

Use the 'Do-Everything' Photos App in Windows 11 to Work with Your Pictures

This article shows you how to:

- Look through your photos or view them as a slideshow
- Improve your photos with easy editing tools
- Quickly print out a photo on paper

One of the joys of the computer age is being able to take photos on your smartphone or digital camera and keep them forever on your PC. They won't fade or curl, and they won't lie forgotten at the bottom of a pile!

If you use Windows 11, you already have everything you need to enjoy the photos you've taken. You can look through them whenever you like and arrange them into named albums. And with a few quick clicks you can improve a flawed picture or print photos on paper. Read on to learn how it's all done.



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Quickly Look at a Single Photo from File Explorer

Go to your Pictures folder...

Try this: open File Explorer (by pressing **Win+E** or by clicking its icon on your taskbar) and then double-click the **Pictures** folder to open it. (Alternatively, if you find double-clicking difficult, click the **Pictures** folder once to select it and then press the **Enter** key, which does the same thing.)

... to find all your photos

In this folder you should find all your photos, probably organised into yet more folders. Choose one of these folders and double-click it to open it.

Double-click a photo to open it

Now you're looking at the photos in the folder you've just chosen. File Explorer shows you small versions ('thumbnails') of the photos, just large enough to let you see what's what. Perhaps there's one picture you'd like to look at? If so, double-click it to open it. Or perhaps you'd like to look through all the photos in this folder at a decent size? In that case, double-click the first photo in the folder.

The Photos app displays it for you

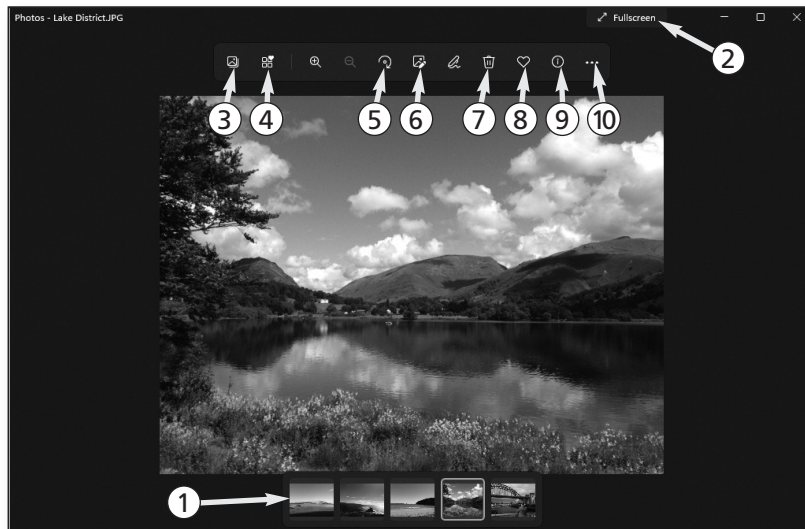
Now you'll see the window pictured opposite, which displays the photo you chose. This is Windows 11's built-in 'Photos' app (the word 'app' being an alternative word for 'program').

Show or hide the toolbar and filmstrip

Near the top of the window there's a toolbar providing a bundle of useful options (which we'll look at in a moment). At the bottom there's a filmstrip showing other photos from the same folder. These clutter-up the window somewhat, and they may be obscuring your view of the photo, but try this:

- Click anywhere in your photo. The toolbar and filmstrip disappear, giving you a clearer view of your picture.
- Click your photo again and the toolbar and filmstrip reappear.

In this way, you can easily hide those extra bits and pieces, but bring them back whenever you need them. Now let's look at what they do:



① The filmstrip shows you the other photos in the same folder: you can click one of these to view it. Alternatively, just press the right-arrow key to move to the next photo in the folder or the left-arrow key to see the previous photo.

See other photos in the same folder

One extra thing you can do with the filmstrip is see two or more photos at the same time. Move the mouse over a thumbnail in the filmstrip and a little checkbox appears: click in that box and this photo will be shown side-by-side with your current photo.



② Click the **Fullscreen** button and the window will expand to fill your screen, showing the current photo at the largest-possible size. To return to a normal-sized window, either click the same button again or press the **Esc** key on your keyboard.

A full-screen view of your photo

- See your whole collection* ③ The **Browse all your photos and videos** button takes you to the front page of the Photos app, which we'll explore on page 5.
- See favourite photos* ④ The **See all favourites** button shows you the collection of photos you've marked at your favourites (see ⑧ below).
- Rotate the photo* ⑤ If you come across a photo you took with the camera turned on its side, click the **Rotate** button. Each click turns the photo clockwise by 90 degrees, and you can click it as often as needed.
- Edit the photo* ⑥ If you arrive at a photo that could do with a little improvement, click the **Edit image** button. We'll look at photo-editing on page 10.
- Delete the photo* ⑦ If you come to a photo you don't want to keep, click the **Delete** button. A little prompt will ask if you're sure, and assuming you are, you click **Delete** to confirm. Any photos you delete will be placed in the Recycle Bin where you can recover them if you deleted them by mistake.
- Mark the photo as a favourite* ⑧ If you're particularly keen on the current photo, you can click the **Add to favourites** button to mark it as a favourite. Click the **See all favourites** button ④ to see all your favourites together.
- Information about the photo* ⑨ The **File information** button opens a panel showing all sorts of details about the current photo: the folder it's stored in, its size and dimensions, and perhaps even notes of the date it was taken, the make of camera used, and the camera settings.
- Extra options* ⑩ The **See more** button opens a menu of extra options including **Print** (which we'll cover on page 16) and **Copy to Clipboard**. One nice option here is **Slideshow**: choose this (or press **F5**) and you'll see all the photos in the current folder displayed as a full-screen slideshow, each remaining on the screen for several seconds

before moving on to the next. To stop the slideshow at any time, press **Esc**.

One other useful option on the **See more** menu is **Save as**. If you're about to edit a photo, you might like to choose this to save a copy of the photo first, just in case you muck it up during the editing.



When you've finished looking through the photos in this folder, one option is simply to close the Photos app by clicking the **x** in its top-right corner. From here you might go to a different folder in File Explorer and double-click another photo to look through those in the same way.

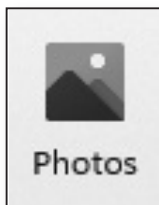
Close the Photos app...

Rather than closing the Photos app, however, you could use it to explore your whole photo collection. Click the **Browse all your photos and videos** button (③) in the screenshot on page 3) and you'll arrive at the front page of the Photos app, which is what we'll look at next.

... or see your entire collection

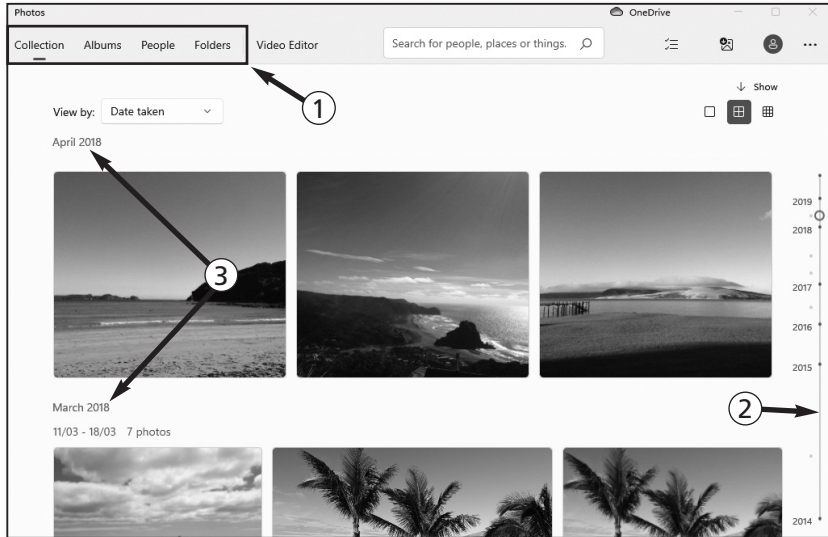
All in One Place: Explore Your Entire Photo Collection

On page 2, we started the Photos app by double-clicking a photo in File Explorer. The other way to do it is to open the Photos app directly and use that to look through your photo collection. Open the Start menu and you may see the Photos app in the 'Pinned' section where you can start it with a click. If you don't, either click on **All apps** and scroll down to the 'P' section to find it, or just start typing the word **photos** and it will appear in the search results.



Open the Photos app from the Start menu

It has four sections You'll arrive at the front page of the Photos app and you'll see it's split into four sections: **Collection, Albums, People and Folders** ①. Initially you're looking at the **Collection** section (as you can tell from the coloured line below the word 'Collection').



The Collection section In the **Collection** section you'll see your entire photo collection – absolutely everything in your Pictures folder – laid out in a long date-ordered list, with your newest photos at the top.

Scroll through all your photos in date order To look through your collection, you can roll the wheel on your mouse, or you can click (and optionally drag up and down) on the timeline ② at the far-right of the window to jump straight to a particular date.

You'll notice that your photos are grouped by month and year ③, and if you click one of these headings you'll see a list of all the months in which photos were taken: just click a month in this list to jump straight to its photos.

This Collection section is perfect if you like to see your entire photo collection in one place, with no need to dip in and out of folders. But perhaps you'd rather see your photos arranged in folders, as they are when you look at your Pictures folder in File Explorer? In that case, click **Folders** at the top of the window (① in the screenshot on the previous page).

This takes you to the **Folders** section where you'll probably see just two tiles at first: one named 'One-Drive' and another named 'Pictures'. Click on **Pictures**.

*The **Folders** section*

Now you'll see a separate tile for each of the folders in your Pictures folder. Each tile shows the name of the folder along with a randomly-chosen picture from that folder. To open a folder and see the photos inside it, just click its tile.

To go back to the full list of folders, click the words **Go back to all folders** near the top of the window, or click the left-pointing arrow in the extreme top-left corner of the window, or press the **Backspace** key.

View your photos at a larger size

Whether you're looking at the Collection section or the Folders section, the Photos app shows your pictures at a reasonable size. You can adjust this size using the three buttons near the top-right corner of the window, switching between large, medium and small previews.



See your collection at three different sizes

Nevertheless, you'd probably like to get a better look at the pictures, and the way to do that is simply to click one. The Photos app then displays this picture at a size that fills the window.

Click a picture to display it

It does so in almost exactly the way I described in the first few pages of this article: the window looks almost

identical to the screenshot on page 3, with a toolbar at the top and a filmstrip at the bottom which disappear and reappear as you click your photo.

Use the corner arrow to step backwards again

There's just one small difference: you won't find a **Browse all your photos and videos** button at the left of the toolbar. Instead, there's a left-pointing arrow in the extreme top-left corner of the window: when you want to go back to the **Collection** section, or to the folder you were viewing in the **Folders** section (depending on where you came from), click this arrow.



Organise Your Photos into Named Albums

Albums – related photos gathered in one place

Besides looking through your entire collection, or looking through one folder at a time, you can create albums of photos. For example, you might like to create an album containing the photos from a trip abroad, or an album of the photos from a family get-together.

All done without making copies of photos

When you create an album, you're not making more copies of your photos – there's still just one copy of each, even if you've included a particular photo in half-a-dozen different albums. Behind the scenes, an album is really just a list of photos, and when you look at the album, you see the photos you added to that list. Likewise, if you ever delete an album, you're just deleting that list: you're not deleting any photos.

Here's how to create an album:



1. If you're currently looking at a photo, click the arrow in the extreme top-left corner of the window once or twice, until it disappears and you can see the four sections of the app at the top-left.

2. Click on **Albums** to go to the Albums section of the app.
3. Click the large **New album** tile.
4. You'll see your entire collection of photos again, but this time each photo has a little square box in its top-right corner. You choose the photos to include in your new album by ticking these boxes: look through your collection and tick as many photos as you like. (If you tick the wrong photo by mistake, just untick it.)
5. When you've chosen the photos to include, click the **Create** button at the top-right of the window.
6. After a brief pause, you'll arrive at a new page headed 'Album'. Click the word **Album**, type a better name for your album – such as 'Tenerife Holiday' or 'Jenny's Party' – and press **Enter** to confirm it.

Add photos by ticking them

Type a name for your album

Done – you've created your first album, and you're looking at it. At the top is a mini-movie containing the photos you included in the album, and below that are the individual photos.

Click the arrow button in the top-left corner of the window to go back to the main 'Albums' section of the Photos app. At the top you'll see the album you just created (and, of course, you'll find it here every time you use the Photos app). Whenever you want to view this album, just click it. You can create as many albums as you like, and they'll all appear in this 'Albums' section.

Go back to the Albums section

We don't get everything right first time, and in future you might come across a photo you wish you'd included in a particular album. No problem: right-click the photo and choose **Add to**, then click the name of the album in the box that opens, and this photo will be added to that album.



*Delete an album
you created...*

While looking at the main Albums page, there are a couple of other things you might want to do. First, if you've created an album and you no longer want it, just right-click it and choose **Delete**. As I mentioned earlier, this deletes the album but doesn't affect any of your photos themselves.

*... or one created
for you by the app*

Second, the Photos app occasionally creates albums for you. You can click these to have a look through them (and then click the arrow in the extreme top-left corner to go back again). Move the mouse over these albums and you'll see a choice of Keep and Delete buttons. Choose **Keep** and this album will be kept and treated like one of your own albums; choose **Delete** and it will disappear for good.

Easy Editing: Quickly Fix a Flawed Photo

*A little
improvement
needed?*

There's more to the Photos app than just looking at your pictures. When you come across one that didn't turn out quite as well as you'd hoped, there's a little collection of editing tools to help you improve it – including a one-click 'Enhance your photo' tool that might do just what you need with almost no effort!

*Edit the photo
you're viewing*

When you're looking at a photo that could do with improvement, click the **Edit image** button (Ⓔ in the screenshot on page 3) or press **Ctrl+E**. The window changes to look like the screenshot on the opposite page, with your photo shown on the left and the panel of editing tools on the right.

*Three sections of
editing tools*

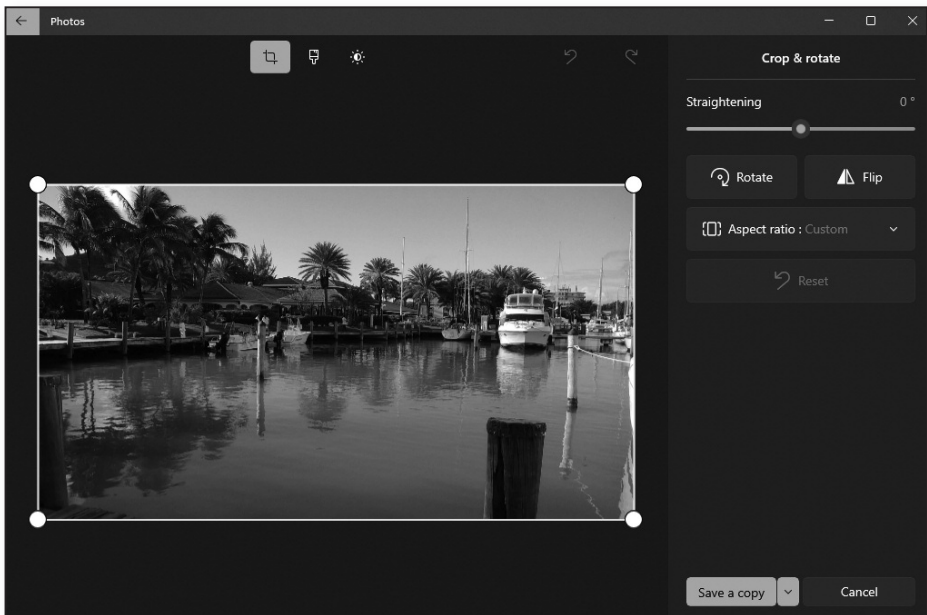
A small toolbar at the top allows you to switch between the various editing tools. In the centre are the three tool sections – **Crop & rotate**, **Filters and Adjustments** – which we'll look at in a moment. Further to the right are two buttons which look like Undo and Redo buttons, but they're not:

- The left-hand button removes all the alterations you've made (using any of the tools) and returns your photo to its original, unedited state.
- After you've used the left-hand button, the right-hand button puts all your alterations back into effect again. In this way, you can click each button in turn to compare the unedited photo with the edited version to ensure you really have improved it.

Revert to original

Restore editing changes

What that means, unfortunately, is that there's no 'Undo' feature – you can't simply undo the last change you made. So, if you feel you've mucked up a photo by editing it, you have to use the left-hand button to revert to the original and start editing again, or click **Cancel** in the bottom-right corner (followed by **OK** in the pop-up message) to leave editing mode and return to your unchanged image.



Straighten, rotate or crop your photo

Sideways or tilted photo?

Perhaps you took the photo with the camera turned sideways, giving you a photo that's also on its side, or the camera was tilted accidentally and you've ended up with a slightly lopsided picture. Or perhaps the main subject of the photo is lost in a large expanse of background because you didn't zoom in enough, and you want to crop out some of that scenery?

If so, click the **Crop & rotate** button on the toolbar (if you're not there already). You'll see the tool panel pictured on the previous page and you're ready to make whatever change is needed:

Straighten-up a crooked photo

- **Straighten the photo:** if the camera was tilted slightly when you took the photo, drag the circular blob under **Straightening** left or right to turn the photo by tiny amounts. As you do this, a grid is superimposed over the photo to help you see when any straight lines in the photo are truly vertical or horizontal.

Rotate in 90-degree steps

- **Rotate the photo:** if you took the photo with the camera turned on its side, click the **Rotate** button as often as needed to turn it the right way up.

Mirror the photo

- **Flip the photo:** perhaps a better name for this would be 'Mirror' since a click on the **Flip** button creates a mirror image of the picture, moving whatever was on the left over to the right, and vice versa. A second click obviously puts the picture back as it was.

Crop out unwanted areas of background

- **Crop the photo:** the picture has a white box around it with a circular blob in each corner. Drag any of the blobs inwards to make the white box smaller, and drag the photo itself around until the portion of the photo you want to keep is contained within the box. (Keep resizing the box – outwards or inwards as necessary – and/or moving the photo until you've neatly outlined the required portion.)

- **Reset:** if anything goes wrong (most likely with either cropping or straightening), you can click the **Reset** button to undo the changes you've made using this page of tools without undoing any of the other changes you might have made on the Filters or Adjustments pages.

Undo changes made on this page

One-click enhancement and colour filters

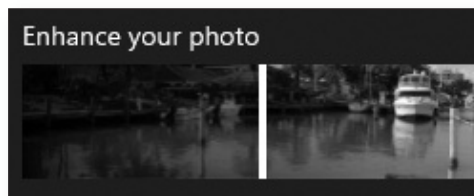
Click the **Filters** button on the toolbar to visit the next page of editing tools. Here, most notably, you'll find the one-click enhancement tool I mentioned earlier. Below the words **Enhance your photo**, you'll see a letterbox-shaped copy of your photo with a magic wand in the middle: click that letterbox shape.

One-click photo enhancement

This carries out an instant 'enhancement' that involves such things as improving the brightness, contrast and sharpness of your picture: have a look at your photo and see what you think of the result.

You'll notice that letterbox shape has lost its magic wand and gained a white vertical slider in the centre. You can vary the level of 'enhancement' by dragging this slider left (to reduce it) or right (to increase it). If you'd like to compare this version with your original, drag the slider all the way to the left to switch off the enhancement, then back to where it was to switch it back on again.

Vary or remove this 'enhancement'



Further down on this page is the **Select a filter** section. This is more of a curiosity than something truly useful, but feel free to experiment with it. Each filter applies a different colouring effect to your photo: click one and then use the **Filter intensity** slider to adjust the level of

Try the colour filters

colour effect. Not keen? Click a different filter instead. If you decide none of these is really an improvement, click the first filter, named Original, to go back to your original, unfiltered picture.

Improve your photo's lighting and colours

*Switch to the
Adjustments
section*

Click the **Adjustments** button on the toolbar to move to the final page of editing tools, where you can alter the lighting and colouring of your photo with more detailed tools than our earlier 'one-click enhancement' allowed.



*Adjust the
brightness...*

- **Light:** drag this slider left or right to darken or brighten the photo respectively. As soon as you move the slider, the word **Reset** appears to its right and you can click that if you want to quickly put the slider back to the centre (unchanged) point.

*... and colour
saturation*

- **Colour:** use this slider to adjust the strength of colour in the picture, from greyscale (colourless) at the far left to rather garish at the far right. Again, a **Reset**

button appears as soon as you move this slider, letting you quickly put it back to the centre point.

If you need to make a fairly major change to your photo's brightness using the **Light** slider, you'll often need to make some adjustments to its contrast as well: brightening a photo often requires increased contrast, and darkening one needs the contrast reduced.

How can you do that? Well, if you click the word **Light** (or the little chevron to its left) you'll see four more sliders, **Contrast**, **Exposure**, **Highlights** and **Shadows**, and you can use these to tweak your photo's lighting in much more detail.

In the same way, if you click the word **Colour** (or its chevron) you'll see sliders that allow you to adjust the **Tint** and **Warmth** of the colouring.

In both sections, the **Reset** button puts all the sliders in the corresponding section back to their centre points.



- **Clarity:** drag this slider to adjust the sharpness of the photo, giving a soft-focus blur when moved further to the left, or greater definition when dragged to the right. *Sharpness or soft focus*
- **Vignette:** this creates an old-fashioned black or white haze around the edges of the photo. Drag to the left for a white haze or to the right for black. *Old-fashioned 'vignette' effect*
- **Red eye:** to fix a red-eye problem, click this button and then click each eye in your photo to recolour it. When you've finished, click the same button again. *Recolour flash-induced red eyes*
- **Spot fix:** click this button if you need to repair small flaws in the photo such as specks of dust on the lens. Click a speck to blur it out by covering it with the surrounding colour. When you've finished using this tool, click the **Spot fix** button again to turn it off. *Fix small blemishes and dust specks*

Save your photo (or cancel the editing)

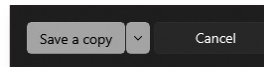
Ready to save? When you've finished using the editing tools, there's a decision to make: do you want to save the result or not? And, if you do, do you want to replace your original version with this one or keep both?

Cancel without saving

- If you don't want to save the result, click the **Cancel** button, then click **OK** in the little message that asks if you want to 'Leave without saving'.

Replace your original

- If you want to replace your original photo with this edited version, click the arrow to the right of the **Save a copy** button and choose **Save**.



Keep your original as well as this edited version

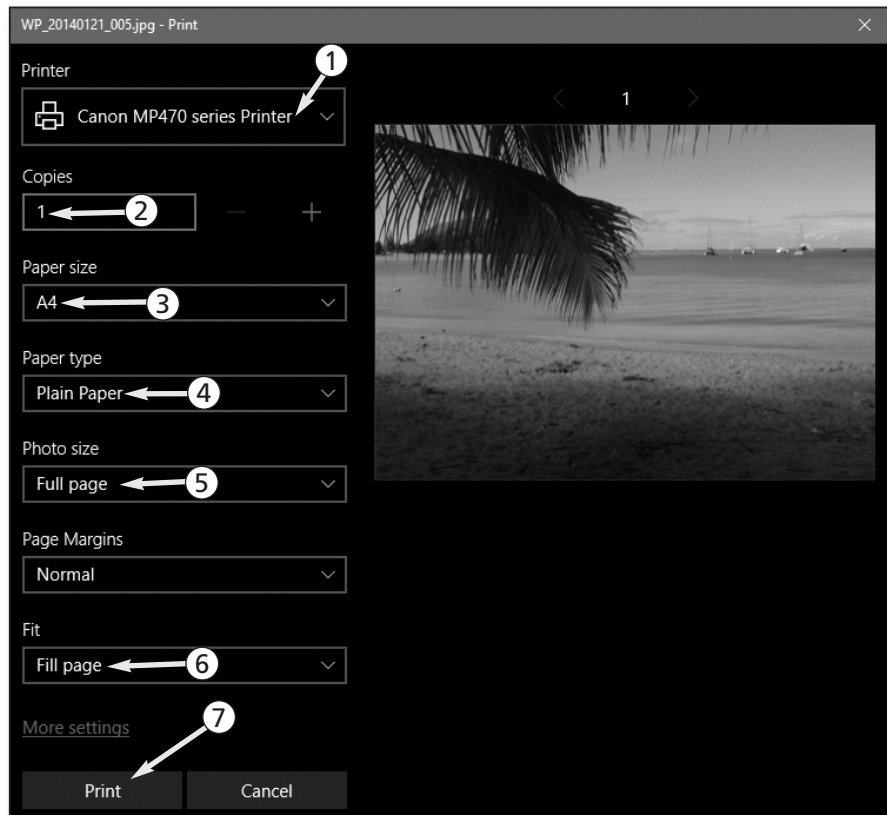
- To keep your original photo as well as this edited version, which I recommend, click **Save a copy**. The app saves this edited copy in the same folder as your original, giving it the same name plus an added number in brackets.

How to Print a Photo on Paper

Quickly print out a photo Another great thing about the digital camera era is that you don't have to send films away to be printed, or find that you've wasted your money printing a close-up of your finger. At the drop of a hat, you can print any photo you like in a minute or so, and the Photos app can do that for you as well.

Display the photo and click Print Start by opening the desired picture in the Photos app (or by finding it and clicking it in the Collection or Folders section). Next, click the **See more** (three dots) button on the toolbar (⑩ in the screenshot on page 3) and choose **Print** or press the key combination **Ctrl+P**. This takes you to the Print window pictured below, showing a preview of how this photo will look on

paper and giving a little bundle of options and settings to the left.



Here are the settings you'll need to check (and possibly change) before you print the photo:

- Make sure the app is set to use the printer you're intending to print with! If the wrong printer is shown ①, open the drop-down list and choose the correct one. *Is it using the right printer?*
- If you want to print more than one copy of this photo, either type a new figure into the **Copies** box *Number of copies to print*

② or use the + button to its right to increase the figure.

Size of paper • Open the **Paper size** box ③ and choose the size of paper you'll be using.

Plain paper or photo paper? • In the **Paper type** box ④, choose a fair approximation of the type of paper you'll be using. Don't worry about finding an exact match, but it's important to differentiate between plain and photo paper and, if the latter, between glossy and matte.

• In the **Photo size** box ⑤, make sure **Full page** is selected, as you probably do want the photo to fill as much of the paper as possible.

Fill the whole page? • The **Fit** box ⑥ gives a choice of two options. **Fill page** aims to fill the whole page with your photo, but this often means you'll lose small strips from the left and right of the picture. **Shrink to fit** ensures the whole photo is printed, but may give you white strips at the top and bottom.



Digital photos have different proportions to most standard paper sizes, so there's always a trade-off to be chosen when printing them on paper, hence the choice in that **Fit** box. In most cases, the **Fill page** option will produce a more pleasing print, but in losing those small strips from the sides of the photo there's a chance your carefully-composed shot will be spoilt.

Extra (rarely-used) settings A **More settings** link below these boxes offers a few other printing options, although you're unlikely to need them. If you do, click **OK** after changing them and you'll return to this main Print window again.

Click the Print button Finally, make sure you have the correct paper loaded in your printer and click the **Print** button ⑦. The Print window closes and your printer gets on with the job of printing, leaving you to continue looking through your photos (and perhaps choosing the next to print).