

## Spiegel Online

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### From hurried to high-quality

**Printed photo books are currently taking over from photo albums and boxes of collected photos. And this is fine, since too many photos disappeared on old hard drives and computers. Photo books now present our memories better than ever before.**

Munich/Berlin – The digital era sometimes also produces analogue results: once photos have been transferred from a memory chip in a camera to the hard drive of a PC, many users are not satisfied with simply looking at a slide shown on the screen. The haptic moment is not there, no canvas and glue to handle. Ever since it has been possible to order photo books online, talk has been of a revival of the old family album in a new guise. There are now suppliers aplenty.

It's all quite simple: users download a special layout program for designing an album from a supplier's website. An assistant arranges the photos chosen on the double pages of the virtual book and a preview shows the preliminary result on the screen. Those who wish to can put in photos and texts themselves right from the start. The programs do not offer extensive options for processing the photos, says Margit Hofgärtner from the German magazine "Chip. Foto – Video – Digital". When photos that have already been prettied up are used, the automatic image optimising mode which is usually activated needs to be deactivated. Generally photos in an RGB format, ideally in a 300 dpi resolution for double pages are best. "When the template has been produced it is sent to the supplier online or on a burned CD. The supplier will then produce the book and send it back by mail," says Margit Hofgärtner.

### Differences in the quality of exposures

There are however differences: on the one hand there is a choice of whether photos are only printed or whether they are produced on photo paper, says Hofgärtner. With many prints, dots can be perceived with the naked eye – for example, the printed photo books produced by CeWe or Albelli. This will not happen with developed variants. "Chip. Foto – Video – Digital" recently examined seven suppliers in a practical test and chose Saal Digital as the test winner.

While Saal Digital and Fotobuchübernacht.de /Diefotobuecher24.de), which came in second, did well in terms of picture quality, other suppliers sent in books developed with photos that were somewhat pale or slightly out of focus as well as photos with artefacts in their colour flow, such as the Fuji Color photo book. Fuji is after all one of the lowest-priced suppliers of developed photo books. The Chip testers paid 37 euros for the copy they inspected.

Those who decide on a standard print can order photo books for less than 20 euros according to Hofgärtner. Discount store Aldi even offers standard models for 6.95 euros. For customers wanting a high-quality product, for example laminated or screwed, a photo book will easily cost almost 100 euros; the XXL photo book by ProPhotoPrint for example cost the testers 88 euros – a printed variant. There is a choice of soft or hard covers and various bindings or stitching.