



Make the most of face recognition in iPhoto 11

Identifying people in your photos is a big help when you need to assemble snaps in one of iPhoto's creative projects such as a photo album or calendar. iPhoto 11 refines the workflow for doing this.

Apple introduced face recognition technology as part of iPhoto 09, but it has only recently improved the workflow for identifying people so that the whole process is easier to understand. However, there are still a couple of different ways to work with Faces, and it's worth knowing a few tricks so you can whizz through your existing photos and keep on top of the task when importing new ones.

iPhoto automatically tries to identify faces when you import a new photo, and it's important to let it do this. Even if you don't assign names to people, iPhoto uses the areas in which it thinks faces appear to determine which parts of a photo it needs to keep in the frame when it places them into calendars, books and cards.

Going to the extra effort of assigning names has its own rewards, though. Doing so makes it much easier to assemble mementos because you can easily find a picture that includes a particular person by browsing just the photos in which they appear, rather than having to browse through albums and events in a more haphazard manner.

Along the same lines, you can also browse through your photo library by person within iMovie's Media Library to assemble a customised slideshow with Ken Burns-style effects. Here's how to go about making sure you can get the most out of this incredibly helpful capability.



Alan Stonebridge spends his working life in front of Macs – and they've taken over his free time, too.

Kit required iPhoto 11

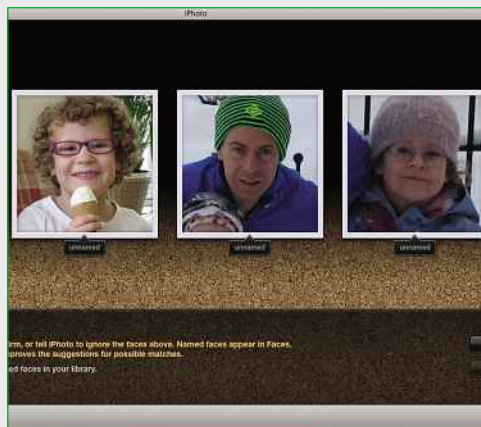


1. Automatic face detection

When you import new photos, whether directly from your camera, from files that are stored on your Mac's hard drive or images you have uploaded to a Nas drive from a remote location, iPhoto inspects their content and looks for features it thinks are people's faces. While it's doing this, you'll see a spinning icon next to Faces in the left pane.

2. Force detection for existing photos

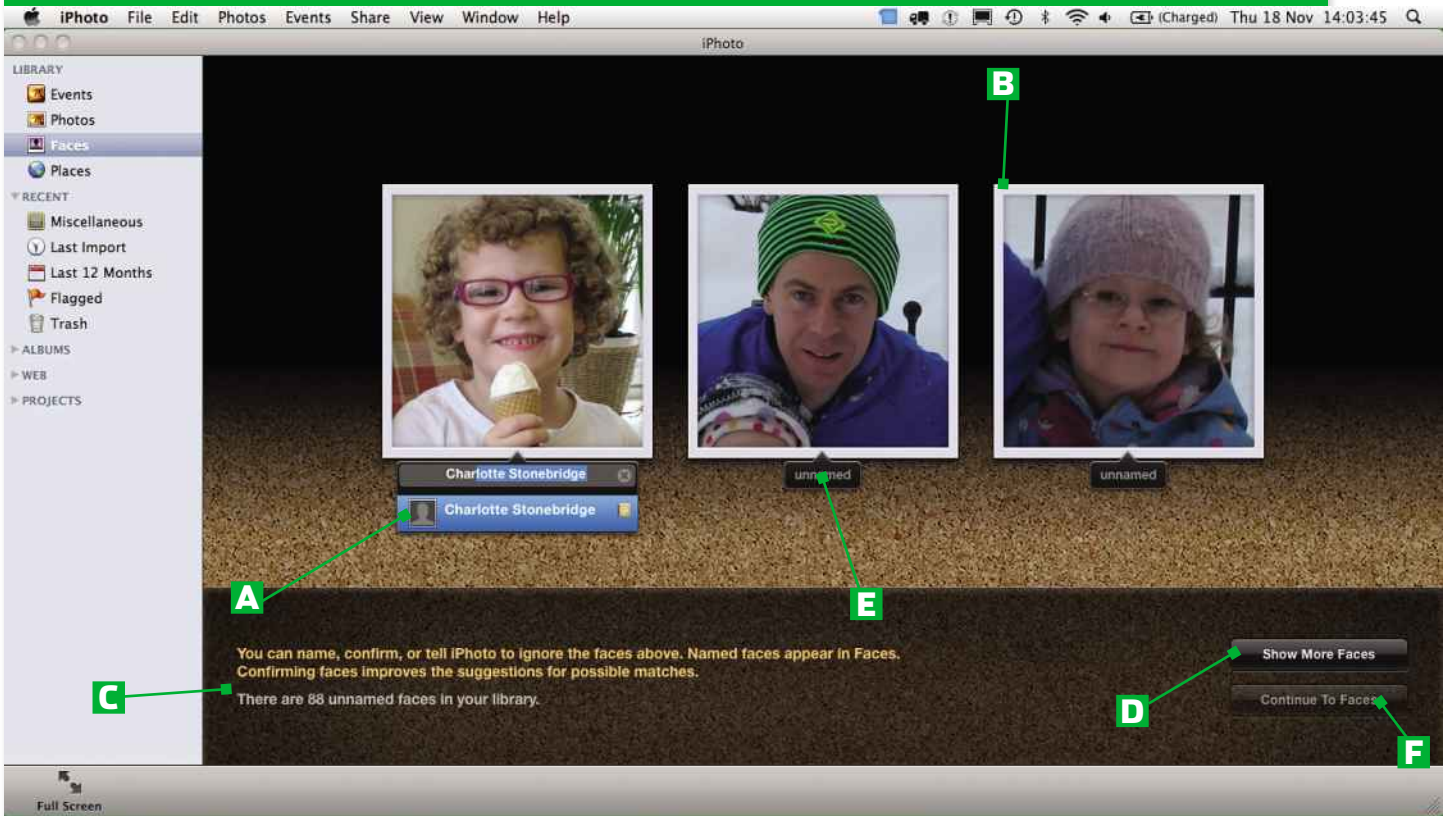
If you have upgraded from a version of iPhoto that predates 2009, your library will be packed with images of people, so make sure you have a backup of your iPhoto library in case something goes wrong. Next, select Events in the left pane and choose Photos > Detect Missing Faces in the menu bar. The same spinning icon that appears next to Faces in the left pane is also displayed while iPhoto is scanning pictures already in its library.



3. After face detection

Once iPhoto has finished analysing your photos, click Faces in the left pane. If you haven't already named someone in a photo, you'll see a view like this one. iPhoto is waiting for you to confirm who these people are.

4. GIVE IPHOTO A HELPING HAND WITH IDENTIFYING PEOPLE



A. Click the tag below one of the mugshots and start typing the person's name. iPhoto shows similar names in your address book, which you can select with the mouse, trackpad or arrow keys (followed by Return). If none of them are a match, keep typing and press Return to confirm the person's name.

B. iPhoto might mistakenly pick up a detail that isn't actually a face. Roll over the preview and a cross will appear at its top-left corner (see

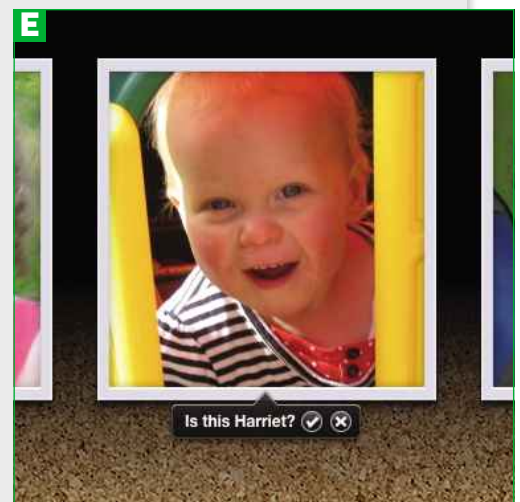


below). Press it and the picture becomes dimmed. iPhoto forgets that it thought a photo was present.

C. This text shows how many more faces have been identified but remain unattributed. If the quantity is no more than a few dozen, you can work through them in this mode.

D. Once you've identified the three faces displayed, press this button to show another bunch. If the number of people to identify (see point C) is very high, you don't have to work through them all in this mode. By all means identify each person several times in different photos, though, as it allows iPhoto to build a facial profile of each individual, which helps it to get better at picking them out.

E. After identifying a person in several photos, the application will be able to identify their attributes in other pictures with greater ease. Instead of blank tags beneath photos you'll start to see a question that asks whether iPhoto correctly identified someone, speeding up



the work. Click the tick or the cross. Pressing the latter reverts to an empty name tag into which you can type, as before.

F. You don't have to keep working through photos three at a time. To move to a quicker way of working through hundreds of people's faces press the button labeled Continue to Faces. You'll arrive at a corkboard.



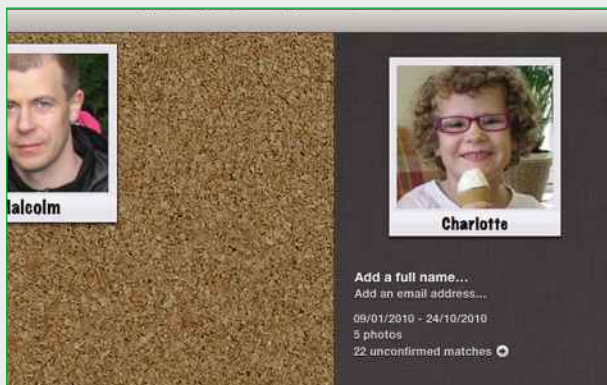
5. The Faces corkboard

After you have named some people, clicking Faces in the left pane will show you this corkboard in future. The people pinned to it don't represent all the faces that iPhoto has picked out, just those who you have named. iPhoto will start to recognise these people in other photos, but it requires you to confirm it has correctly matched faces and names. That's a much quicker process.



6. Confirm and reject iPhoto's matches

You can see how many unconfirmed pictures iPhoto has picked out by double-clicking a face to first see confirmed appearances, then clicking the button labelled Confirm Additional Faces to start inspecting iPhoto's guesses. However, as you import more photos into your library, double-clicking each person is a tedious process. Thankfully, there's a shortcut that's far more convenient.



7. Use the Info pane as a shortcut

Go back to the Faces corkboard and press the Info button in the toolbar to reveal a new pane on the right. Click one of the faces to select it and you'll see a summary in the Info pane that includes a count of the number of pictures in which iPhoto thinks that person appears. Clicking the arrow next to the total takes you directly into the process of confirming and rejecting iPhoto's guesses.



8. Approve iPhoto's guesses

In the next view, iPhoto collects pictures it already knows contain the person you selected on the corkboard in a group at the top. Below them is a banner titled Unconfirmed Faces. In that group you can quickly click photos to confirm they contain this person. Click a photo again if you make a mistake and the setting is toggled. Press Done to commit your confirmations to the library.



9. Name people when iPhoto doesn't detect a face

Face recognition doesn't work so well with partly obscured faces, so naming people is helpful. When viewing a photo in an album or event view, open the Info pane, click Add new face, [A], then drag and scale the box [B] that appears so it frames the person's face. Finally, type their name into the tag.



10. Correcting mistakes

If iPhoto thinks something is a face when it is not, roll over the name tag that's displayed over your photo and a box will appear around the supposed face. Click the cross at the top left of that box to tell iPhoto that it isn't a person.