

Producing an Optimal Digital Image in Picasa 3

Background

All digital images are stored in a square or rectangle of pixels.

The original image from your camera may have a size exceeding 3000 x 2000 pixels – the actual number varies depending upon the camera manufacturer and the settings you have set on your camera when taking the picture.

However, the size of an image projected by most digital projectors is substantially smaller than this. For the class of projector used by the club, the native size of the image is 1400x1050 pixels – which is a rectangle with a ratio of 4 :: 3. When a digital image measuring exactly 1400x1050 (or smaller) pixels is sent to the projector, the image is displayed pixel to pixel (or 1 :: 1) and it faithfully reflects the pixels in your image. Therefore, *it is to your benefit* to control the quality of the images in your editing software and produce an image that the projector can optimally handle.

For the purposes of projection the club has decided that submitted images will have a dimension of 1280px on their longest side. Therefore, you have a 1280x1280 pixel playing field in which to project your completed image. Within this 1280x1280 square, you are free to use the space in any way you wish. So, whether your image format is horizontal (landscape) or vertical (portrait), you want the final sizing for submission to be 1280px on the longest side and the other dimension something less than 1280px.

The procedure to downscale your images in your image editing software is straightforward. The basic workflow is to save your original image; and produce a smaller copy for submission. In a nutshell, the correct order of operations is to apply sharpening to your image then export a copy sized to the correct dimension.

Detailed Steps

Follow these steps to produce an optimal digital image for submission to the Club. These instructions apply only to Picasa.

- Complete all your editing work and then crop your photo, as appropriate. The crop tool is under the Basic Fixes tab. A key advantage to Picasa is that you can crop, or re-crop, without destroying parts of your original image.

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- Sharpen your image. The sharpen tool is under the Effects tab. Don't over do it or your image will appear un-natural. Sharpening can improve the look of an already in-focus image, *but it can't satisfactorily repair an image that is inherently out of focus.*

Now follow 3 different steps depending upon whether your image is horizontal or vertical.

Horizontal (Landscape) Image:

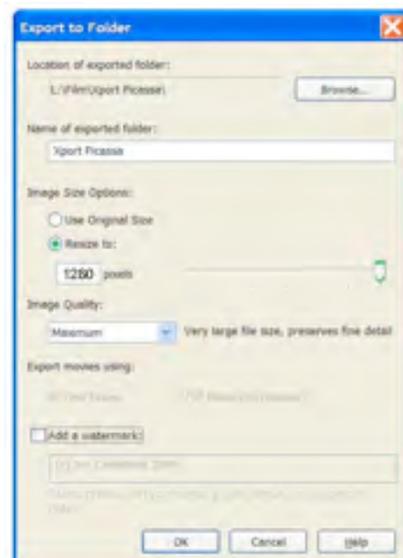
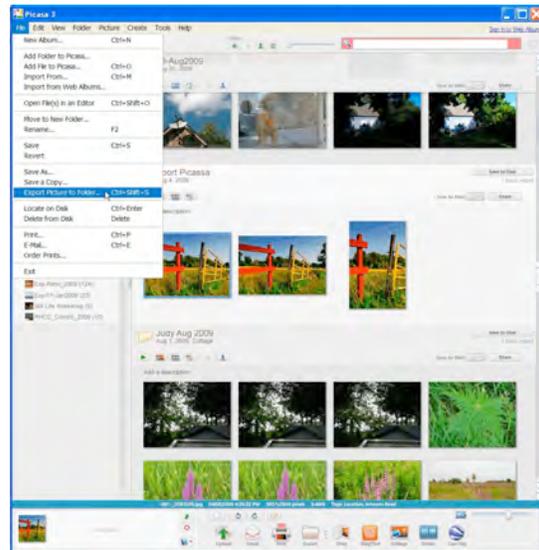
- Export a copy. Click on the picture you wish to export. We're choosing the horizontally cropped fence image.

Using the menu, select File / Export Picture to Folder.

In the dialog box that appears, choose 1280 in the size box. We're using 1280 because that is the dimension that we want for the longest side of the image.

You will also need to indicate the Location of your export folder (where you want to save the image). Use the [Browse] button and navigate to the folder on your computer where you wish to store your photos or create a new folder specifically to hold these exports. This should NOT be the same folder as your original, so that you reduce the risk of accidentally over-writing your original.

Set the Image Quality to Maximum.



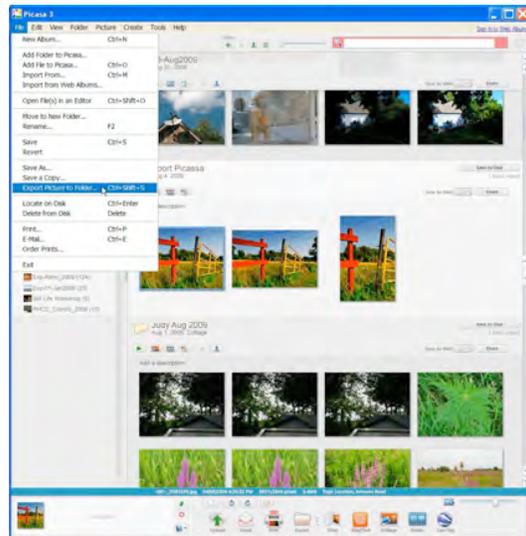
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Vertical (Portrait) Image:

- Export a copy. Click on the picture you wish to export. We're choosing the vertically cropped fence image.

Using the menu, select File / Export Picture to Folder.

In the dialog box that appears, choose 1280 in the size box. We're using 1280 because that is the dimension that we want for the longest side of the image.



Now you can navigate to the exported folder and check your image. This will be a separate copy from your original, likely much smaller in size.

This document describes how to resample images using Picasa. You may wish to explore using Adobe Photoshop Elements or Lightroom as your photo manipulation software, since they are more effective and easy to use. Ask other club members what they use and why.

