

Paint.NET Introduction

What is Paint.NET?

Paint.NET is a free image editing application for Windows 'XP' or 'Vista'.

It is designed to work with raster images (e.g. photo's) so can be categorised along with pay-for image editing applications such as PhotoShop and PaintShop Pro.

Some key features of Paint.NET include:

- Image cropping, re-sizing
- Output to different image formats
- Functions such as red-eye removal and artistic effects
- Drawing functions (e.g. freehand brush, shapes, curves, fill tool)
- Basic text tool
- Layered images (an image can be constructed from two or more images stacked in front of each other)

The latest release of Paint.NET can be downloaded from: <http://www.getpaint.net/index2.html>

Quick Tutorial

This tutorial is designed to familiarise you with some basic functions in Paint.NET to demonstrate how quick and easy it is to learn.

Creation or manipulation of all images used in this tutorial was all done in Paint.NET.

1. Prerequisites

This tutorial assumes a basic familiarity with the Windows XP user interface and common applications. If you have not installed software before, please consult IT support first.

When the tutorial asks you to select or click, this refers to the left mouse button.

2. Download and install application

- First, download and install Paint.NET from <http://www.getpaint.net/index2.html>
- As with any externally sourced software, it is good practice to scan the setup file for viruses before running [installing] it.

3. Get tutorial files

- Once you've installed Paint.NET download some sample images from <http://www.brad.ac.uk/elearning/software/paintdotnet/> to somewhere convenient on your computer (e.g. 'My Documents' or a folder on your 'G:' drive). When the file has downloaded, extract it (e.g. **right-click** the zip file [pn_qs.zip] and select '**extract all**'). The new folder will be called **pn_qs**.
- Final example images have been included - tutimage_example.pdn and forweb_example.png (you end up with your own versions of these by the end of the tutorial)


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4. Open Paint.NET

Double-click on the Paint.NET icon if present on your desktop, or select from the start menu (*start* > **All Programs** > **Paint.NET**).

5. Open background image (a duck pond)

First, you're going to open a photograph of a pond. To this, we will add a couple of ducks.

- Select **File** > **Open...** , press **CTRL + O** or click the file open icon 
- Browse to the folder **pn_qs**, select **pond.jpg** and click **Open**

6. Save the file

In order to maintain the highest image quality and work with layers, the file needs to be saved in the Paint.NET format (.pdn). This is a proprietary format (don't worry - the final output can be saved later in a number of alternative formats), with a similar purpose to (*but not compatible with!*) Photoshop .psd or Paint Shop Pro .psp files.

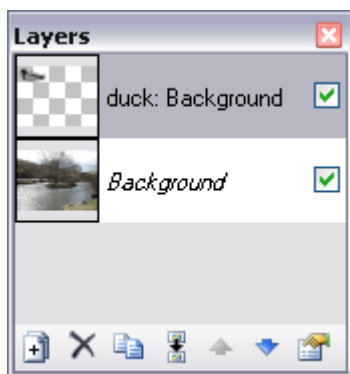
- Select **File** > **Save As...** (or **CTRL + SHIFT + S**)
- In the **File Name:** box, type a name for the file (e.g. **tutimage**)
- In the **Save as type:** drop-down box select **Paint.NET v3.07 (*.pdn)** or similar (the version number may be different, you just need to make sure it's the one with *.pdn in brackets)
- Select **Save**

7. Add a duck

This section introduces the concept of layers and transparency.

- Select **Layers** > **Import From File...**
- You should be taken straight to the pn_qs directory, if not then browse to it as before
- Select **duck.pdn** and click open

The 'Layers' palette (at the bottom-right of the Paint.NET screen by default) now displays 2 layers with a background layer ('pond') and a second layer 'duck'. Layers take precedence the further up the stack they are (so on the main image, the duck is not obscured by the pond).



If you cannot see the layers palette, select **Window** > **Layers** or press **F7**



Now save your file – select **File** > **Save** , **CTRL + S** or click the file save icon 

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8. Select, resize and move the duck

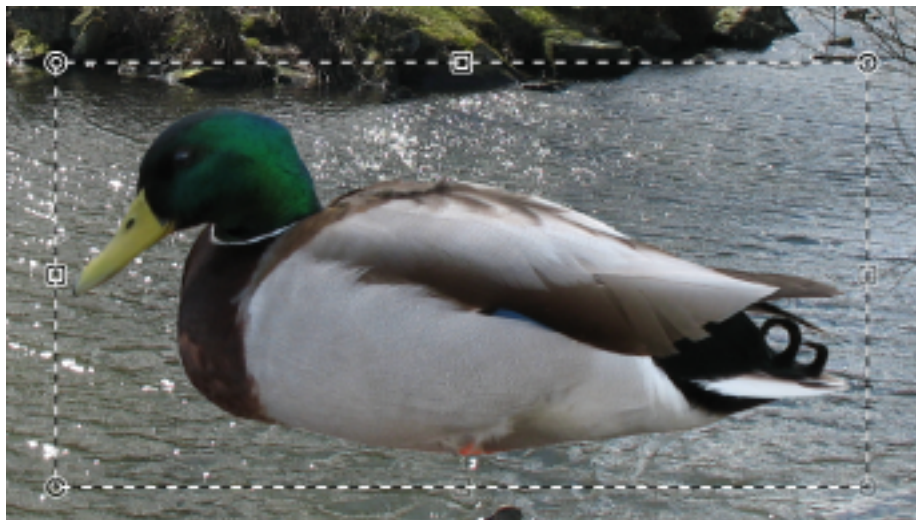
Selecting the duck

The 'duck' layer should be selected (has a moving dashed border around it). If it isn't, do the following:

- Ensure the 'duck' layer is highlighted (grey)
- Click the 'Rectangle Select' tool in the  'Tools' palette (on the right of the screen)
- You're going to 'draw' a selection rectangle around the duck:
 1. **Click and hold** the area where you want the top-left of the rectangle to start
 2. Move the cursor to where you want the bottom-right corner to be and release the mouse button. You should now have a rectangle around the duck
 3. If the whole duck is not within the rectangle, select **Edit > Deselect**, the deselect icon  or **CTRL + D** – then repeat steps 1 and 2.

Moving the duck

- From the 'Tools' palette, ensure that the 'Move Selected Pixels'  icon is selected
- **Click and hold** anywhere inside the selection rectangle (away from the edges though) and move the duck to somewhere on the pond to the right of the image, below the island
- You should now have a duck selected that looks similar to:



Resizing the duck

- Move the mouse cursor over one of the corners of the rectangle so that it changes to a hand cursor

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- *Hold down the **SHIFT** key and **click and hold** the rectangle corner*
- *Move the cursor towards the center of the rectangle to make the duck smaller (moving it the other way will make it larger)*
- *Release the mouse button when you're happy with the size*
- *Keeping the shift key held down during this process 'constrains proportions'. This means that the image doesn't become 'stretched'*
- *You can re-position the duck in the same way as before*

Now save your file

9. Add another duck, 'flip horizontal' and resize

Add duck

With the 'duck' layer selected

- In the 'Layers' palette, click the 'duplicate layers' button 
- You'll now see another 'duck' layer. You can't see two ducks yet because the duplicate has been placed exactly over the top of the original
- With this new layer highlighted:
- Ensure there's still a selection rectangle over the duck, if not then create one in the same way as before (but still with the new layer highlighted)
- Select the 'Move Selected Pixels' icon  from the 'Tools' palette and drag the new duck to the left
- You should now see two ducks on screen

Flip duck

With the new (highest in the layer stack) layer highlighted:


- Select **Layers > Flip Horizontal**
- Resize the duck to make it slightly smaller than the original duck
- Move it so that the beaks overlap (**hint:** you may need to 'deselect' then make a new selection rectangle)

Now save your file

10. Make the first duck a different colour and bring to the front

- Select the original duck layer in the layers palette
- Select **Edit > Deselect** (or **CTRL + D**)
- Select **Adjustments > Sepia**
- Select **Adjustments > Hue / Saturation**


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- In the box that appears, drag the 'Hue' slider and release to change the colour of the duck. You can see the ducks colour change (drag the Hue / Saturation box to somewhere else if it's obscuring the duck)
- Play around with the 'Saturation' and 'Lightness' sliders to see the effect. You can use the 'reset' buttons to the right of each slider if you want to start over
- When you're happy with your changes, click OK
- Bring the duck to the front [top] by clicking the up arrow in the layers palette 

The reason for making the image sepia was to enable a uniform colour to be applied to the layer. Some interesting effects can be achieved by skipping that step.


Now save your file

11. Insert a thought bubble with text

- Insert a new layer as in section 7, this time selecting **thought_bubble.png**
- Move the bubble to above the head of one of the ducks
- Insert a new blank layer using the icon in the layers palette  and ensure this layer remains selected when you add the text
- Choose a foreground colour from the colours palette (if it's not displayed, **Window > Colors** or **F8**). The text will be the colour of the top-left square:



click it and select a colour from the colour wheel or predefined colours (along the bottom of the color palette box)

- Select the text tool from the Tools palette 
- In the text options box that will have appeared near the top of the screen, select 'Arial' '36' and click the 'B' button to make the text bold
- Click in the centre-left of the largest thought bubble
- Type 'Quack!'
- You can select the text in the layer and move it around as you did to the other layers previously. Note that to maintain higher quality text, resizing is best done by deleting the text layer and re-typing the text having selected a different size.
- When working with text, always keep it on a separate layer as otherwise it merges with the layer you've inserted it in, making it difficult (or impossible) to alter later without destroying part of the image. This may be different to recent versions of other packages you might have used such as Photoshop or PaintShop Pro which handle text in a different way.

Now save your file

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12. Add a frame

- Insert a new layer as in section 7, this time selecting **frame.png**
- The frame has the same dimensions as the original photograph, so your ducks and pond should now be framed inside an oval
- If your ducks are obscured, move them inside the oval area. If you need to hide the frame while you do this, uncheck the box for that layer in the layers palette (each layer has a box on the right which is ticked by default to show the layer). Re-select the checkbox when you're done

Now save your file

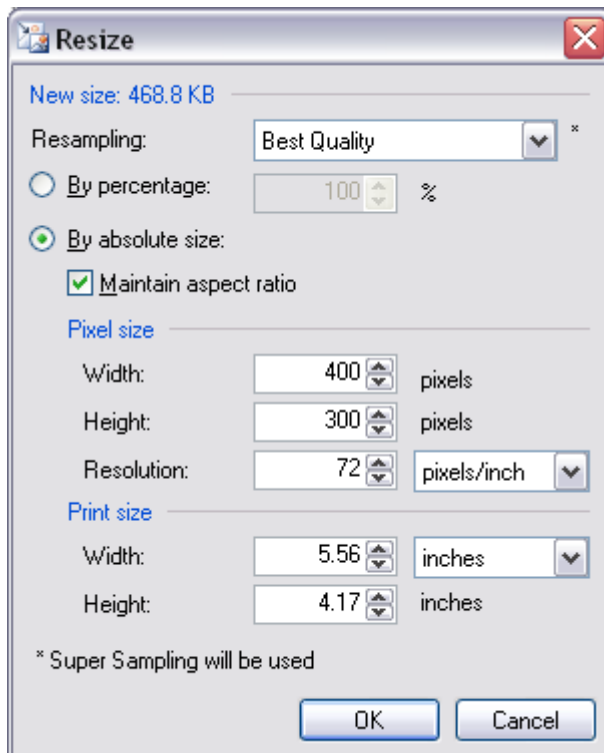
13. Resize and output the result for use on the web

As it stands, the image is suited to print output direct from Paint.NET, but would still need to be saved in a different format for use in most page layout or publishing applications.

To demonstrate the export function, you're going to save the file as a PNG targeted at web use (e.g. as a standard web page or within Blackboard) at a size suitable for display alongside text and other images.

- Make sure you've saved the file! This is so that the master .pdn file is up-to-date
- Select **File > Save As...** and browse to the folder you want to save the file in if different from the one that appears
- Type a file name (e.g. **forweb**) and select **PNG (*.png)** from the '**Save as type:**' drop-down menu
- Click **Save**
- When prompted, select the 'flatten' option to continue
- Paint.NET has now saved the file as a PNG and is displaying it instead of your original PDN file (you'll see the filename ending .png in the title bar). To re-edit the image layers in future, you'll need to open the .pdn file.
- If for some reason the title bar is displaying the original filename ending .pdn, close it *without saving* and open the PNG file instead. This is because otherwise when you next save the .pdn file, the version with separate layers will be overwritten so you won't be able to alter them independently anymore
- Resize the image by selecting Image > Resize... (CTRL + R)
- In the box that appears, adjust the settings to match the one below. **HINT:** change the options in order from top-to-bottom for easiest results - e.g. if you've checked 'Maintain aspect ratio' the correct Height will be set when you enter the Width. You will not need to alter options under 'Print size':

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- Click OK
- Now save the file using the regular 'Save' option (File > Save, CTRL + S or the save icon)
- You now have a web-ready PNG!

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Further Reading

If you would like to explore Paint.NET further, then two sources of information available on the internet via the Paint.NET Help menu are suggested below. Some features/topics that may be of particular use are:

- History (you may have noticed this palette displayed on screen by default)
- Transparency (used by the duck image, thought bubble and frame)
- Effects

Help Topics

These are available from within Paint.NET by pressing **F1** or selecting **Help > Help Topics** (url: <http://www.getpaint.net/doc/latest/en/index.html>).

Down the left side of the page are a comprehensive set of links that should cover everything you need to know about using Paint.NET

Tutorials

There is a forum on the website where Paint.NET users can post tutorials explaining how do perform specific tasks.

To access these, go to **Help > Forum**
(url: http://www.getpaint.net/redirect/tutorials_hm.html)