

**“A dig into Picasa”**  
**Notes on a talk by L Tubb to MCC on 01/11/2010**

Ref.: Picasa 3.8 Build 117.16

It would be a great help when reading this if you have Picasa installed on your computer and try the various knobs and whistles as they are discussed, otherwise it is a really dry read.

I hope that the following does give an incentive to people to try the package out, it's free and fun, and dare I say it frustrating at times.

Tutorials available from the Web: click on help in Picasa and you will be linked to the front page of the Picasa web site and a very good first tutorial is the Community video on the left of the page. The right side of the page has a number of other videos of varying quality. Also try out all the explanations in the getting started guide you will find that there are a lot and suddenly you are the expert.

The other way is through Picasa help/forums to see how many other people have the same problem and probably as many solutions. These Forums are a two edged sword.

The solutions offered are subject to the skill of the person who managed to get the programme to do what they had in mind, this not the same as solving your problem in a lot of cases. So what do you do when all else fails? The simple answer I suppose is BIN IT, or to be more constructive look elsewhere.

Picasa is a very useful quick editor with some interesting options and a very good picture straightener.

Picasa is fully active within Windows but you can make changes that are not recorded in Windows and I suspect some of Windows warnings are circumvented. You will find that when it has been installed, all your folders will have a Picasa link added. I have found that the program even finds the files and folders on my additional drive. You will also find that when you create a collage / export a video / make a video an additional folder is made in my pictures that contains these folders. One other thing: although Windows will forbid two files with the same name in a folder Picasa will happily accept this condition. Another thing that you should be aware of is that as Picasa is a file indexing programme at its heart, it slows down the computer especially when there are other indexing programmes like your own camera software installed on your computer. The best way is to make a conscious decision which programmes you want and either inhibit their installed ones or remove them.

Picasa is basically a file handling program; additionally some of the things you do are not SAVED unless you specifically tell the program to do so.

You should be aware of the Windows filing system and directory and the manner that Windows deals with files. It may well save a lot of heart-ache when things disappear.

For example setting up a new album in Picasa does not do so in Windows.

So much for the warnings!!

**Shall we take a look around Picasa?**

1. File. Files and Folders can be moved around in Picasa just the same as in more advanced softwares and the Mac by the simple expedient of drag and drop. Watch the twitch of the finger or you can get some surprising results
2. The most important item is what happens when you save a picture that has been edited in Picasa. In this event the new picture is saved into the same folder by Picasa with the original name. Looking for the picture you started with then becomes fun. Picasa has saved it, to a new sub folder attached to the original folder in Windows. It is NOT readily viewable in Picasa. To view, you need to right click on the picture concerned. Then select (locate / original on disk), the location will be displayed. If you want to use it, then it's a case of move again to a location of your choice. Alternatively look into the Windows folder view and you will see that each folder had an extra folder attached - your picture, or to

be precise the original, should now be there. Or if in doubt take the safe as option and tell it precisely where to go !!

- a. You can import from other source or from the web
- b. The recently update shows what it say on the tin.
- c. Folder on the left of the page is stacked in order of folder creation and can be changed by using the view option / folder view, basically a view in date order or in Windows arrangement. This does provide a alternative to the Windows view of your folders.
- d. Touch the folder icon and it will show you its location within the computer, including multiple drive - a handy trick.
- e. If you right click on the folder you can add a description which is a help in giving you a later reference that you may forget (grey cell prompts). The change is added to the display.
- f. Right click on an individual picture and it will locate it within Windows and a pop up window will appear that is the Windows move / rename etc. window.
- g. Right click on a picture and you can see in the blue bar its details.
- h. Double left click sends it straight to Picasa editor; right click provides many options, the most useful being that you can choose which photo editor you wish to use.
- i. Folders will not show in the index even when created in Windows until they actually contain a picture.
- j. To set a new folder so that it is canned at your choice of intervals go to Tools / folder manager / choices. Tick the relevant folder or drive with the symbol that determines the rate at which Picasa scans that folder or drive.
- k. If you have multi drives, it is best to deselect them in Tools / folder manager as they do eat up the computer tasks and current files are normally in the C drive; also, as Picasa does not recognize drives, as they are not picture folders, it can get very confusing.
- l. It is best to regularly check for updates under the help menu.
- m. Moving Pictures in Picasa is the same as in Windows under tools / folder/move, but it is marginally slower and tends to inhibit the mouse functions if you wish to do something else whilst Picasa sorts out the folder.
- n. A simple right click on the folder name or file also brings up most of these function choices.
- o. Files can be renamed under Files / rename just as in Windows, and they are renamed in sequence order, subject to the search order you sorted by before renaming.

There many other options under each of the headings at the top of the page, some of which we will come back to, but they should be explored and tested so that you understand what they do. It could save a lot of grief at a later stage.

Face detection: if you do not want this to work it can be switched off in tools / option / name tags / click off the enable box. Face detection is fine, but it does use a lot of computer processing as it scans all the files looking for faces, and then wants you to name them etc. On a computer with thousands of pictures like mine, this can be a very long job, most people's faces of which I will never know again.

### **View drop menu**

It is a very good thing to look into the hidden pictures options from time to time, especially after changing several pictures, as all those changes are recorded by Picasa and they could be removed if you are satisfied with the result and it has been saved.

Also you can hide a folder.

1. In the folders menu select hide and the top folder showing at that time will be hidden with or without a password. The same can be achieved using right click on folder.
2. This can be duplicated on individual files by both methods.
3. Hidden pictures usually appear as a ghosted picture in the file in Picasa.

### **Edit a picture**

Picasa is a very useful quick editor with some interesting options and a very good picture straightener.

Remember, unless you physically chose the save option, the changes you make stay within Picasa and all the stages you went through are to be found there also; this could be useful later. For example Adobe Photoshop Elements would remind you to save, and at that point the changes would be amalgamated, whereas in Picasa they remain as hidden files unless you remove those files.

Hidden files are files created by Picasa at various points when you are editing. Picasa holds these, but they are not seen by Windows. They can be revealed for each folder.

Once again, a repeat of what I said before: the photo tree on the left can be rearranged into a Windows or date list using options in the view menu. This option has many uses, as it is possible to list pictures or folder by name or choice not available in Windows, which gives you an alternate way of finding that elusive picture you are sure that you had somewhere.

A picture edited in Picasa will not appear in Windows unless you save it to Windows using the save option.

The name of the picture will appear at the bottom of the picture on the blue strip; in Picasa you can [have two pictures with the same name](#).

Left click on the folder icon sends you directly to the Windows folder page.

I repeat: a picture can look different in Picasa and Windows, but have the same name.

### **Entering the editor you will come up with**

Basic fixes: these are the basic changes as suggested, the best of which is Red Eye and Straighten which is very good; perhaps also the lucky fix if you have no idea what to do. Retouch is one of the tools and needs a small degree of interpretation. Using this tool you can determine the radius included, you then select the area you wish to change and the area you want to fill it with. To complete the change you have to click on apply; this is useful for adding highlights to a still life, etc. However, this time Windows also recorded the changes, so if in doubt of the result it is best to use a copy of your original or use the undo button to get back to the beginning. IT DOES even remember if you use the escape key and then recall the picture.

### **The remainder I suggest you try out**

Next comes Tuning. This is mostly global in that the effects are seen over the whole of the picture. The one other is the neutral colour picker - this one is great fun. Assume that your picture has a black point or some point you consider should be black: select the eye dropper, select the black point and Picasa will colour the picture according to what you will have told it is black!! To escape from the changes click the wand. Have fun with the results.

Finally comes Effects, the most interesting of which is Focal Point. In this you can determine which point in a picture is true colour, and then the editor will change the colours out fading to black and white from that point. I got surprised by this as it saved the changes in Windows as well. However, it can be undone using Picasa: resubmit to Picasa editor and you find that you will be able to undo.

### **The Print option**

Tools / options.

The print command can get into an argument with the Windows commands, and I found it a much less paper wasting experience if you wish to print two pictures on one A4 sheet to use Windows, as the Picasa way produced a lot of white paper!

Here you can set the types and details of the various print options you would like to use and control the resolution.

1. Using the print icon
2. Here you will find your print option as tags once again plus extra tools
3. Most of these are self explanatory
4. The printer set up tag takes you straight into Windows print manager

5. A helpful tag at the bottom right where you can view what you have set up to print and its option selected. It seems to suggest that you can use different options for pictures with a print queue, but that is something that I have yet to solve.
6. If you need to print multiple images, move the files around in the Picasa folder so that they are in sequence.
7. If the result is not to your taste when you select print, you have a page where you can select the layout: the option at the bottom is printer set up. You can select also the printer you are using in the box above. On my computer, for reasons best known to itself at this moment, selecting Landscape produces a Portrait layout and vice versa; anyone else meeting this little conundrum - if you get the paper layout correct then the waste paper syndrome disappears

### **Next we are going to a peek at making a video**

There are some reservations I found: one it can be slow especially if you add sound and the number of pictures will have a significant effect. The thing to watch is that you choose to add the audio to the pictures by fitting it to the pictures and not by fitting the pictures to the audio - or alternately of course choose a audio file that has the length you need, or chop one down.

The other is that most of my video players would not recognize the results, so the file had to be passed to another compiler that has that facility and then the problems get much more fun.

The software has many good points and the edit package is clean and simple with no real hang ups.

OK for just using on a computer or for posting to the web, etc. It states that it has created a WMA file, but whilst my player will accept WMA from Elements it won't recognize a file from Picasa.

At this stage the first and most important thing is to ensure that you have a clean disk available: like most video tools it will not accept a disk with any material on it.

I would suggest you use a rewrite disc, as errors could get very expensive.

Compiling a video can be a long automated process so it is best to run it a few times to remove the glitches before you pass it to the compiler. If you add sound to the video then this really lengthens the process and be careful which option you select when attaching the sound, whether it is trimmed to the slides or to the sound.

From the try out of my own, I think it would be best to complete a video of a holiday a day at a time, but how you get the subsequent days onto the same disk I have not found at this point.

### **Create a slide show**

1. In the selected folder (i.e. Folder at the top of the view page) click create
2. Check the options on the screen
3. Check that the slides are the ones you want
4. Ensure that they are in the order you like
5. Add any other material you need
6. Check dissolves
7. Give the video a trial run
8. Add audio - ONLY one track
9. Create the movie - it will be filed in the Picasa videos folder
10. The system tells you that it creating a WML file or WMV. My player does not understand these: apparently they are for the web, and the Picasa video is designed to pass through the web.
11. So we are left with the problem of passing this file to another type of DVD burner to get a video that is more compatible with household video players.
12. Minimize Picasa
13. Open Video folder in Windows
14. Right click on video file and open with Media player and stop immediately
15. Go to burn and select burn to disk
16. This version will only play in Window Media player, not on my TV player. The problem may be in the disk selected, as it was looking for a CD and my player expects DVDs for Videos.

17. Always do a trial run with something short to see that the method you are going to use does the job.

### **Disk burning through Adobe Photoshop Elements and Première Elements**

1. Open Elements
2. Go to create
3. Add media My Pictures / Picasa / video
4. Select video
5. Test result with play button
6. Select output burn to disk
7. Select DVD /PAL
8. Note check box to include any already on disk
9. Save show: give it a name you will remember
10. Agree arrangement
11. Ensure PAL is selected
12. Save in My Videos
13. Wait while compiled file get written
14. At this point the file on my set up is passed to Première Elements, so if you have a stand-alone version of Elements, you will have to find your own way!
15. Name the new project
16. Preview your project
17. Add anything else
18. Go to share
19. Select disc burn
20. Check details
21. Select burn
22. Test result on your chosen player.

That's the lot for today. I hope that I haven't bored too many members, as this is quite an involved subject once you get beyond the basics. Just do it and hope for the best!

I hope that points raised above will improve and increase your enjoyment of a terrific piece of FREE software. To install Picasa, open your web browser into Google search, type in Picasa, and follow the instruction. Yes, you can even use it on a MAC, but in all cases please read the system requirements.

### **Geotagging**

This is a new one to me I am just beginning to explore. Using Picasa you can attach to file EXIF data the location of the picture - so now you have all the picture info and also where it was taken. Google maps enables you to attach the place the photo was taken to the EXIF data. When viewing your pictures, if the location symbol is attached, the simple expedient of clicking on it brings up a map with the position – COOL.

### **Something more**

If you feel the need to add something to this, then e mail me at [lauriedavid@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:lauriedavid@tiscali.co.uk) and I will append that info so we will build a good help base in time.

Laurie