

USING A DIGITAL CAMERA AND EDITING SOFTWARE

By Tony Manton

Contents

- Setting your camera up to take the very best pictures
- Improving your chance of getting a great picture
- Transferring your pictures to your computer and finding them again
- Finding your pictures again.
- Organising and Correcting less than perfect pictures - **Downloading Picasa**
- Using Picasa
- Getting Started with Picasa: *Getting Started Guide*

Setting your camera up to take the very best pictures

Out of the box, a digital camera may not be set up to take the best possible pictures.

The **resolution** (the number of pixels used in the picture) should be set at maximum.

Compression (the amount by which the picture is reduced in size) should be set to the lowest compression or fine setting. This will result in larger file sizes and fewer pictures stored on your memory card, but with the ever falling price of memory cards, this should not be a problem.

Set the **white balance** to automatic (this can be changed for specific situation which will be discussed later).

If the camera has it, set the **anti shake**, also know as **image stableitation** to on.

Whilst the **Auto** setting is OK for many situations and will produce acceptable pictures most of the time, the **Program** setting gives more flexibility to adjust things like **aperture** and **shutter** speed, **focussing** area and **light metering** patterns - again, more of these later.



Taking the best possible picture in the first place will reduce the work that needs to be done later.

A picture that is of average quality can be improved, but getting the original picture right in the first place is much better.

Low resolution and **high compression** pictures will be of poor quality - you cannot add more resolution (low resolution pictures have little detail), or get rid of the effects of high compression (blocky pictures with poor colour graduation).

Whilst it is a good idea to set the **flash** to **Auto**, in some situations this will make the picture worse. For instance, trying to take a picture in a stadium, or anything at a distance at night is difficult, but the flash will not help at all. The built in flash on most cameras has a range of just 3 to 4 metres (10 to 13 feet). Because the camera thinks the picture will be lit with the flash, it adjusts the exposure accordingly, resulting in a very under exposed picture.

In these situations, the **flash should be turned off**.

Also, turn **Red Eye** off. Using red eye makes the camera set off a pre flash, which delays the actual taking of the picture. This can make your subjects strain to keep smiling, or move after the first flash. Any red eye can easily be removed later on your PC. The picture will be taken sooner after pressing the shutter button, leading to a more natural picture.

Improving your chance of getting a great picture

Before setting out for a photo session, it is a good idea to check a few things in advance.

Make sure the **battery** is fully charged. If you are going to be out for a long time or taking a lot of pictures, it's a good idea to buy a second battery (and always have it fully charged too) and a second memory card, if your main one is not very big (2gb or less).



Clear any pictures from the **memory card**, using the **FORMAT** option (having transferred them to your computer first!) so that you have plenty of room to take lots of pictures.

Digital pictures cost nothing, so take lots.

Clean the **lens**, a dirty lens can ruin any picture and smudges, dirt and finger prints cannot easily be removed and will be on every picture you take. Use a soft lint free cloth such as used to clean spectacles. The glass in a lens is relatively soft, so make sure there is no grit on the cloth before you use it.

This is particularly true if you are using the camera on a Smartphone as it is very easy to get finger marks on the lens in general use.

When you press the **shutter button** on a digital camera, a number of things happen. The camera looks at the amount of light available, what kind of light it is (natural sun light, tungsten, florescent, snow/beach, sun set/sun rise and so on). It also adjusts the lens for the best focus. The camera shutter button has two positions, although you might not be aware of this to start with.

Press the shutter button gently and you will find that the button moves slightly and then meets with a little resistance. This is the position where the camera makes all its adjustments.

On some cameras, there will be a short beep to show that everything is set, on others there may be a small square in the middle of the screen/viewfinder, which will turn green when it is set, and red or orange when it is not, ie too dark/light or not focused.

If the shutter button is just jabbed fully down in one go, the camera will not have time to do its work and result in an out of focus, poorly exposed picture. Jabbing also shakes the camera, which may blur the picture too.

Practice squeezing the shutter button so you can feel the resistance point so that you are used to doing it all the time. Your pictures will benefit.



Sometimes, if the button is pressed down in one go, the camera will not take the picture immediately, while it does its measurements. This can result in a delay between pressing the button and taking the picture of up to one second, resulting in the possibility of missing the picture you wanted.

When you press the button half way and the camera is ready, pressing down the rest of the way will result in the camera taking the picture immediately, so you get exactly the picture you want, properly focused, and exposed, with the right colour balance.

Transferring your pictures to your computer and finding them again

Before transferring pictures to your PC, you should **create a directory called - My Pictures -** then in the directory create another one each time you transfer new pictures with the date or some other name that makes that set easily identified.

Put a **short cut** to My Picture on your **Desktop**, by right clicking on the folder and selecting **Create Shortcut**. Move the Shortcut to the Desktop by **Right Clicking** and moving the mouse from the drive to the Desktop.

There are 3 ways to transfer picture to a PC 1) using the cameras supplied **USB cable** 2) using a **card reader** and 3) some cameras now have the ability to transfer pictures by **WiFi** - we will not be discussing this option here as few cameras currently have this option.

1) Using the USB cable.

Most cameras are supplied with a **USB cable** and the manufacturers own transfer & image manipulation software. This software varies from poor to average. It is better to use software from dedicated imaging companies such as **Adobe Elements**. **Google's Picasa** is also very good but does not do as many things as Elements, but is easier to use.

It is also not necessary to use the software to transfer the pictures as both **Windows XP, Vista, Window 7 and Windows 8** will do it for you.



Open the **My Picture** folder and create the directory for you current batch of pictures (eg Holiday 2014) and open that folder.

Connect the camera and PC with the USB cable.

Switch the camera on.

A small window will open with a disk drive letter, probably D: or E:

Go to the last but one option - Open Folder to View Files and select it and click OK.

This opens a window of the pictures on the camera. Windows treats the camera as if it is a new disk drive on the camera,

You will have to drill down through 2 or 3 folders to get to the pictures. When you get there they will display as thumbnails or a list. If they appear as a listing, select the **View** menu and click **Thumbnails**.

Now press - **Control A** - this selects all the pictures in the folder.

Press - **Control C** - if you want to copy the pictures, ie make a **copy** to your PC **and** leave them on the camera or - **Control X** - if you want to **move** them, ie **remove** them from the camera and put them on your PC.

Select you new folder (Holiday 2014) on the PC and press - **Control V** - this will copy/move them from you camera to the new folder. It may take a few minutes, depending on the number and size of the pictures.

2) Using a card reader or a built in card reader which many laptops now have

Using a card reader is exactly the same as using a USB cable, except that you remove the memory card from the camera and slot into the reader. The same thing as above will happen, ie a new window will open with the card contents in it.

Proceed as above for a USB cable.



Finding your pictures again.

As there is a Shortcut on the Desktop, which you created earlier, all you need to do is to click on it and it will open up with all the folders you have created. Choose the folder with the pictures you want by clicking on it.

You can choose from a **Film Strip** (which also lets you view the pictures as a full screen **slide show**, **Thumbnails**, and other view options.

Right clicking on any picture will give you lots of information about it. Select **Properties** from the list.

Select the **Summary tab** (you can add your own comments to this page).

Now click **Advanced**

This window tells you all the **technical details** about the picture, including the **date** and **what type of camera** was used.

All this without any additional software!



Organising and Correcting less than perfect pictures

Downloading Picasa

Whilst commercial software such as Adobe Elements is very good, many of the most useful tools for manipulating pictures can be obtained for free.

Google's Picasa is one of the best.

To get, you need to open your **internet browser**. I use Microsoft's Internet Explorer.

Type - www.google.com - into the address bar and pres **Enter**.

Google's **home page** will open.

Click on the **More** option at the top of the window.

Select **Even More** from the list.

About halfway down the page on the right column, you will find this logo



Click on the Picasa word and new page will open. Click on the **DOWNLOAD PICASA 3** button and follow the on screen instructions.

Congratulations - you now have your free copy of Picasa.

Google also provide membership of a **free space on the web** to store a limited number of your pictures, which you can keep private, share with you family and friends, or with the whole world - **you choose**.

Using Picasa

Every time you start Picasa, it looks at your computer's hard disk for any pictures. The **first time** it may take a few minutes while it finds all your pictures. During subsequent starts, it will just add any new ones.



To learn how to use Picasa we will use the **help and tuition** that it has built in to it.

Click the **Help menu** option across the top of the Picasa window. Select **Help Contents and Index F1**. To get to help you can also just press the **F1 function button**, from within Picasa

Important : Before you start to make changes to any picture, **make a copy** - that way, if you make a complete mess of things, by accidentally saving wrong changes, you still have your **original** to go back to.

To make a copy, **Right click** the picture, and select **copy**. Now **left click** away from the picture and **right click** again. Select **Paste**.

A copy will be created called **Copy of the original picture name**.

Select and click **Getting Started Guide** and off we go.

Note - what follows is taken from the Picasa web site, and therefore is the copyright of Google. It can be viewed at any time by selecting Help from within Picasa.

Getting Started with Picasa: Getting Started Guide

Using Picasa and Picasa Web Albums together, you can now organize, edit, and upload your photos to the web from your computer in quick, simple steps. Arrange your photos into folders and albums and erase their blemishes using powerful editing tools in Picasa. Then use Picasa Web Albums to share those perfected photos online with family, friends, and the world.

This guide walks you through the main features of Picasa. When you're done perusing this guide, [read up on Picasa Web Albums](#). You're then ready to become an expert user of Picasa and Picasa Web Albums



Table of content

[Organizing photos in Picasa](#)

[Importing your photos](#)

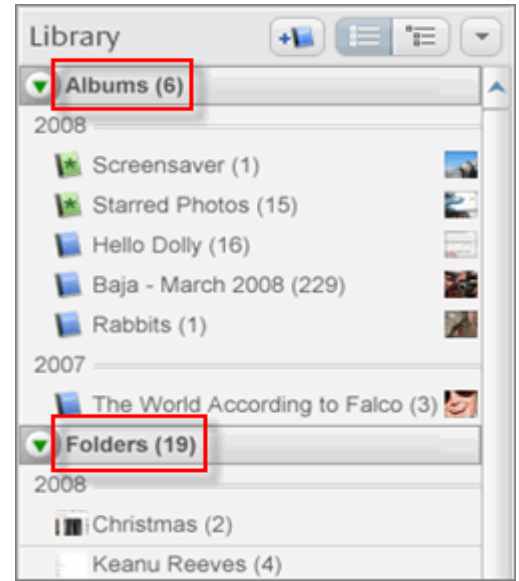
[Quick and easy editing](#)

[Sharing in Picasa](#)

[Backing up your photos](#)

[Printing your photos](#)

[Picasa Photo Viewer](#)



Organizing photos in Picasa

When you first [install Picasa](#), it scans folders on your hard drive and displays any detected photos. These folders, along with the customized albums you create, make up the organization of your photos within Picasa. Within your folders and albums, Picasa displays icons on your images to help you quickly see which photos have been uploaded, marked as a favorite, geo-tagged, and more.

Folders

Folders represent actual directories on your computer's hard drive that contain photos. Changes you make to folders in Picasa affect corresponding folders on your computer's hard drive. For example, [moving a photo](#) from one folder to another in Picasa will also move the photo in Windows Explorer (Windows) or Finder (Mac).

Mac users: Picasa handles the photos in your iPhoto Library a little differently. To ensure that Picasa and iPhoto play nicely together, Picasa scans and displays the photos in your 'iPhoto Library' as read-only files. If you try to edit or move these photos, Picasa will ask your permission to create a new editable copy. Learn more about [how Picasa handles your iPhoto Library](#), go to the help page.

Albums

Unlike folders, albums exist only in Picasa. For example, you might create an album called 'Pictures with Grandma,' and include photos from various folders on your computer. Unlike Picasa folders, your albums don't correspond to real



folders on your hard drive -- so when you delete or move photos from an album, the original files remain in their original locations on your hard drive.

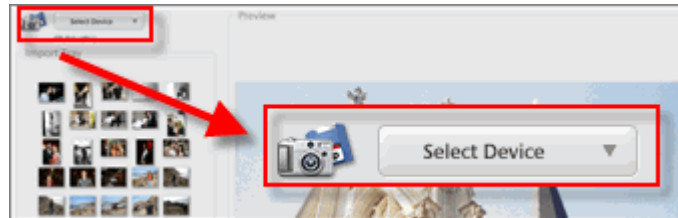
Library icons

Picasa display small icons on your photos in the Library to provide you with at-a-glance updates on the status of your image.

Click these icons to see short descriptions of their functions:



Importing your photos



Of course, not all your photos reside on your computer. You can import photos into Picasa from many sources, including cameras, CDs, memory cards, scanners, webcams, and more.

Follow these easy steps to import from your camera:

1. From within Picasa, click the **Import** button.
2. Select your device or folder from the drop-down menu (your camera should automatically be detected). To help you import images from a particular day or event, Picasa segments your images according to the time period in which they were taken. Each group of images in the import window will be marked by a clock icon.
3. Select the specific photos you'd like to import, or choose all. These photos will be saved on your computer and displayed as a new folder in Picasa.

Quick and easy editing

Now that your photos are organized, you can start editing. With Picasa's advanced photo editing, you can use basic one-click fixes to improve almost any photo, adjust colour and lighting, and add effects like black and white or sepia. Add captions to help tell the story.

First, double-click a photo to open the 'Edit Photo' screen. Then find your editing tools on the left-hand side, within the three tabs Basic Fixes, Tuning, and Effects.

Don't worry - Picasa never overwrites your original file. The photo edits you make are only viewable in Picasa until you decide to either export or save your

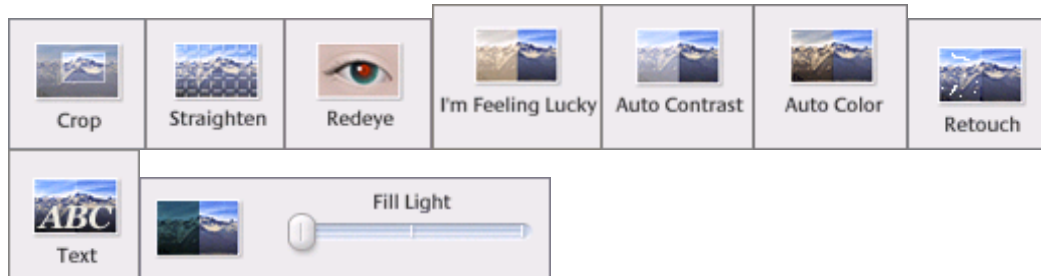


changes. Either way, your original photos are always safe and sound, accessible at any time. [Learn more.](#)


Basic Fixes tab

Use the **Basic Fixes** tab to make simple edits on your photos.

Below are the basic fix buttons in Picasa:



Tuning tab

Control the colour and adjust the lighting in your photo to produce a more visually enhanced image. Click the magic wands for lighting or colour  to let Picasa automatically adjust the photo or use the provided sliders to manually control the colour and lighting aspects of your photo.

[Fill light](#)

[Highlights](#)

[Shadows](#)

[Highlights](#)

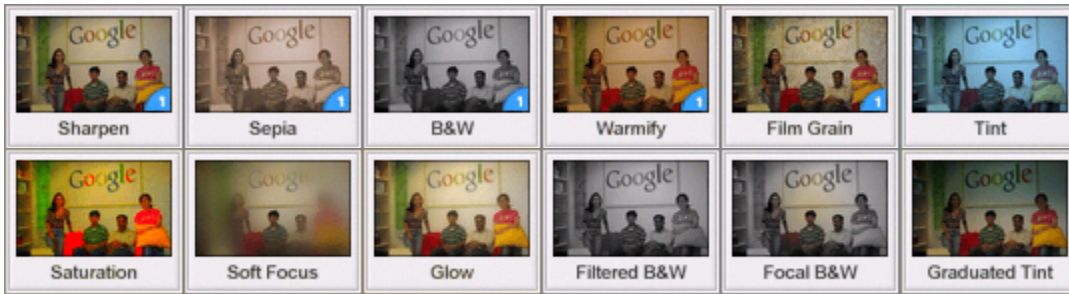
[Colour temperature](#)

[Neutral colour picker](#)

Effects tab

The **Effects** tab contains 12 effects that you can apply to any still photo. Click a button below to learn about each effect:





Add captions

Tell the story behind a photo using captions. While editing a photo, click the text underneath that says 'Make a caption!', then add a caption. If you upload the photo to Picasa Web Albums, your captions will also appear in your online albums.

Captions are searchable from the top search bar within Picasa. Locate photos with ease by searching through your photos by the captions that go along with them.

Sync your edits

So how do you keep your online photos updated with your most recent Picasa edits? By enabling **Sync to Web** for a folder or album, edits made to your photos in Picasa will be reflected immediately in your online Picasa Web Album. In addition to photo edits, you can sync the changes you make to captions, tags, and geotags. Learn more about [syncing your photos online](#).

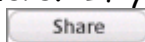
You can also control many of your online album settings directly from Picasa.



Use the down-arrow menu to the right of the **Share** button to control online album privacy, online image size, and much more. Learn more about the [different types of online controls](#).

Sharing in Picasa

Now that you've organized and edited your photos, you're ready to share them with others. If you'd like to share an entire folder or album, click the

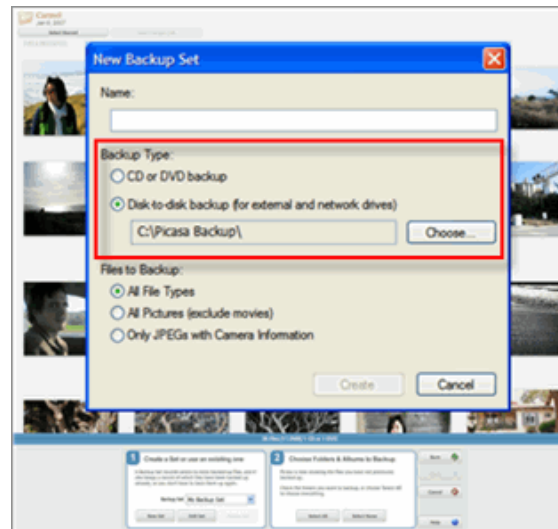


Share button located in the folder or album header. Your photos will then be uploaded to Picasa Web Albums. You'll also be prompted to send email invitations to your friends and family to view the album.



You can also use the button bar at the bottom of your Library to share your photos in creative ways. Just [select the photos](#) you'd like to share and click the action you'd like to take. You can email or upload your photos, create a collage or movie, or order prints online from any number of providers.

Click a button in Picasa to see a short description of its function, examples below:



Backing up your photos

Backing up your photos is a good way to make sure that they're always safe and sound. Picasa makes it easy to do this. Just click the **Tools** menu, select **Backup Pictures**, and select **New Set** to get started.

External hard drive: If you have a large collection of photos, you may want to store your backup file on an external hard drive to save some room on your local hard drive. Once you've initially backed up your entire collection, Picasa will then only back up the recent changes that you've made. This saves you time and ensures that your entire collection will be protected. Using an external drive with Picasa's backup feature is also a great way to migrate your photos to a new computer.

Back up to CD or DVD: Burning your photos to CD or DVD is also a convenient option. Should your hard drive ever fail, or should a power surge hit your external drive, you will thank your lucky stars as you recover all of your photos and edits.

Printing your photos

In the era of digital pictures, sometimes it's gratifying to see and hold a hard copy of a photo. Picasa makes it easy to print your photos at home or order prints online through your choice of print providers.

The **Print** button lets you print your selected photos using a local or networked printer. You can select a print layout size, such as 4 x 6 or wallet size, and Picasa will automatically size your selected photos to those proportions. Opt to include a border or your photo captions. These print layout options make it easier to print multiple photos on one page.

Click the **Shop** button (Windows only) to access a list of Picasa's online print providers. After you sign in to the provider's website, Picasa will automatically upload all of your selected photos to the print provider's website, enabling you to order prints as you wish.



Picasa Photo Viewer

Want to quickly preview your photo? Picasa Photo Viewer is installed with Picasa and lets you quickly view photos on your computer desktop or in Windows Explorer. This lightweight application gives you access to view, make minor edits, and upload an image to your Picasa Web Albums without having to fully open Picasa. You can set the Picasa Photo Viewer to be the default photo viewer for [all photo file types supported by Picasa](#).

Please note that the section on Picasa was taken from the Picasa help web site.

All blue underlined sections are links to specific areas of the Picasa help site.

The main Picasa web site help can be found here:

<https://support.google.com/picasa/?hl=en-GB#topic=4538690>

And from within the Picasa program its self

