

Photoshopping: how much is too much?



Today, it is normal for magazines to show pictures of models and celebrities that have been 'Photoshopped'. This means that the original photos have been changed on a computer using the Photoshop software to make them look better. The beautiful people in the photographs have perfect skin, no fat on their stomachs, and no wrinkles on their faces. They look so perfect and beautiful that what we see can't be real. But some publishers and advertisers insist that Photoshopping is necessary so that celebrities and models always look their best.

On the other hand, health organizations have warned that digitally altering photographs may be dangerous. They say Photoshopped images are not realistic, and may have a negative effect on people. Psychologists agree with the health organizations. They say some people try so hard to look like the pictures in magazines that they get ill. In some cases, they want to be as slim as the models and so they stop eating properly. When they realize that it is impossible to look so good, they get depressed. This doesn't only happen to young girls but it can happen to people of all ages. So what can be done to keep everybody happy? Two researchers at Dartmouth University in New Hampshire, USA, think they have found the answer.

Professor Hany Farid and Doctor Eric Klee have developed a computer program that can detect how much Photoshopping has been used on an image. Their software gives a rating from 1 to 5 to the image – 1 for a few changes, and 5 for a lot of changes. Farid and Klee's idea is that publishers include the rating next to the image. That way, consumers will be able to work out how realistic the image is.

News of Farid and Klee's system has come out at the same time as people have started criticizing the use of Photoshopping. They say that some advertisers are going too far with it. Recently, the actress Rachel Weisz appeared in an advert for an anti-ageing beauty cream in the UK. In the advert, Ms Weisz looked like a teenager – in fact, she's in her early forties. There were a lot of complaints about the image and the advert was eventually banned. Farid and Klee's system could solve two problems at the same time. Firstly, it would serve as a kind of health warning for consumers, and secondly it may stop advertisers from using so much Photoshopping.

b Read the article again and choose the correct answers.

- 1 According to the article, publishers use Photoshopping to make people look...
 - a as good as possible.
 - b as interesting as possible.
 - c as thin as possible.
- 2 The article says that Photoshopped images have a bad effect on...
 - a girls of all ages.
 - b young teenagers.
 - c all kinds of people.
- 3 The new program gives a rating of 1 to an image with...
 - a no Photoshopping.
 - b a little Photoshopping.
 - c a lot of Photoshopping.
- 4 People complained about the Rachel Weisz advert because...
 - a it made her look a lot younger than she is.
 - b it showed the actress as she really is.
 - c it used an image of a different actress.
- 5 The people who will benefit most from the new tool are...
 - a advertisers.
 - b consumers.
 - c publishers.

c Look at the **highlighted** words and phrases. What do you think they mean? Use your dictionary to look up their meaning and pronunciation.

d Complete the sentences with one of the **highlighted** words or phrases.

- 1 Our neighbours are relying on us to water their garden while they're away.
- 2 Animal Rights groups want experiments on animals to be _____.
- 3 We're _____ our holiday plans so that we arrive on Thursday instead of Saturday.
- 4 I can't _____ how to download this program.
- 5 In general, the older you get, the more _____ you have in your skin.
- 6 In most countries, films are given a _____ to show which age group they are suitable for.