Best Scanner for Art and Design

Whether wanting to scan in linework or capture full blown graphics, our choice of the best scanners out there for creatives has something for everyone.

The usefulness of a scanner these days provides for an interesting flashpoint in the relationship between traditional and digital art. While a lot of artists and designers do linework on their tablet devices, there are also many who vouch for doing outlines in ink before scanning onto a device for colouring digitally.

A scanner can also be invaluable for adding graphics, illustrations and type to vectorise for a digital piece, a designer knowing that the capture from a scanner will always be truer than that from the shutter of a camera. If the lighting's wrong for your shot, then expect an inaccuracy with the facsimile created that simply doesn't occur with a scan.

You might also want to capture the certain shade of a colour in a magazine or book that's inspired you, to then sample from your scan for a digital project you're working on. You could invest in a handheld Pantone Capsure if you want – but a decent scanner can easily be half the price of this kind of colour capture tool, so it really just depends on your budget.

If you're reading this and find you're nodding your head, then read on to find all the specs and advice you need when shopping around for your first or next scanner – and find our most recommended scanners out there below with a summary of each device and price tag.

What makes a good scanner for art and design?

First up, put away any notions of a bulky beast pulled straight out of your 9-to-5 office nightmare. A good scanner for artists and designers will be the stand-alone desktop sort, preferably a flatbed type with a lid you can press down on your documents (as below).

Credit: iStock

Do most scanners work with a Mac?

This is something many creators overlook as it's often taken for granted – but make sure your scanner has a MacOS driver before making a purchase.

Windows users are generally safe but anyone using a Macbook – i.e. most artists and designers out there – should read the fine print. MacOS drivers can be already on the machine or available as a separate download on the manufacturer's website; to make things easier for you all our scanner picks in this feature are Mac friendly.

What are good specs for a scanner?

Any decent scanner should offer an optical resolution of 4,800dpi or more if you're looking to scan in colours. Any higher and the difference won't necessarily be obvious – but any lower and it will.

Your perfect scanner for art and design should also have CCD scanning tech. CCD stands for Charged Coupled Device, an image sensor that uses an actual lens to reduce the scanned image onto the scanner's imaging sensor. This lens is the sort you'd find in a legacy digital camera, giving all the

capturing capabilities you'll need; most of our picks below are CCD unless otherwise noted.

Don't scanners capture 'dirt' on an image?

Most scanners come with software that can detect irregularities sitting on top of the emulsion of what's being scanned, like Digital ICE for example which usually comes with Epson models.

Are latest scanner models always better?

Scanner models are not updated on an annual basis, so don't presume that because something came out a year ago that it's automatically better.

Scanner tech is not a constantly evolving field, and a model from five years ago can still be more than ample enough to deal with your creative needs.

Do portable scanners exist – and are they reliable?

Portable scanners are an option for anyone who needs to travel from location to location, packing their kit along with their laptop and tablet. They look slim as a Toblerone packet or window blind mount, but almost always come with low specs. They can be useful though if you only intend to scan one sheet here and there simply for linework whilst on the move.

A compact scanner like the Fujitsu ScanSnap S1300i below will always be your best bet – compact scanners aren't as thin as their portable brothers, but can easily be lugged about,

stowed away or placed on a small desk with little coverage.

If you do go small, you may be tempted to pay premium for a wireless model, but as it’s likely you’ll be working with your laptop on hand anyway, just get a standard type which you can hook up to your device’s USB portal.

Best All-round Scanner – Canon CanoScan 9000F MKII



- **Max size: A4**
- **Max resolution (DPI): 9,600 x 9,600**

The CanoScan 9000F from Canon is sold as a professional film, photo and document scanner, and is a great all-rounder for its price tag.

It also holds great specs in optical resolution, with 9600 x 9600dpi for film, and 4800 x 4800dpi for photos and documents. It also automatically recognises different paper types, so no need for extra tapping on its (nicely efficient) interface.

Best Photo Scanner – Epson Perfection V550



- **Max size: A4**
- **Max resolution (DPI): 6,400 x 9,600**

The Epson Perfection V550 Photo Scanner is another good all-rounder on the lines of the Canon model; where it stands out is with its on-board software dedicated to photography.

If you don’t work with photos, you can be pleased with its DPI specs and useful cloud upload capabilities.

Best Compact Scanner – Fujitsu ScanSnap S1300i



- **Max size: A4**
- **Max resolution (DPI): 600 x 600**

Portable scanners seem like they’re the best option for

any creator on the go often (or any creator stuck behind a particularly small desk). We say go with a compact scanner instead, particularly this ScanSnap S1300i from Fujitsu. It’s not as small as a portable device but can still be lugged around with your kit easily.

Although it’s neither a CCD type nor a flatbed, the scanner is still the most efficient and reliable compact type on the market, and a speedy one at that, capable of scanning up to 12 double-sided pages per minute.

If you’re needing a CCD option that’ll capture your colours and images in better quality then look at Fujitsu’s Image Scanner FI-7700. Though neither compact nor portable, it’s a dinky thing that won’t take up all of your space.

Best A2 Scanner – Fujitsu ScanSnap SV600



- **Max size: A2**
- **Max resolution (DPI): 285 -218 (Horizontal) / 283-152 (Vertical)**

The Fujitsu ScanSnap SV600 is what’s known as a document camera, something more sought out by the archivists and librarians out there.

What this means for artists and designers is that you can capture a large piece simply by putting it below the camera – so no fiddling about with lids or stitching images together on Photoshop.

The camera head of the SV600 recognises the whole of the

object on its placemat, moving mechanically to scan the piece from top to bottom. The coverage of this light is the same as putting a scanner lid down on a book, so you can be assured of a quality scan like from any normal flatbed scanner (as opposed to a digital photograph).

If in doubt of its pedigree, know that the SV600 was used to create a massive online archive of watercolour paintings with stunning results, as featured on *Digital Arts* recently.

Best High-end Scanner – Epson Expression 12000XL



- **Max size: A3**
- **Max resolution (DPI): 2,400 x 4,800**

For the big price tag you get a big flatbed, which is perfect for A3 pieces.

The resolution is lower than cheaper alternatives in this list, but the Expression guarantees big scans in great resolution at fast speed. There’s also zero warm up needed before proceeding with your scans.

This scanner also has the most minimal control panel in our rundown, made up simply of a power button and LED status lights.

https://www.digitalartsonline.co.uk/features/creative-hardware/best-scanner-for-art-design/