Picasa Getting Started Guide

Picasa is free photo management software from Google that helps you find, edit and share your photos in seconds. We recommend that you print out this brief overview of Picasa's main features and consult it as you use the program for the first time to learn about new features quickly.

Organize

Once you start Picasa, it scans your hard drive to find and automatically organize all your photos. Picasa finds the following photo and movie file types:
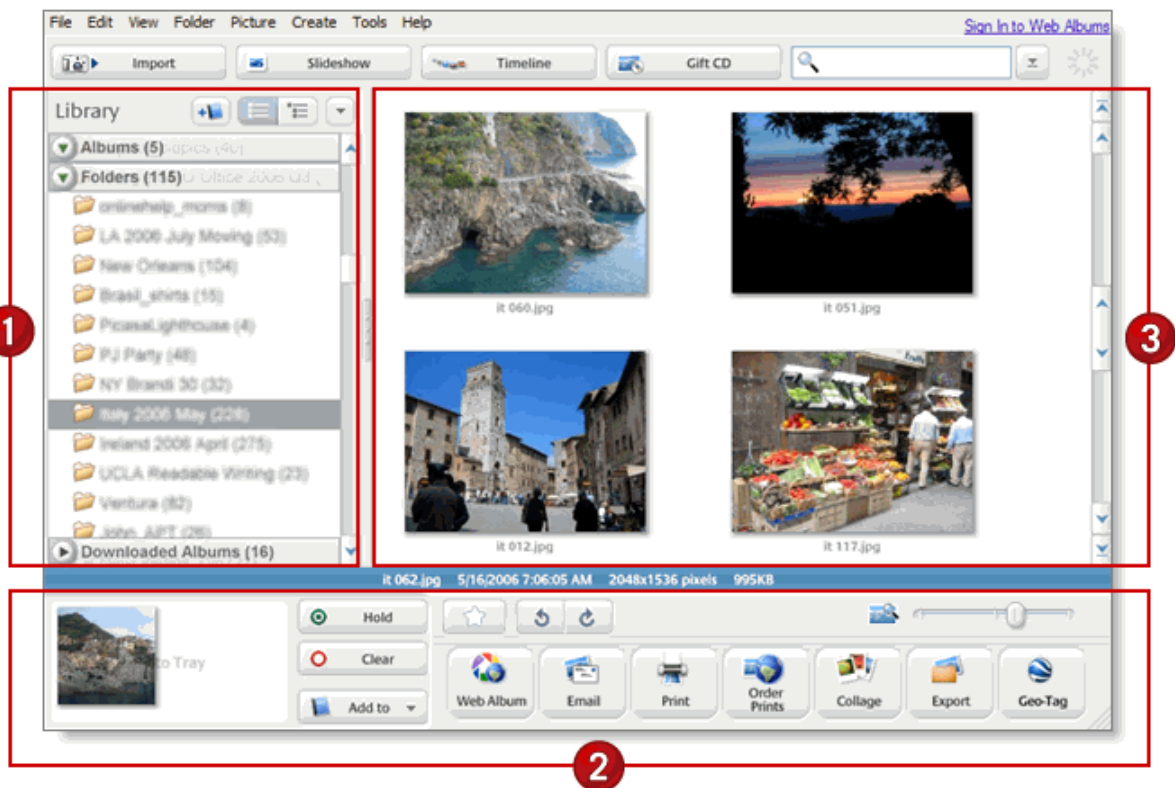
- Photo file types: JPG, GIF, TIF, PSD, PNG, BMP, RAW (including NEF and CRW). GIF and PNG files are not scanned by default, but you can enable them in the **Tools** > **Options** dialog.
- Movie file types: MPG, AVI, ASF, WMV, MOV.

If you are upgrading from an older version of Picasa, you will likely want to keep your existing database, which contains any organization and photo edits you have made. To transfer all this information, simply install Picasa without uninstalling Picasa already on your computer. On your first launch of Picasa you will be prompted to transfer your existing database. After this process is complete, you can uninstall Picasa.

Library view
Picasa automatically organizes all your photo and movie files into collections of folders inside its main Library view.

Layout of main Library screen:

1 **Folder list**

The left-hand list in Picasa's Library view shows all the folders containing photos on your computer and all the albums you've created in Picasa. These folders and albums are grouped into collections that are described in the next section. By default, the folder list is sorted by creation date. To change the way the list is sorted, go to "View" > "Folder View"

2 **Photo Tray and output options**

The "Photo Tray" is used to collect photos and movies from one or more folders or albums so that you may work with them as a group. The "Add To" button and all of the output options buttons ("Print," "Email," "Collage," "Hello," "BlogThis!" "Order" and "Export") perform their respective actions using the photos currently in the "Photo Tray." By default, your current selection in the lightbox is placed in the "Photo Tray." To keep these items in the "Photo Tray" while you select more, press the "Hold" button. You can also drag and drop items into the "Photo Tray" and they will automatically be held. To remove a held item, select it in the "Photo Tray" and press "Clear". Once you are satisfied with the contents of the "Photo Tray" you can press any of the output options buttons or the "Add To" button to perform the corresponding action on all the items in the "Photo Tray" at once.

3 **Lightbox**

The right-hand side of the Library view displays visual thumbnails of the photos (and movies) corresponding to the folders and albums in the folder list. To change the thumbnail size, use the slider at the bottom right of the lightbox or use the "View" menu to select a common thumbnail size. Double-click on any folder or album header to edit its title, date, place taken or description. For folders, you can click on the large folder icon in the header to open the corresponding folder in Windows Explorer. Press the up and down arrow keys on your keyboard or use the far right scroll bar to move through the lightbox. NOTE: Only folders and albums that are visible in the folder list will appear in the lightbox. Folders inside of a closed collection will not be displayed.

Collections

Folders
This collection displays the folders on your computer that contain photos or movies, sorted by date, with the original folder names as they appear on your computer's hard drive. Changes you make to the folders in this collection affect the matching folders on your computer's hard drive. Renaming a folder in Picasa will also rename it in Windows Explorer.

- **Adjust which photos and folders appear.** Only folders that Picasa is set to scan appear in this collection. To modify what folders on disk Picasa scans for photos, select "Folder Manager" on the "Tools" menu. Use the settings there to select or de-select the folders Picasa scans, choosing from these options: "Scan Once," "Remove From Picasa" and "Scan Always."

- **Move photos between folders.** Select a photo. With your mouse, drag and drop the photo to its new folder. To select more than one photo, hold down the Shift key on your keyboard as you select photos. If you move a photo into a different folder on disk, Picasa will remind you that you're about to move the actual file on your computer's hard drive. Click the "OK" button to move the photo to it's new location. Note: Moving photos between folders in the "Folders" collection will affect their physical location on your hard drive.

- **Edit a folder description.** Double-click on the title of any folder to open the Folder Properties box. Enter a description. You can also modify the folder's date, place taken, or description. Any descriptive information you add will be searchable in Picasa. Click the "OK" button. Changing the name of a folder in Picasa will change the name of the actual folder on your computer's hard drive.
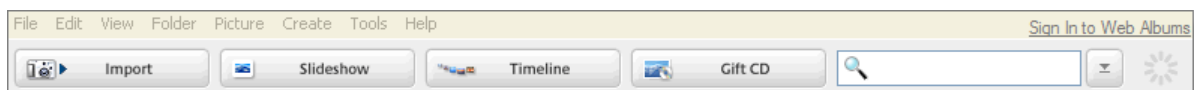
- **Delete a photo from a folder**. Select a photo, then go to "File" > "Delete from Disk," or just hit the Delete key on your keyboard. Picasa will remind you that you're about to send that file to your computer's recycle bin. Click the "OK" button to remove the photo.

Albums

This collection contains albums that you create in Picasa. You can use albums to group and organize photos based on your own criteria and identified by a simple word or title. For example, you can create a album called "Flowers" to group all of your photos of flowers, or you might create a album like "Trip to The Grand Canyon" to arrange all of your latest vacation photos. Unlike the "Folders" collection, which matches exactly the folder locations on your computer, albums do not correspond to physical folders on your hard drive. Albums exist only in Picasa and are like a virtual "playlist" of photos you have grouped together. If you delete or move photos inside the Albums collection, the original files remain in their original locations on your hard drive. You can add the same photo to multiple albums without creating multiple copies of the same photo on disk. Any edits you make to a photo in an album will be applied to every instance of the photo in Picasa, including the original in your Folders collection.

- **Create a new album.** First, select one or more photos (you cannot create an empty album). Select "File" > "New Album" to create a new album in Picasa containing the selected photo(s). You can do the same thing by choosing a photo, clicking the "Add to" button to the right of the Photo Tray, and selecting "New Album" on the popup list.

- **Add a photo to an existing album.** The same photo can be assigned to many albums in Picasa. Select a photo, click the "Add to" button to the right of the Photo Tray, and select an existing album from the popup list.

- **Change an album description.** Double-click on the title of any album to open the "Album Properties" box. Enter a new description for the album. You can also modify the album's date, place taken, or description. Any descriptive information you add will be searchable in Picasa. When you're done, click the "OK" button.

- **Delete a photo from an album.** Select a photo. Right-click with your mouse and select "Remove from Album" in the context menu or press the Delete key on your keyboard. Note: Deleting a photo from an album does not delete the original file from your computer's hard drive.

- **Rearrange photos in an album or between albums.** Click and drag a photo to change its order within a album or drag it into another album to add it to that album. This doesn't affect the order in which the original files are stored on your computer.

- Note: An album in Picasa is not the same as a Picasa Web Album. The Album collection does not show you the photos you may have uploaded to the web.

Library tools

At the top of the Picasa main library screen are several buttons that help you add photos to the Library, view and find photos in additional ways, and burn photos to a CD.

Import

To import photos from a digital camera, plug the hardware into your computer using its usual connection device, such as a USB cable or your camera cradle. Open Picasa. Click the "Import" button and select your device or folder from the dropdown menu (your camera should automatically be detected). Your photos will

automatically begin to appear in the "Import Tray." After your photos have finished loading, click the "Finish" button. Picasa will save the folders on your computer (in the My Pictures directory under a folder name you create) and display them in the "Folders" collection.

Slideshow

Select a folder or album and click the "Slideshow" button. This will open the slideshow player. Click the onscreen "Play" button to start the slideshow and make the player's controls disappear. You can hit the spacebar key on your keyboard or simply move your mouse to make the slideshow controls reappear at any time while your slideshow is playing. You can rotate photos in the slideshow mode, add a star rating, and change the time duration that each slide is displayed. You can even choose to display captions during your slideshow by selecting the captions checkbox. Hit the Escape key on your keyboard to stop the slideshow and return to the Picasa main library screen.

Timeline

The timeline view in Picasa is another way to look at the photos in your collections. Click the "Timeline" button and sweep back and forth through your photos using your mouse to navigate.

Gift CD

Insert a blank CD into the writeable drive on your computer, select photos or an album and click the "Gift CD" button. On the "Create a Gift CD" screen, photos with a checkmark will be included on your gift CD. De-select any photos you don't want included. Under Step 1, click the "Add More" button if you'd like to add photos to the CD. If you'd like your photos displayed as a slideshow on the CD, check that box. Finally, choose a size for your photos. Under Step 2, name your CD. (Note: by default, a copy of Picasa software will be included on the CD.) Click the "Burn Disc" button to create your CD.

Search

If you type any text into the search box at the top right corner of the main Picasa library screen, Picasa will search your photo files' EXIF/camera data, keywords, albums, and any additional properties or captions you've entered inside the program.

- Starred button. Use this button to find only photos that you've tagged with a star rating.

- Movies button. Use this to find only movie file types in your library.

- Date slider. Move this slider left and right to quickly reduce the number of search results based on the date of the photo.

- Uploaded button. Use this button to find only photos that you've uploaded to Picasa Web Albums.

Edit

With Picasa's advanced photo editing, you can use basic one-click fixes to improve almost any photo, adjust color and lighting, and add any of twelve effects.

A few general editing tips:

- Double-click on a thumbnail in the Library to open the "Edit Photo" screen. This will show you the photo you're currently editing. To the right of the photo are three tabs, "Basic Fixes," "Tuning," and "Effects."

- While on the "Edit Photo" screen, use the thumbnail arrows on either side of the filmstrip at the top of the photo to navigate through the rest of the photos in that album.

- To reverse any edits you made, click the "Undo" button at any step along the way.

- Any edits you make to photos in Picasa are not saved to the original file on disk until you click the "Save Changes" button in the album header. Saving your changes this way will overwrite the original file, while retaining a backup in a new "Originals" folder. Click the "Undo Save" button to revert a file to the backed up version.

- For more information about the edit screens, refer to the Picasa Help menu in the software.
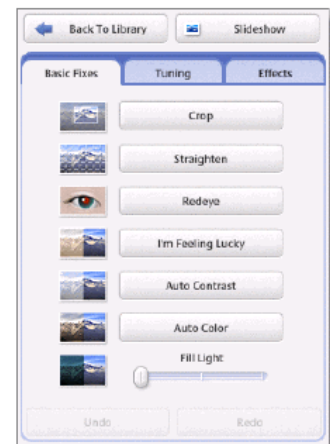
Basic Fixes tab

Crop
Use the "Crop" button to cut out parts of a photo that you don't want to see. In the "Crop Photo" view, you can select a pre-determined photo size (for instance, 4x6) or manually select the part of the photo you'd like to keep. To crop a photo, drag and drop the bounding box directly over the photo. Click on and drag the corners of the box to change the cropped selection while maintaining the same proportions. Click "Apply" to save your changes in Picasa or "Cancel" to return to the "Basic Fixes" tab.

Straighten
Use this feature to fix photos taken with an off-kilter camera. Select a photo and click the "Straighten" button. In the "Straighten Photo" view, use the slider at the bottom of the screen to align the photo against the boxed grid. Click "Apply" to save your changes in Picasa or "Cancel" to return to the "Basic Fixes" tab.

Red eye
Use this feature to remove red eye from any photo. First, click the "Red Eye" button. In the "Red Eye" view, click and drag the mouse around each eye separately to select it. As you do this, a selection box will appear over the area. Release the mouse to complete your selection. The photo will automatically be displayed with the red eye removed. Click "Apply" to save your changes in Picasa or "Cancel" to return to the "Basic Fixes" tab.

I'm Feeling Lucky
Click the "I'm Feeling Lucky" button and Picasa will change your photo's color and contrast to produce what it thinks is the ideal photo. You'll see a change only if your photo isn't already color balanced. Click the "Undo I'm Feeling Lucky" button below to remove the change.

Auto Contrast
Click the "Auto Contrast" to adjust the contrast in your photo in Picasa. Click the "Undo Auto Contrast" button below to remove the change.

Auto Color
Click the "Auto Color" button to adjust the color in your photo automatically in Picasa. Click "Undo Auto Color" button below to remove the change.

Fill Light
Use the fill light slider to add light to the foreground of photos with too-bright backgrounds, making them more balanced. Click the "Undo Fill Light" button to remove the change.

Tuning tab

Fill Light slider
Use the "Fill Light" slider to add light to the foreground of photos with too-bright backgrounds, making them more balanced. Click the "Undo Fill Light" button to remove the change.

Highlights slider
Use the "Highlights" slider to add to or reduce the brightness spots, or highlights, in your photo. Click the "Undo Tuning" button to remove the change.

Shadows slider
Use the "Shadows" slider to add more shadows to your photo. Click the "Undo Tuning" button to remove the change. **Hint**: you can use the one-click button to the right of the "Fill Light," "Highlights," and "Shadows' sliders to make fixes to your photo's lighting without using the sliders.

Color Temperature slider
Use the "Color Temperature" slider to make your photo warmer (to the right) or cooler (to the left).

Neutral Color Picker
Use the "Pick Color" dropper to tell Picasa which part of your photo it should consider as gray or white. Picasa will color balance the colors surrounding that selection according to the selected color.
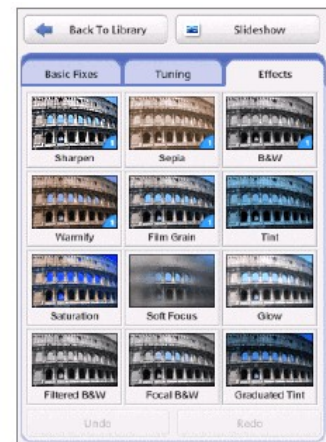
Effects tab

The "Effects" tab contains twelve effects that you can apply to any still photo. Effects are added in progressive layers, and you can always undo or redo the last effect you made at any time. Here are the effects you can use to improve your photos in Picasa:

Sharpen – Make the edges of objects in your photos crisper and less fuzzy.

Sepia – Create an "old-fashioned" effect by changing the photo to a reddish brown tone.

B&W – Turn any color photo into a black and white photo.

Warmify – Warm up a cool photo, improving skin tones.

Film Grain – Add a "grainy" film look to any photo – looks great when you print.

Tint – Use the dropper to pick a color and apply that duotone or tint to the entire photo.

Saturation – Increases color saturation.

Soft Focus – Soften the focus around a center point that you select.

Glow – Give photos a gauzy glow.

Filtered B&W – Make a photo that looks like it was taken with black and white film and a color filter.

Focal B&W – De-saturate color around a center point with adjustable size and sharpness sliders.

Graduated Tint – Add a graduated filter from a color you select. Useful for making gray skies blue.
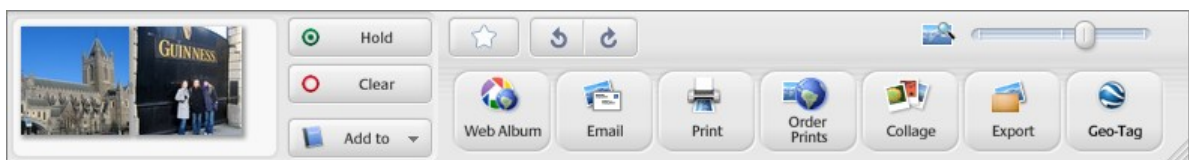
Captions

You can add a caption to any photo while you're in the "Edit Photo" screen. Underneath the individual photo, click on the text that says "Make a caption!" Type in your caption. You can show or hide a caption from the photo using the button on the left in the caption bar. You can delete a caption by clicking the trash can icon on the right.

Captions in Picasa are stored in each photo's EXIF data, so they stay with your photos. That means if you upload to a Picasa Web Album, your captions will also appear on the website. Captions are also searchable inside Picasa.

Share and Print

Sharing, printing and more ways to enjoy photos outside of Picasa

The Photo Tray and controls
Any photo you select in the folder list appears as an active selection in your Photo Tray on the lower left corner of the main library screen. Photos in the "Photo Tray" are affected by the buttons to the right of the tray.

Hold

Use the "Hold" button to keep a photo in the tray as you add more photos. You can add multiple photos to the tray by holding down the Shift key as you select photos.

Clear

Click the "Clear" button to empty the "Photo Tray" of all photos on hold.

Add to

Click the "Add to" button to add a new or existing album to the photo(s) in the tray.

Star

The star button adds a small gold star to any photo in the tray. These stars are searchable ratings that help you find favorites quickly. Any photo to which you add a star can be easily accessed when performing a search in Picasa.

Rotate Left and Rotate Right

The two rotate buttons will rotate the selected photo clockwise or counter-clockwise inside Picasa.

Web Album (Internet access required)

Picasa's newest feature, Picasa Web Albums, allows you to post and share your photos easily online. Simply select photos (they'll appear in the "Photo Tray") and click the "Web Album" button to upload them to your album. Once the upload is complete, press the "View Online" button to view and manage photos in your Web Albums account. If you don't have a Picasa Web Album, you'll be prompted to create one the first time you use the "Web Album" button.

Print

The "Print" button lets you print the photos in the Photo Tray using a local or networked printer. Click "Print" to open the print screen and select a print layout size. Picasa will automatically size the photos in the Photo Tray to those proportions. These buttons make it easier to print multiple photos on one page. For example: if you have four photos in the tray and select 3.5x5, Picasa will fit all four of the photos on a standard 8.5 x 11 page.

The "Review" button in the lower right corner of the print screen helps you review all your print settings before you print. Click "Print" to send the photo(s) to your printer.

Email (Internet access required)

The "Email" button in Picasa lets you email the photos in your "Photo Tray" several ways:

Default Email

Select this to send photos using your computer's default email client.

Gmail

Works with an existing Gmail account from Google (not included with your Picasa software). Sends up to 10MB of photos, including the message, compressed perfectly to a size that your friends will be able to open.

Picasa Mail

If you don't have Gmail or Outlook, you can use this option to send photos using another email

address or your Hello username. You'll need to register for a free Hello account using an existing email address and a password that you create.

Collage
Click the "Collage" button to quickly make personalized photo collages from a variety of templates including picture pile, picture grid, or contact sheet. You can also create a film-style multiple exposure effect. To save your new creation, pick a background for your collage (use a photo or the colors black, white or gray) and specify how you want it created (as a screensaver, as a desktop background, or as a folder you select).

Blogger (Internet access required)
A blog is an online web journal. You can publish photos to the web for free using Picasa and a blog that you create on Blogger.com. Select up to four photos (they'll appear in the "Photo Tray") and click the "BlogThis!" button. Your photo(s) will be uploaded to your blog as the newest post. If you don't have a blog, click the "BlogThis" button in Picasa and follow the instructions to sign up for a free account (it only takes a few minutes). Once you have an account, you'll be able to click the "BlogThis!" button in Picasa at any time to post photos to your blog in one step.

Order Prints (Internet access required)
Click the "Order" button to order prints from one of Picasa's online print providers. Chose a provider by clicking on the logo or link. You'll be prompted to sign in, using the username and password you normally use to access that provider's website. After you sign in, Picasa will automatically upload all the photos in your "Photo Tray." (to the print provider website; Note: any photos you order via Picasa are processed through the print provider's website and are covered under that company's privacy and shopping policies.) Picasa does not disclose any information about you to the merchants listed on the "Order" page. For more details on what information Picasa shares with these websites, please click the "Privacy Policy" link at the bottom of the this website.

Export
Click the "Export" button to save any photos in the "Photo Tray" as new JPG files. Export is like "Save As" on your computer. For example, if you make an album containing photos of your dog from various folders and then edit them to all be black and white, you can export that entire album and create new files on your hard drive that reflect those edits. You can choose the JPG quality and saved photo size during this process. Note: Picasa never overwrites your original file on disk; any edits you make to a photo are only saved inside Picasa until you decide to either export or click the "Save Changes" button in the album header.