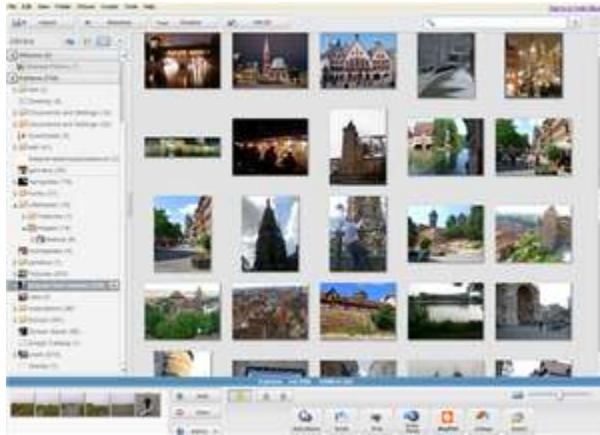


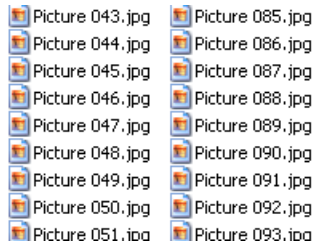
# Organize your Photos with Picasa



Anyone with a digital camera knows it doesn't take much to wind up with a hard drive littered with thousands of files named things like IMG\_1892.jpg. In my quest to organize all the stuff that's accumulated on my hard drive, I knew that sooner or later, my little digital photo problem would rear its ugly head. By "little", I mean out of control, and by "problem", I mean looming catastrophe. What's a girl with literally thousands of pics to organize on her 'puter to do? Enter Google's free desktop software, Picasa, which is basically the Walker Texas Ranger of photo organization packages.

## Intro to Picasa

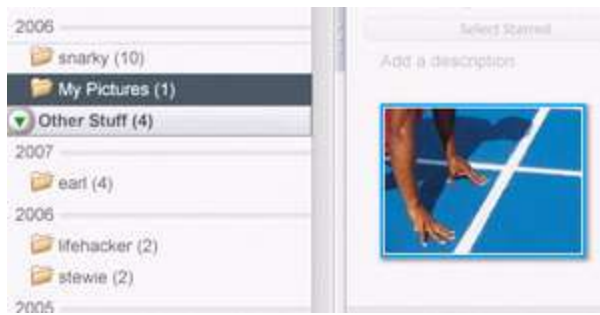
### Full size



Because I have three kids who are photographed pretty much every day, I have a lot of pics. Add that to the various web sites that I blog for and you have a ton of images. I've attempted to keep them in some kind of meaningful order over the years, and it's not TOO horribly bad, but I knew it could be better. That's where Picasa came in and saved my bacon.

Picasa is a free download for Windows and a Linux version is available over at Google Labs. (Sorry, Mac users - there's a Picasa Web Albums uploader available for you, but not a full-blown version of the software.) Once you download Picasa (free!) and install it, Picasa will set to work finding and organizing all the pics and videos on your machine by date added. Depending on how many pictures you have, this process can take a while to complete. In fact, if you do have a ton of pictures, you can pick and choose which folders you'd like Picasa to scan to save time.

Here's what Picasa's interface looked like once it got done indexing all my pics.



On the left are all the folders that contain photos that Picasa found on my machine; this list is sorted by creation date by default, but you can change it by selecting "View", then "Folder View". I prefer "Sort By Name".

On the bottom, you'll see what Picasa calls the Photo Tray; basically, this is the workstation section of Picasa, where photos can be edited, blogged, printed, ordered, etc.

Lastly, the middle section where you can actually \*see\* the photos is called the Lightbox; this just displays the images inside the folder list on the left-hand side.

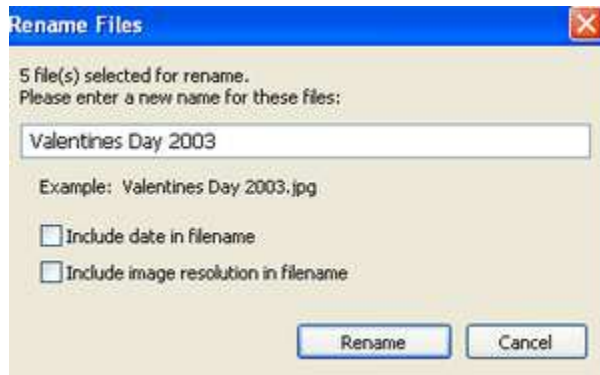
## Organization

Before you get going too far in Picasa, it's worth noting that any changes you make to folders within Picasa will affect your machine's file system.

Once Picasa finished scanning my computer for images, I had all my thousands of photos in one convenient place. There were three main organizational hurdles that I needed to tackle:

- Renaming.
- Organization of folders
- A more meaningful sorting system

## Renaming



I found approximately 4 jillion pictures that were not intuitively labeled using Picasa, and the thought of having to go through and rename those individually kind of made me queasy. However, you can use Picasa to rename an entire group of photos at once:

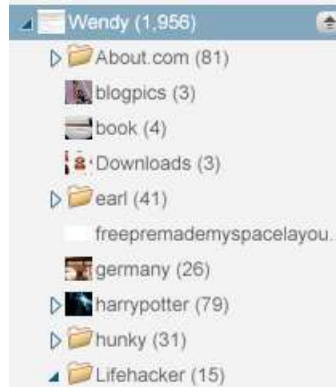
- Find the folder where the photos are located.
- Pick the photos you want to rename; you can use the Shift key to select multiple photos in the Lightbox.
- Select "File", then "Rename" (you can also access this by just pressing F2).
- Figure out what you would like this group of photos to be named.
- Click "Rename", and you're all set.

Now, instead of five photos labeled ever so helpfully "0784586.jpg" (and so on), I've got five photos labeled "Valentines Day 2003".

## Organization of images within folders

There's not one way to organize images within folders that's going to work for everyone; I know that what works for me might not necessarily work for you, and that's okay. The method that works best for me seems to be a combination of dates and events, so that's how I set out to organize my folders in Picasa. A couple of things that I found most helpful to keep in mind when I organized my folders:

Full size



- The folders come by default with a date attribute which is completely separate from the name attribute.
- When you start to get a lot of folders, you have a couple of views to choose from - I find Tree View (click on View, Folder View, Tree View) easier to manage.
- Once you've copied or moved images around in folders within Picasa, do NOT tweak with them in Windows Explorer. I actually lost edits that I had made to two folders doing this.

Organizing my folders is an ongoing project - I've got thousands of pics to get sorted, but Picasa makes it simple to drag and drop an image from one folder to another, rename on the fly, even apply captions if I want to.

## A more meaningful sorting system

Once I started making sense of my misnamed images and half-sorted folders, Picasa gave me even more micro-organizational options: albums and gold stars.

First, gold stars. While you're organizing your photos, you're sure to come across an image you want to make sure you can find easily later. Just click on the star button in the Photo Tray and that photo will be starred; you can later select all the starred photos in one folder to add to another folder or an album (what's an album? Keep reading.). Oh, and if you'd like to apply stars to more than one photo at once, just click on the Shift key and go to town.



Think of Picasa albums like this: you've got 234 snaps from your Oregon coast vacation. You can instantly access your favorite images by selecting them from their appropriately named folder (or clicking on the "Select Starred" option) and dropping them into an album - you could call it "Oregon Coast Highlights". It's an easy way to instantly pull up the images you want to share with Grandma.

I could keep going, but I'm out of space. Believe me, there's a lot more I could've written here on the ninja-like way Picasa helped me organize my photo collection; it's just that awesome. Tune in next week, when I'll show you how I use Picasa to edit and adjust photos.

**Wendy Boswell** is Lifehacker's Weekend Editor and has organized 13 out of approximately 300 photo folders with Picasa so far. Subscribe to her feature series [Technophilia](#) using the [Technophilia feed](#).