

PSP Version 5 Basics

Creating a New File

When you create a new file in Paint Shop Pro, you must choose 16 million colors for most of the filters to work. I set my default to Background Color: White and Image Type: 16 million colors. If you save a file as a gif, when you open it again, the image will no longer be 16 million colors. To fix this, just chose Colors|Increase Color Depth and choose 16 million colors again (or if you're smart, you will have this option on your toolbar!).

The size of your new graphic is up to you. I usually create a new file bigger than I think I will need to give me working room, then crop the image when I am done (Image|Crop to Selection).












Edit|Clear









Once you have created an image, if you don't like it and want to start over, this combination makes it very easy to do. Just be sure you have the background color set to what you want the cleared file's canvas to be. This is also a trick for filling an image with a background color. Setting the background color then choosing Edit|Clear is a lot faster and more efficient than choosing the flood fill tool and using it. If you choose Edit|Clear when working on the base layer, it clears the layer and fills with background color. If you use Edit|Clear while working on a layer, it just clears the layer, it doesn't fill the layer with the background color.



Tool Palette

Paint Shop Pro 5 has several new tools and the function of several of the tools has changed. The following tutorial will give you the basics of each tool and some tips for using the tool. The manual that comes with Paint Shop Pro does a very good job of explaining all the tools in the program.

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Arrow - This tool is most useful when you have an image enlarged to work on a portion of the image. If you click on your image with the arrow tool and hold down the left mouse button, the cursor turns into a hand. Holding down the left mouse button, you can then drag your picture to move a new portion into the window.
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Zoom - The zoom tool is used to zoom in and out on a graphic. Clicking on a graphic with the left mouse button zooms in, with the left mouse button zooms out.
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Deform Tool - The Deform tool allows you to expand and contract or rotate and skew an image or a selection. This tool is fairly complicated, so I will leave it to you to read the book to learn how to use it.
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Crop Tool - This Crop tool is fairly straight forward. Just click on the tool, draw a selection on a graphic, then double click on the selection. Instant crop. I have to admit, though, that I still use the Image|Crop method most since you can use different selecting techniques with this crop method.
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Mover Tool - This tool is one of my favorites. I move my selections frequently (either image selections or text selections) using this tool. All you need to do is to make a selection, right click on the selection with this tool and you can then drag your selection to a new position.
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Selecton Tool - This selection tool allows you to make rectangular, square, ellipse and circular selections. You can predetermine the size of square and rectangular selections by double clicking on the tool and entering coordinates. When you make a circular or ellipse selection, always have "antialias" checked. This smoothes the edges. Don't have "antialias" selected when you make rectangular and square selections. If you crop a selection with antialias on, you will end up with spare pixels around the edges. The selections for this tool are on the Control Palette.
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Freehand Tool - This tool is commonly called the "Lasso" tool. With it you can make irregular selections. A new feature of this tool in 5.0 is the "Smart Edge" option. With this option selected, you can click along the edge of something and the selection will snap to the nearest color. This tool is very useful for making preliminary selections (such as cutting a person out of a picture).
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Magic Wand - This is another very handy tool. When you click on a solid color with this tool, you get that color selected. If you hold down the shift key and click on another part of a graphic, that part is added to the selection. Holding down the control key and clicking on a selection removes it from the selection. The controls for this tool are on the Control Palette. The PSP manual has a good description of all the features of this tool.
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Dropper Tool - This tool is commonly called the "Eye Dropper". If you right click on a color with this tool, you will set the foreground color whereas a left click sets the background color. A hint for using this tool. Sometimes it works best to zoom in on a graphic to choose a color.
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Paint Brushes - The paint brush tools in PSP have many features. You can adjust the size of the brush, the opacity, the texture and the shape. The manual has an excellent description of how to use the paint tools. A hint: You can create your own paint brushes by creating a graphic (you can even use fonts). To create your own brush, have a black graphic selected, click on the Paint Brush tool, then on the "Brush Tip" tab on the Control Palette. Click on the "Brush Options" button, then click "Custom". When the custom window pops up, click on Create. You can edit your custom brushes by clicking on the "Edit" button. The "step" entry means how far apart each "brush" stroke will be when you drag the brush. Set to 100, each brush stroke will be separate. You can also use Photoshop brushes in Paint Shop Pro.
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Clone Brush - This tool can be a lot of fun and is very useful. It allows you to clone part of a graphic to a new position. I use it frequently to "clone" skin on bright spots on people's faces or to replace reflections. Another common use for this tool is to create a "seamless tile". The manual has a very good section on using the Clone Brush.

-  **Color Replacer** - This tool allows you to replace one color in a graphic with another color. To accomplish this, set the foreground color to the color you want to replace and the background color to the replacement color. Then dragging with the right mouse button replaces the foreground color with the background color and double clicking with the right mouse button replaces all instances of the foreground with the background. To reverse the process, left click and drag or left double-click.
-  **Retouch Tool** - This tool is used to apply photo retouching effects to an image. It is a very complicated tool. The manual has a very good explanation of all its uses and features.
-  **Eraser Tool** - This tool essentially erases all color down to the base image. Using the tool on the original layer (usually called "background" when you open a new graphic) will replace the erased portion with the background color. Using the tool on a graphic on a layer will remove the graphic down to the transparent layer. I use this tool a lot to touch up selections I have pasted as a new layer. If you zoom in on your image and keep your tip fairly small, you can successfully remove stray pixels easily with this tool. Another benefit to removing stray pixels with the eraser tool is that it smoothes the edges.
-  **Picture Tube** - This tool is used with premade tubes. With it you can scatter tube pictures over a graphic. You can make the tube images larger and smaller with the "scale" slider on the Control Palette. Keep in mind, though, that scaling an image larger will dither the image the same way resizing an imager larger will. Tubes are a lot of fun and I will be providing links to tubes sites soon.
-  **Air Brush** - This tool is quite similar to the Paint Brush tool in that it is very complex and has a lot of settings. The manual outlines the use and setting for this tool very well.
-  **Flood Fill** - This is the one tool you will probably use the most. It is used to flood fill a selection with a solid color, a pattern and various versions of color fills using the background and foreground colors in combination. The settings are on the Control Palette. I use the Sunburst Gradient to make spheres and the Linear gradient to make buttons.
- A** **Text Tool** - The text tool is used to place text on a graphic. I cover the use of this tool in my "Text" tutorial. A couple of important things to remember about this tool. First, always have "anti alias" checked, otherwise your text will have jagged edges. The second is that your text will be centered from where you have the cross-hairs when you place your text (i.e. if you click at 50x50, half your word will be to the left of that coordinate and half will be to the right. This is useful to know when placing text to help your alignment on the graphic. But, you can always move your text by left clicking on it and dragging it to a new position. Right clicking outside your text selection will place your text.
-  **Line Tool** - This tool is used to draw lines. It is most useful in drawing straight lines, since angled lines end up pretty ragged. To draw a straight line, hold down the shift key while dragging the mouse. You can set the Line Type and Width on the Control Palette. I have to admit that I don't understand the Bezier line yet, so that will come later. I use the straight line tool a lot to clean up straight edges on selections.
-  **Shapes Tool** - This tool is used to create outline or filled shapes. It is useful for creating quick filled circles, squares, etc. It is also useful for creating outline masks for dual beveled buttons.

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PSP Version 5 Basics

Tool Bar



The Tool Bar on PSP 5 can be customized to work the way you work. I have placed many menu items on my toolbar for instant use. To configure your tool bar, choose File|Preferences|Customize Toolbar. The first thing you will probably want to do is to remove from the Toolbar items you don't think you will use often (don't worry, you can always put the item back). I removed the Cut and Copy buttons, since I use hot keys for each of these functions. I also removed the "preview" buttons, since I rarely use them. I then started adding the items I do use frequently. My toolbar is arranged as follows:

- New
- Open
- Save
- Save A Copy
- Separator
- Undo
- Paste as a New Image
- Paste as a New Selection
- Paste as a New Layer
- Promote Selection
- Separator
- Brightness & Contrast
- Adjust RGB
- Separator
- Toggle Control Palette
- Toggle Layer Palette
- Separator
- Display Grid
- Add Borders
- Canvas Size
- Resize
- Rotate Image
- Separator
- Select All
- Select None
- Invert Selection
- Separator
- Increase Colors to 16 Million
- Decrease Colors to 256
- Greyscale Image
- Set Transparency
- Separator
- Acquire Image
- Start Capture

This arrangement of the toolbar makes sense to me. Figure out what makes sense to you and customize your toolbar. It will save you a lot of time in the long run.

Menu Items

I won't spend much time explaining the menu items, since most are self-explanatory and they are well documented in the Manual. I would like to point out some very useful items that you may overlook.

One of the areas where most people run into trouble with PSP 5 is in understanding the "save" commands. Here's how they work:

Save - When you choose "save" after creating a new graphic, it defaults to the "psp" format. Some people hate this, I think it is a good thing. I rarely save a graphic the first time in any other format than PSP since I work in layers a lot and this is the only format that will preserve the layers and keep the masks and selection information intact in the graphic. When you choose "save" while working on an existing graphic, the program saves in the format the graphic was originally saved in.

Save As - Again, when you choose "save as" after creating a new graphic, the program defaults to "psp". You can use "Save As" to change the format you have saved a graphic in. I.e. you have a JPG open and you want to save it as a transparent gif. You set your transparency, then choose "Save As" and pick the GIF setting.

Save Copy As - This is what you want to use if you want PSP to remember the last settings you used to save a graphic. The program remembers the last setting and the last folder you saved to.

View|Image Information - This is one of my favorite additions to PSP 5. When you go to this menu item, you will open a window that gives you all the specifications of your image and has a tab called "Creator Information". You can store valuable information about your image here. It saves with the image so you can access it any time you want. I use the description box to record the font I used and the colors I used in the image. I love this! I can't count the number of times I have received e-mail from a visitor asking "what font was that you used on "x" graphic? I mostly sit there scratching my head and wondering. Now, I can go to the image and see what font I used quickly and easily.

View|Toolbars - If you are a little cramped for space when working on a graphic, this drop down window allows you to turn on and off the various toolbars.

View|Rulers - Do you need a precise measurement? Turn on the rulers.

View|Grid - Another great new feature. Working with the grid on allows you to easily line things up on your graphic.

Window|Duplicate - You can use this menu item to make an exact duplicate of the image you are working on.

Shortcut Keys

My first piece of advice to anyone learning a new program is "Learn the Shortcut Keys". The time you will save in the future is worth the time it takes you to learn to use the shortcut keys. Following is a listing of the shortcut keys I use the most:

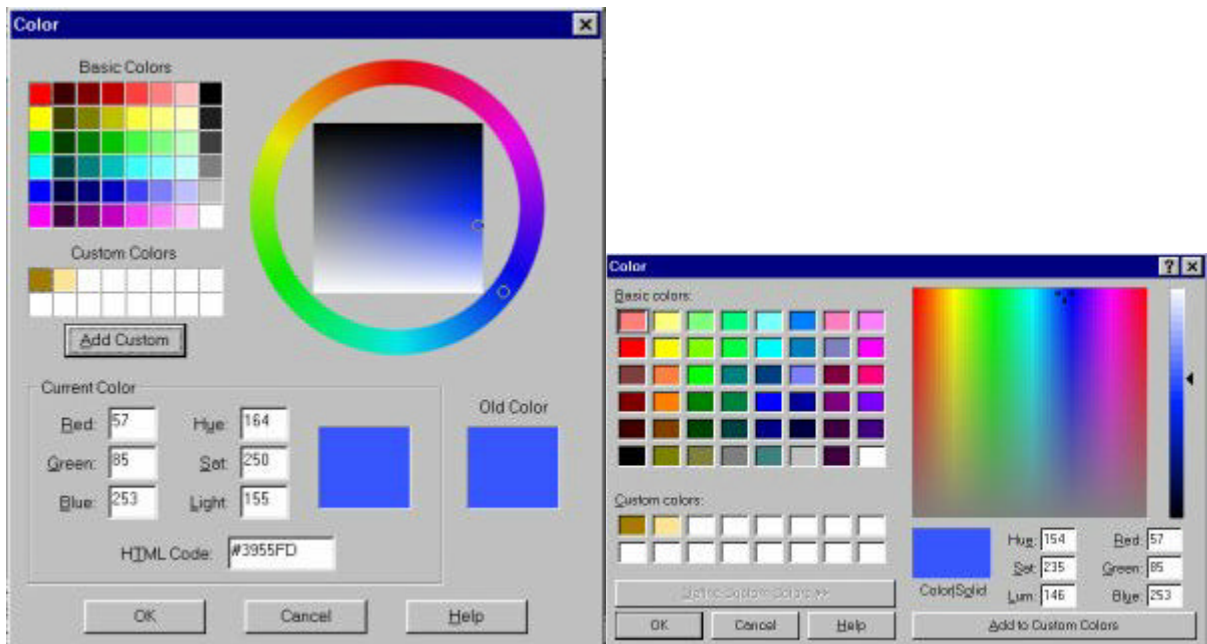
Ctrl N - Create a new Graphic
Ctrl O - Open a graphic
Ctrl B - Browse
Ctrl A - Select All
Ctrl C - Copy selection
Ctrl V - Paste as a new Image
Ctrl L - Paste as a new Layer

Ctrl E - Paste as a new Selection
 Ctrl D - Deselect
 Ctrl D - Creates a Duplicate copy of your image

These are the shortcut keys I use the most. There are many more. Take the time to explore the menu and try out some of the shortcut keys.

Custom Color Picker

Paint Shop Pro 5 has two variations of the color picker available. It comes preset with the picker on the left below. If you want to change to the standard Windows color picker, choose File|Preferences|General Program Preferences and click on the "Dialogs and Palette's" tab.



Both these Color Picker's work essentially the same. You can click on one of the colors in the box, or somewhere in the spectrum to select your color. I prefer the picker on the right, probably since it is the picker I have used since I began working with Paint Shop Pro. The one advantage to the picker on the left is that it will give you the HTML code for the color you have chosen.

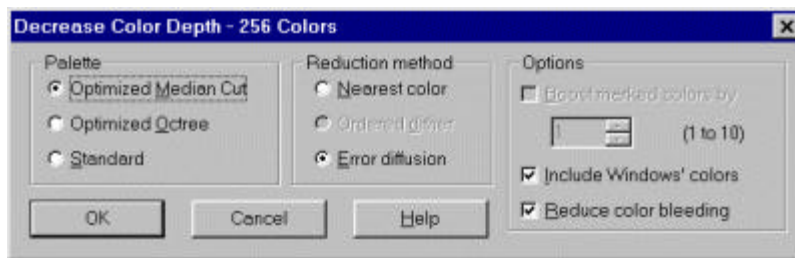
A handy feature of this tool is the ability to define your own custom colors. I find this very useful when I come up with a color combination for a graphic. I just add the colors to the "custom colors". Then when I want to create a new graphic, I have the exact color I want available with the click of the mouse. You can overwrite the custom colors by clicking in one of the boxes. Then enter the RGB values for the color you want and click on the "Add to Custom Colors" bar. This will replace the old color with the new color.

Paint Shop Pro can use Netscape's 216 color palette for Windows. If you want to create web graphics with colors you are sure will be viewed the same on most monitors, use this color palette for choosing your colors. To download this palette, Right Click [here](#) and choose "Save Link As". Save the palette in the subdirectory with Paint Shop Pro. Do not click on the word "here", right click on it. If you click you will just see garbage. Once you have the palette, you can choose Colors|Load palette and choose "Netscape". The main problem with using this palette is that once you load it, you will no longer be in 16 million color mode and most filters and plugins won't work. What you need to do is to choose your color, then switch back to 16 million colors.

Transparent Gifs

In version 5, setting background transparency is a real pain. It has now become a three step process. The most important thing to remember when creating a gif with a transparent background is that there is only so far you can go with it. You can't take a graphic with a black background, make the background transparent and place it on a white background. You need to start out with a graphic with a background color as close to the background color (or a prominent color in a pattern). To create a transparent graphic:

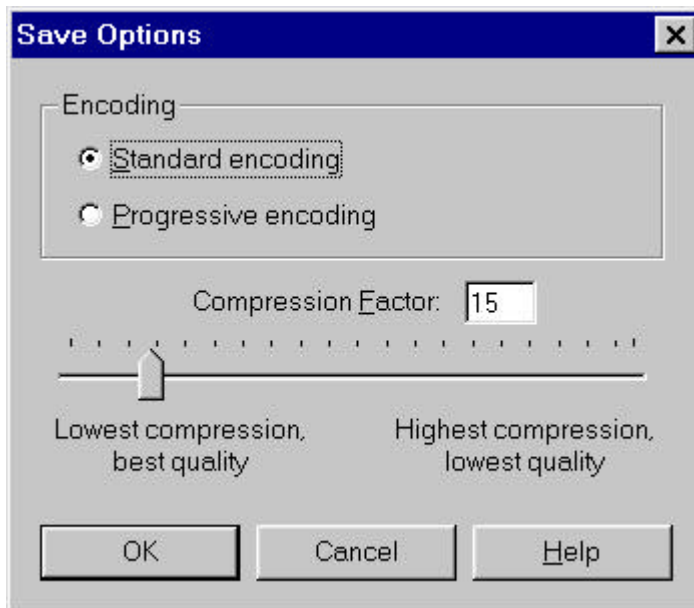
1. Create a graphic on a background color close to the color of your page.
2. Set the background color in the Color Picker to the background color of the graphic.
3. Reduce the colors in the graphic to 256 (Colors|Decrease Color Depth) (or just hit the button on your toolbar if you have placed it there).
4. Choose Colors|Set Palette Transparency. If this option is not available (it is greyed out), you have not reduced your colors to 256. The following demonstrates the settings that I think work best for this purpose:



5. Click on the box that says "Set Transparency Value to Background Color", click OK.
6. You can view how the transparency looks by going to Colors|View Palette Transparency.
7. Choose File|Save a Copy As and choose gif as the file type. Save.

JPG Compression

Placing a photograph on a web page can be very challenging. There is no reason to place a photo on a web page if the quality is not up to par. I recommend that you always save a photo as a jpg to maintain the quality of the image. But, then, sometimes you have a very large graphic file to deal with. Well, Paint Shop Pro has a way to cut the size of that graphic without cutting down on the quality of the photo. All you have to do is set the preferences for saving a Jpg. When you choose "jpg" as your file type, click on the "Options" button. This will bring up the following window:



I have found that a compression level of 15 results in little noticeable difference in the quality of the picture. That is the default I leave my JPG compression at. Following are two copies of the same image. The image on the left was saved at no compression and is 26kb. The copy on the right was saved at Compression Level 15 and is 9kb. I think that there is very little difference in the quality, but there is a huge difference in the size of the graphic.



PDF File