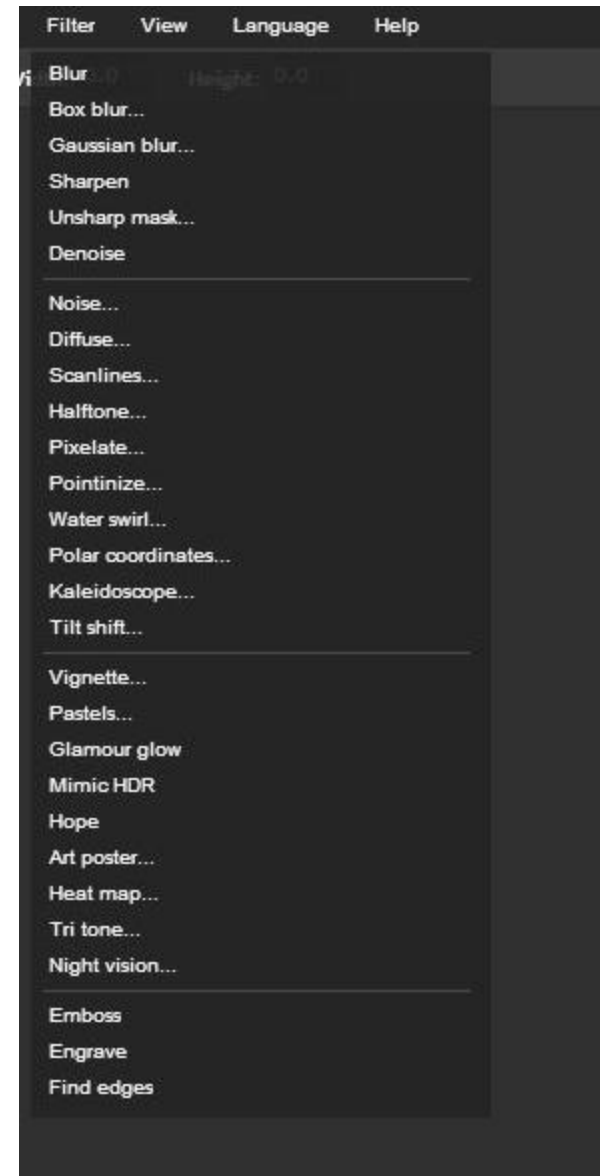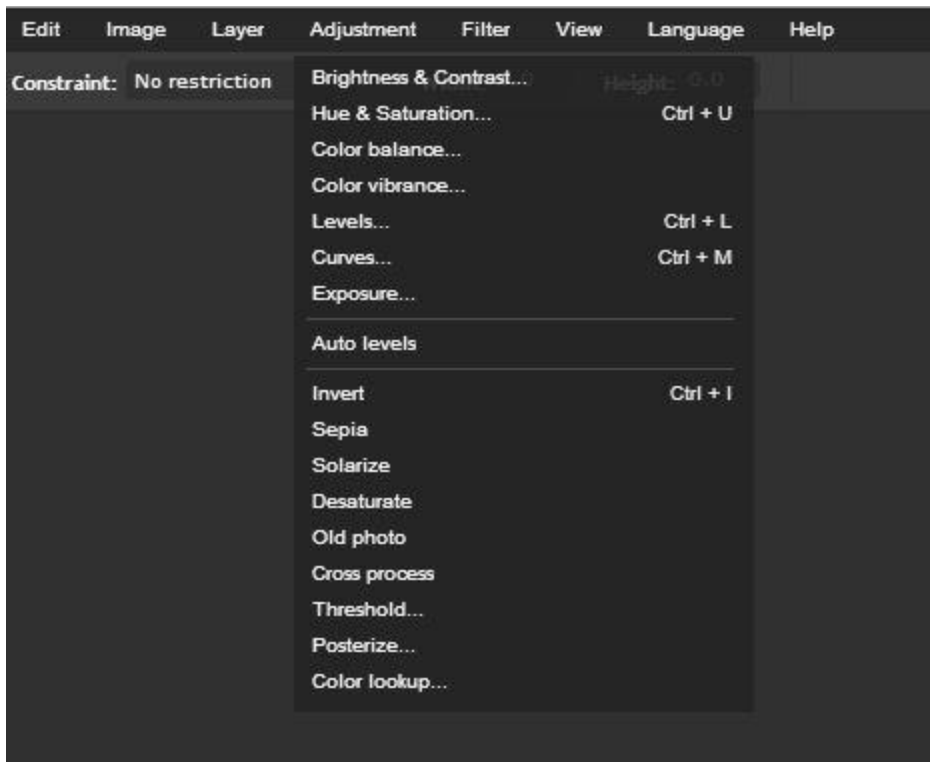
Adjustment Menu and Filter Menu

It's helpful to talk about these two menus together because there's really a lot of overlap in what they do, but they use different names. **A filter** is just a set way to **adjust** the image and in the **Adjustment menu** you'll find what are essentially **filters** under the names: **Invert, Sepia, Solarize, Desaturate, Old photo,** and **Cross process**.

Under **Adjustment** you'll find other useful tools you might be familiar with, such as **Brightness & Contrast** or **Hue & Saturation**, if you've ever adjusted your computer monitor. The other tools are a bit complicated to explain briefly here so again we suggest playing around with them or watching more in-depth tutorials on YouTube.

Tip: The **Filter** menu gives you a wide range of fun ways to adjust your image. There are too many to explain here and the best way to learn them is to play with them.
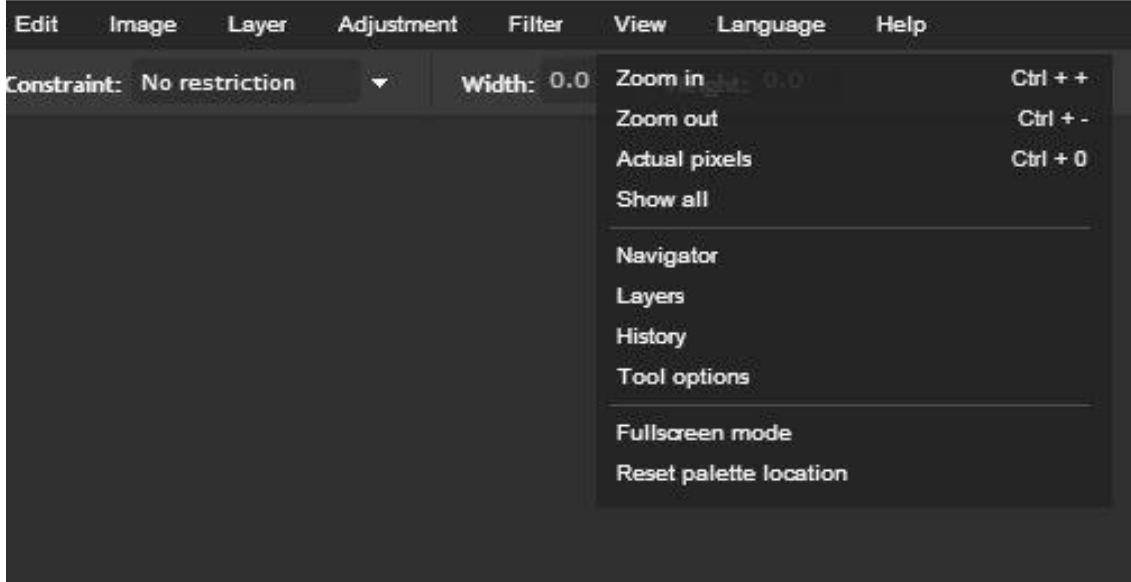
View, Language and Help

A few key things to point out here are:

- **Actual pixels**: This will increase the size of your image to the full size it is based on how many pixels are in it.
- **Navigator, Layers, History** and **Tool options** refer to the windows that the name corresponds to; this is important to know if you accidently close one of these windows and want to open it again.
- **Reset palette location** will move all the windows to the original placement they're found in when you launch Pixlr.

Language is where you would go to adjust the language Pixlr is in. If you're more comfortable with another language than English, Pixlr is available in several languages to meet your needs.

Last but not least is **Help**. Like all good programs, Pixlr features a help menu. The options included here are: **Help** which will take you to the full Help website for Pixlr, **FAQ** which links you to the Frequently Asked Questions page of the Pixlr help page, **API** which will link you to information on how to embed Pixlr on your own website, **Blog** will take you to the blog page for Pixlr and **Contact** will take you to the page with contact information for Pixlr customer support.

Saving

Now that we've finished editing our photo it's time to save our work. When you click save you're given several options. You can add a name to the image, select the image format, and with a jpeg you can adjust the quality (this changes the file size and how much detail is kept when saving.

File formats explained: **JPEG** is the most standard image, it's good for uploading to the internet; **PNG** allows you to keep an image with a transparent background, useful for logos; **BMP** is a larger file with better quality than a JPEG; **TIFF** is the highest quality format, it's good for posters and photos you'd like to print; and **PXD** is a Pixlr format that allows you to keep layers, this is good if you want to work on an image later.