**App Comparison**

**Graphic Design Web Applications & Mobile Applications**

**Canva & CC (Creative Cloud) Express**

Canva was Created in Australia 2013, and Adobe Founded 1982 in USA (Canva & Adobe “about” pages, 2021)

Both Canva and Photoshop were initially launched as applications, the former a native web application, and the latter an installable computer programme. Quite likely due to Canva’s runaway success, CC Express (formerly Adobe Spark launched 2016) was launched in 2021. Both Spark and CC seem designed to emulate the interface of Canva, but there are differences, which I will outline at the end.

Initially I thought the applications would be for the same purpose, with different interfaces but I did not realise how similar they were.

All four are freemium, single page applications, although it could be argued that Canva low multipage, with increased assets and effects for paid subscribers. Users must be logged in in each instance, creating an account, with email, Google, Facebook or for CC Express, an Adobe ID. Canva had a large-scale data breach in 2019 involving 4 million accounts (Canva.com, 2021), and Adobe in 2013 with 38 million users affected (BBC News, 2013). Both use an emailed 6-digit code to complete user registration. Adobe also use multi-factor authentication on paid accounts.

All four applications are designed with beginners in mind, that may never have used a program like Photoshop or InDesign previously. They are powerful enough to satisfy mid to expert level users for simpler tasks however, due to their design options and ability to upload assets.

Canva Web and CC Express web use alerts and arrows as inductive wizards to highlight functional areas first time users may need, thinking of popular user roles. Both have a learning and tutorial sections on the site version, Canva is much more detailed and has many times the options that CC Express does, as Canva is standalone, while CC Express is part of a larger Adobe Ecosystem. This extends to the mobile application, to the point where Canva seems cluttered by comparison.

The tone of address is simple and direct in CC Express “Create a new project” or “Make an Impression. Upgrade.” versus “You might want to try…” and “For You” in Canva. Both use a white background and rounded edges, Canva using dark grey accents on their left navigation sidebar, CC remaining white. The look of the apps is not customisable. Adobe CC Express uses progressive disclosure to determine the level of experience of the user, both applications establish what field or area the user is coming from, personal project, teacher, corporate etc. Both web applications use collapsing panels for specific tasks that hide away for a minimal interface after the task is completed.

To create a new project or file, both have a large plus sign to create a blank canvas, but templates are heavily featured, especially in the mobile applications. Similarly, the type of content spot lit in each depends on the platform, templates, text and images in the web version, templates on the mobile applications. To a new user, they may feel like choosing a template is the most straightforward option presented.

To add text, the web applications have a text indicator in the left menu, mobile at the bottom within easy thumb reach on a vertical screen. On mobile you must deduce that text can be added by hitting add, then be delivered the option for text. Adobe adds a default text block which you then edit by double clicking or using the right panel, Canva offers you three distinct types of text: heading subheading or body. All versions of the apps also have fancy text templates to edit beneath. Text can be adjusted by a slider or number input. In Canva you drag marquee corners, CC Express mobile you can pinch to resize.

For images, assets are to the left in the web apps and the bottom in mobile, all have subdivisions and search functions. Canva has several more types including graphs and video, and allows integration of dozens of third-party sources, such as Dropbox and Bitmoji. Adobe features their own free and paid assets, such as you would find in Adobe Stock. Images are moved and resized as with text in each respective version, with similar filters and adjustments allowed for. Adobe CC Express has the bonus of allowing separate animation of text and images in one page.

Saving and exporting files are where the two applications differ significantly. Adobe CC is almost instant to export, but allows for very few user options, around size, file type and services to share to. Canva progresses step by step to avoid information overload, as with a complex dialogue box, but still has many options which may require experimentation and multiple attempts by users to export files to their liking. Added to this is the ability to output Canva projects to PowerPoint or record you presenting them, save images as gifs or PDFs (which CC Express does not offer in the free version), and have your designs printed by the company.

Ultimately the main difference a causal user will notice is the sheer plethora of options being offered directly by Canva immediately, as opposed to the initial restrained options with an expansive suite of specialised power for potential use with Adobe CC. It is apparent that Adobe CC, formerly Spark, was developed with user-friendly freemium graphics editor like Canva in mind.

**Cited**

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|  | **Canva Web** | **Canva Mobile** | **CC Web** | **CC Mobile** |
| **Launched** | 2013 | 2016-2018 | 2021 (2016) | 2021 (2016) |
| **Country** | Australia | | USA | |
| **Model** | Freemium | Freemium | Freemium | Freemium |
| **Ecosystem** | Standalone | Standalone | Adobe suite | Adobe suite |
| **Platforms** | All web | Android/ iPhone & iPad-specific | All web | Android/ iPhone & iPad-specific |
| **Users** | Beginner to casual work use | Beginner to casual work use | Beginner to casual work use (upgrade to other CC product for pros) | Beginner to casual work use (upgrade to other CC product for pros) |
| **Aesthetic** | White Background Colourful, Fresh, Rounded | White Background Colourful, Fresh, Rounded | White Background Colourful, Fresh, Rounded | White Background Colourful, Fresh, Rounded |
| **Authorization** | Email, Google, Facebook | Email, Google, Facebook, Mobile | Email, Google, Facebook, Apple, Adobe ID, School Account | Email, Google, Facebook, Adobe ID |
| **Induction:**  **Inductive or Deductive** | Alerts/Wizard tour of basic tools | Suggested projects & templates | Alerts/Wizard tour of basic tools | Suggested projects & templates |
| **Frequency of use** | Weekly + | Weekly + | Weekly + | Weekly + |
| **Assets** | Free images, backgrounds, shapes, stickers, user uploads. Premium assets for paid. | Free images, backgrounds, shapes, stickers, user uploads. Premium assets for paid. | Free images, backgrounds, shapes, stickers, user uploads. Premium assets for paid. | Free images, backgrounds, shapes, stickers, user uploads. Premium assets for paid. |
| **Premium features** | Resizing, extra effects, extra assets. | Resizing, extra effects, extra assets. | Brand, resize, convert to/from PDF. | Brand, resize, convert to/from PDF. |
| **Other features** | Video & music assets, record VO & camera presentation, graphs/charts, animation.  Free desktop (web) app. | Video & music assets, presentation, graphs/charts, animation. | Text and image animation.  Specialised individual power apps. | Text and image animation. Specialised individual power apps. |
| **Undo/Redo** | Multiple Levels | Multiple Levels | Multiple Levels | Multiple Levels |
| **Insert/Ingest** | Menu+ and Drag & Drop, 20+ integrated services (Dropbox, YouTube, Google Maps, Bitmoji etc.) | Menu+ and Drag & Drop, 20+ integrated services (Dropbox, YouTube, Google Maps, Bitmoji etc.) | Menu+ and Drag & Drop | Menu+ and Drag & Drop |
| **Gestures** | Drag, nudge, pull corners | Drag, nudge, pull corners | Drag, nudge, pull corners | Pinch canvas, drag, nudge, pull corners |
| **Guides and Snap** | Guides & Snapping | Guides & Snapping | Snapping | Snapping |
| **Exporting/ Saving** | Download file img/pdf/video/gif/ppt, share to social, collaborate, print service, link to view | Download file img/pdf/video/gif, share to social, collaborate, print service, share service agnostic, link to view | Download file img/video, share to social (laggy), collaborate, link to view, Google drive | Download file img/video, share to limited social (buggy),  collaborate, link to view, save as template |
| **App Speed** | Fast, export file can take time | Fast, export file can take time | Slow to open, buggy, multiple attempts, export instant | Mid speed, export instant |