Comparisons and Contrasts Between iMovie 2 and Movie Maker 2

iMovie 2 and Movie Maker 2 are both very simple digital video editing programs. Essentially, Movie Maker was created by Microsoft to mimic the capabilities and interface of iMovie, so they look and act very similarly. However, there are several differences, which I will outline in this document.

First, we’ll look at the differences in their interfaces.

Both iMovie and Movie Maker have some basic parts to their user interfaces. These parts are the palette of available video clips (“clip shelf” in Apple iMovie, “Collections” in Microsoft Movie Maker), the timeline and clip viewer (‘clip viewer’ is called the “storyboard” in Movie Maker), and the preview window. Please refer to the following figures to see how these elements are laid out in each program.

iMovie Interface Layout

![iMovie Interface Layout](image-url)
As you can see, the interfaces are very similar. Of particular note is the list of common tasks that Movie Maker lists along the left edge of the window. This may help guide users through the various steps involved in capturing, editing and saving video. Tasks become available (are displayed in blue instead of faint gray) only when they are appropriate. For instance, the links to save the video clip (tasks listed under “Finish Movie”) are only available after a portion of video has been added to the timeline or clip view. If no video is “in process” (inserted through one of these views), then there is nothing to save as a finished product, and these options are not available.
Next, Workflow Comparisons Between imovie and Movie Maker

While both Movie Maker and iMovie make use of panels which may be filled with various content, depending on a button press or choice from a menu, the workflow in Movie Maker is somewhat different from iMovie. While iMovie controls the capturing of video through an Import button, on the camera control panel, Movie Maker directs users to click on the “Capture from video device” link, first in the list of tasks.

Some users may find the iMovie interface easier to use, simply because the choices of elements which can be displayed for its reusable panel are all visible at the same time, instead of a user needing to click on a drop-down arrow to display the list of options. (For instance, one can easily see that the same panel will display titles, transitions, effects, audio, as well as the clips it displays by default.)

The process of making a simple movie in Movie Maker

Movie Maker has adopted a workflow design that attempts to guide the user through the process by dividing the tasks one must perform into stages, and then only activating these choices as ‘selectable’ when the program thinks the action is appropriate for the current project.

Capturing footage

When one connects a digital video camera to a Windows XP computer (Windows XP is the only version of Windows that bundles Movie Maker along with the operating system), the computer will recognize that a camera has been connected, and will suggest several tasks that can be performed with the camera. Capturing video with Movie Maker, naturally, is one of the choices. If one confirms this choice by selecting it from the list and clicking ok, the video capture process will begin. If Movie Maker is already running when the camera is connected, the video capture window will launch automatically. The capture window will also launch, of course, if one clicks on the link labeled ‘Capture from video device’ (the top link in the list of tasks).

The capture process in Movie Maker is ‘wizard’ based consisting of several screens.
The first screen in the capture process. Here, one provides a title for the clips (not necessarily the whole project) and tells Movie Maker where to store the captured clips.
The second screen in the capture process. Here, one chooses the quality of the video (basically, how it is compressed). The details of the selected setting are seen in the `Setting details` area. If one wishes to output back to tape (or compress the video with another program), then choose the second option—`Digital device format (DV-AVI)`). The first choice will compress the video as a .wmv file, which can only be played back in Windows Media Player. This format is not recommended for wide distribution.
The third screen in the capture process. This screen allows one to choose whether they want to capture the entire tape all at once, or select parts of the tape. Usually, one will want to capture just parts of the tape. However, be warned that the camera controls (seen on the next screen) are not very accurate. There will be a significant amount of lag after you press a button on the screen before the camera will respond. Don’t expect to get the clips trimmed exactly as you want them just by capturing them. Plan to capture a little more than you actually want to use.
The fourth and final screen of the capture process. This screen shows the camera controls, and the start and stop capture buttons. Using this screen, one can capture several separate clips, or one large clip. Since Movie Maker sometimes has strange interpretations of where clips should be separated, it is recommended to un-check the ‘Create clips when wizard finishes’ checkbox. One will then need to cut the captured video into the right ‘scenes’, but this will be more accurate and will save time in the long run.

Editing the Movie
Once the capture process is completed, the similarities between iMovie and Movie Maker become more prevalent. Both use a ‘timeline’ to organize the desired clips of video into a continuous video project, and both allow one to insert sound, transitions, titles, and other elements directly into the timeline in order to add them to the finished product.

Movie Maker uses a razor blade icon, located just beneath the preview window, to divide a clip into two parts. Then, one part can be discarded by clicking on it in the timeline, and pressing the delete key, or a transition or other element can be inserted into the timeline between the two parts.
The full Movie Maker screen. One moves the clips, edited for length and content, into the timeline, then moves transitions, titles and sound into the timeline to augment the video. The drop down box at the top, which lists all of the clips in the current ‘Collection’, contains the video effects and transitions, as illustrated above.

Finish Movie
The final step in the production of a video in Movie Maker is to output the video somewhere. Since one has already chosen how to compress the video when the video was first captured, the tasks listed in Movie Maker’s task pane under ‘Finish Movie’ are really just shortcuts to wizards designed to help one save the finished product in various ways. For instance, the ‘Save to my computer’ will help one save the movie as a file on the hard drive, while ‘Send in email’ is essentially also saving the file on the hard drive, but is automatically opening a mail client and attaching the video to an email. Most students will either want to choose ‘Send to DV camera’ or ‘Save to my computer’, depending on whether they will just put it on a CD or otherwise distribute it digitally, or whether they will put it back on the camera, to output it to VHS tape.

The Process of making a Simple Movie in iMovie
The entire process of capturing, editing and finishing the movie is done within the same master window in iMovie. Students will probably appreciate this fact, as everything seems convenient, and close at hand at every point in the process. (In Movie Maker, if
one wants to capture another clip, the way the list of tasks is designed, it seems that one is backtracking, and that all of the video should be captured at the very beginning.)

**Capturing video**
In iMovie, to capture video, one changes the preview window to operate the camera controls (as opposed to controlling a clip which has already been imported into iMovie), starts the camera playing, and when the appropriate footage is shown, clicks the Import button.

![Image of iMovie interface](image.png)

When the video is captured, the clips will be placed on the clip shelf (shown in the overview of the interface), and can then be edited and added to the timeline.

**Editing video**
In iMovie, the editing process is done by placing the playhead (basically, a pointer to show which part of the video is playing, and is also used to select portions of video) in a certain location, and choosing an option from the Edit menu. These options include splitting the video into two, cropping the video to throw away all of the clip which is not selected, or to cut away the part of the video that is selected. The video is shown in the preview window as it’s being edited, as in Movie Maker.

Transitions, titles, and other video and audio effects are contained in the panel which normally displays the clip shelf. The blue bar beneath the panel selects which set of items are shown in the panel. Any of these items can be dragged into the timeline at the desired point to add them to the final video (as in Movie Maker).
Outputting the video
When the movie is finished in iMovie, one goes to the File menu to output the finished product by selecting ‘Export Movie’. The next window will offer the choices of ‘Output to Tape’, ‘Output to Quicktime’, and (in some installations) ‘Output for iDVD’. When one chooses ‘Output to Quicktime’, they are offered the additional choices of sizes (resolutions). These are basically analogous to the choices for different sizes (resolutions) offered in Movie Maker. However, Quicktime is a much more popular and ubiquitous format, and therefore can be played in a larger number of presentation formats (on the web, on a CD, etc.). ‘Output to Tape’ will basically record the footage back to the digital video camera’s tape.

One advantage of choosing the format in which to output the video at the end of the project is that the project can easily be output to several different formats, without having to re-capture the video and go through the entire process again (as with Movie Maker).

Conclusions
As you can see, there are several important similarities and differences between the iMovie 2 and Movie Maker 2. While the interfaces of the two products are very similar, there are important distinctions between the two in terms of usability and output format and procedure.

It is my opinion that the iMovie product remains a much easier, more valuable tool to use in editing and producing videos with our Education students (assuming that we don’t want to spend additional class time teaching them how to use various video editing tools). However, Movie Maker offers a very convenient way to get video into the university-issued Thinkpads. This convenience may or may not make the Movie Maker product more effective in the long run, but will still present a shift in the amount of training necessary to help our students produce quality videos. One workaround for capitalizing on the convenience of Movie Maker, but to refrain from using the less-popular .wmv
(Windows Media Video) format might be to capture all video as DV-AVI (uncompressed, raw video) and then use another product to compress the video into a format suitable for DVD, Video CD, or some other format, or simply to transfer the video back to the digital video camera, and use that to convert the video to VHS.