

Ignore Complicated Software! Use This Simple Method to Print Your Photos

This article shows you how to:

- ✓ Choose the photos you'd like to print
- ✓ Quickly set up your chosen printing options
- ✓ Print perfect photos in as few as three clicks

You probably have a favourite program you use to edit your digital photos, but what's it like at printing them? In many programs, the printing options are horribly confusing.

Give that program a miss and do it the easy way instead! Windows has a built-in photo-printing feature that's very easy to use and produces great results. Just follow the steps in this article to print your photos in a few quick clicks.



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Choose the Photo You Want to Print

Printing one photo at a time

The first job is obviously to decide what you're going to print. For now I'll assume you want to print just one photo, so you're going in search of that photo and getting ready to print it. You probably keep your photos in your personal 'Pictures' (or 'My Pictures') folder, so that's the place to start:

Open File Explorer at your Pictures folder

- **Windows 10 or Windows 8.1:** press the key combination **(Windows) + (E)** to open File Explorer. In the main area of the window you should see your **Pictures** folder: if you do, double-click it to open it. If not, you'll find it in the left-hand panel of the window, where you can click it once to open it.
- **Windows 7:** open the Start menu and click the word **Pictures** in its right-hand section.



In Windows 7, you've just opened a program named Windows Explorer to show the contents of your 'Pictures' folder. That's basically the same program Windows 10 and 8.1 users have just opened, but it has a different name. To keep things simple, I'll refer to this program as 'File Explorer' throughout this article.

Look through your photos

You've probably got your photos organised into individual folders, so double-click the folder whose photos you want to see. (You can press the **(Backspace)** key on your keyboard to come back here and pick a different folder anytime you like.) Now you have a choice of two ways of looking through the photos:

Method 1: look through the photos in File Explorer

File Explorer shows thumbnails

File Explorer itself shows small versions of your photos (known as 'thumbnails'), and that may be enough to identify the photo you want to print.

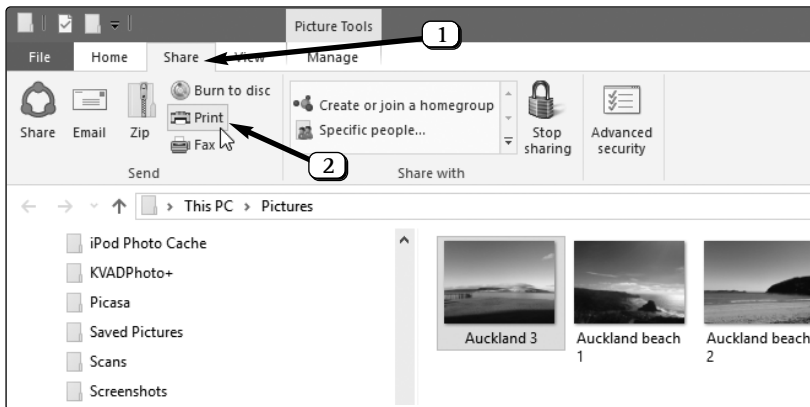
The benefit of looking through your photos this way is that you can see more of them at once, but that's obviously because you're seeing them at such a reduced size! If they're a little too small, right-click a blank white space between photos, move the mouse to **View** on the context menu that appears and choose either **Large icons** or **Extra large icons** to see them at a clearer size.



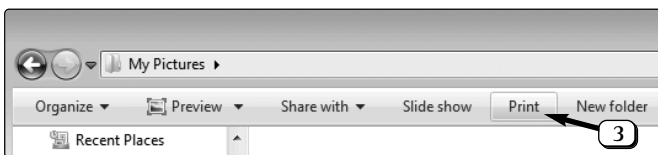
When you find a photo you want to print, click it once to select it and then do the following:

Select a photo to print

- **Windows 10 or Windows 8.1:** switch to the **Share** tab (1) on the Ribbon and click the **Print** button (2), then jump to page 5.



- **Windows 7:** on the light-blue toolbar just above your photos, click the **Print** button (3), then jump to page 5.



Preview a photo
at a larger size



Method 2: browse through your photos at full size

Perhaps you'd prefer to look through your photos at something closer to their full size. If so, right-click the first photo in the folder (or any photo you prefer to start from) and choose **Preview** from the context menu.

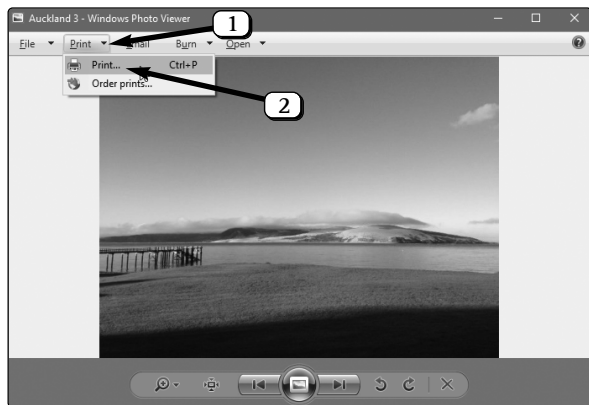
If you see two **Preview** items on the menu, choose either – they both do the same thing. If one of those **Preview** items is shown in bold type, that means you can simply double-click a photo to preview it in future rather than having to right-click it.

Browse through
the photos in
the folder

This opens the Windows Photo Viewer to display the photo you just right-clicked, and you can step through all the photos in this folder by pressing the right-arrow key on your keyboard (or step back to the previous photo by pressing the left-arrow key). You might like to maximise this window to fill your screen in order to see your photos at as large a size as you can.

Select a photo
to print

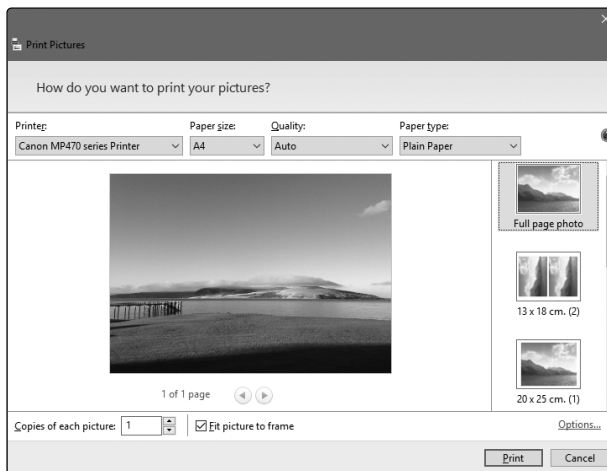
When you come to the photo you want to print, either press the key combination **(Ctrl) + (P)** or click the **Print** button **(1)** on the toolbar and then choose **Print (2)**.



Print a Single Photo at a Time

Now, whichever of the two methods you chose to use on the previous pages, you've arrived at the window below, titled 'Print Pictures', which shows the photo you've chosen to print. (If you've picked the wrong photo or changed your mind about the whole thing, click the **Cancel** button in the bottom-right corner or press the **Esc** key on your keyboard to close this window.)

The 'Print Pictures' window has appeared



As well as showing the photo you've chosen, there are a few settings above it, below it and to its right, and we need to dash through those to make sure they're set up the way you want them.

A few settings to run through...

The good news is that you'll generally only need to do all this once. When you've chosen the options you want for your first print, you can print subsequent photos using all the same options with just a couple of clicks.

...but just once!

Now follow these steps to prepare those settings and print your first photo:



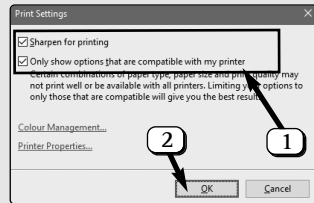
Select the printer
you'll be using

Choose your
paper size...

...print quality...

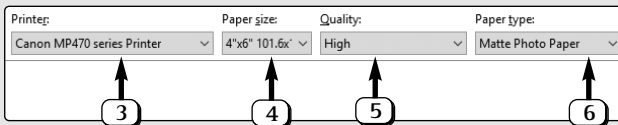
...and approx-
imate type of
paper

1. Click the Options link you can see near the bottom-right corner of the window. This opens a dialog headed 'Print Settings'. Here, make sure there are ticks beside the two items at the top **(1)** (ticking them if necessary) and click OK **(2)**.



2. Now we'll turn our attention to the row of drop-down lists above your photo and work through them from left to right. We'll start by making sure Windows knows what printer you'll be using, because everything from here depends on that! See what's currently shown below **Printer (3)** and, if necessary, open the drop-down list and choose your printer.
3. Below **Paper size (4)**, choose the size of paper you'll be using. You'll find standard paper sizes like **4" x 6"** and **5" x 7"** on the drop-down list; clicking the **More** item adds a few extra sizes to the list.
4. For **Quality (5)** the options vary from one printer to another. You may see a choice of 'Standard', 'High' or 'Best', in which case you'll probably want to choose the item that seems to indicate the best quality. Alternatively you may see figures such as '300 dpi' and '600 dpi', in which case choose at least **600 dpi**.
5. The **Paper type list (6)** usually offers a bewildering variety of papers (many of which have only the tiniest differences). Fortunately you don't have to be too exact about this: assuming you're printing onto some kind of photo paper, just pick an item that seems reasonably descriptive of what you're using ('glossy photo paper' or 'matte photo paper' being the main two differences that matter).

Note that **Paper type** affects the amount of ink used to produce the print. If you choose one of the 'photo paper' types but then print onto plain paper, you'll end up with a limp, soggy sheet that's not worth keeping because your printer has used the quantity of ink required for photo paper. Conversely, if you select 'plain paper' but then print onto photo paper, you'll get something that looks rather pale and washed-out because your printer has used less ink than is needed.



6. Looking at the right of your photo, you'll see a column of layout options. Exactly what you see here depends on the paper size you chose in step 3 (most layouts are only available if you're using large sheets of paper). However, we're just planning to print one photo at full size on one sheet of paper, so the option we need is **Full page photo** which is always available: make sure that one is selected.
7. Turning to the options shown below your photo, we'll start with **Copies of each picture**. As you'd expect, that lets you choose how many copies of this photo you want to print, from 1 to 99. To print more than one copy, click in the box currently showing 1 and press the up-arrow key on your keyboard to raise the figure.
8. The final option is **Fit picture to frame**, and although it's a simple Yes/No (ticked or unticked) option, it takes a bit of explanation! In a nutshell, your camera takes photos that are rather letterbox

Choose the Full page photo option

Print more than one copy of this photo?

Choose how best to compromise on photo shape

White strips at the sides...

shaped whereas all the common paper sizes are more square. This difference in shapes clearly has to involve a compromise, and this option lets you choose how you prefer to deal with that compromise:

- If you don't tick **Fit picture to frame**, your whole photo will be printed on the paper, but you'll see white bands at the right and left of the picture.
- If you do tick **Fit picture to frame**, little strips from the top and bottom of your photo will be chopped off to make the picture the same shape as the paper and thus fill the sheet much more neatly.

Check the preview to see which you prefer

Feel free to tick and untick this option as often as needed and compare the preview of your photo just above. My guess is that you'll want this option ticked, but of course it's up to you. (And it may depend on the individual photo: ticking the option might chop off the top of someone's head if you took a tightly-framed portrait!)

Print your photo

9. That brings us to the end of the settings and you're ready to print. Make sure your printer is switched on, with the correct type of paper inserted (the right way up, if appropriate!) and click the **Print** button at the bottom of the window. You'll briefly see a progress bar as your photo is prepared and sent to your printer, and then this 'Print Pictures' window will close, taking you back to the File Explorer window or the Photo Viewer window you were just using.

Treat it carefully!

10. When the photo emerges from your printer, be careful to handle it only by its edges initially and to lay it on a flat surface to dry for a few minutes.

Ready to print another?

If you were looking through your photos in File Explorer ('Method 1'), you can select another to print in the same way. If you were using Photo Viewer ('Method 2'), you can

continue pressing the right-arrow key to look through the photos in the current folder and see if there are others you want to print. Alternatively, close the Photo Viewer window, then switch to a different folder in File Explorer and use the same **Preview** option you used earlier to look through the photos in that folder and see what else you'd like to print.

From this point, you'll find that the Print Pictures window always remembers the settings you've just used. So, if you select another photo to print now, you'll be able to skip steps 1–8 above and jump straight to step 9 – clicking the **Print** button. Assuming you don't need to change anything, you really can print a photo in just three clicks: click the photo to select it, click **Print** in File Explorer, click **Print** again in the 'Print Pictures' window.



Print Multiple Photos in One Go

You're quite likely happy to print your photos one-at-a-time as we've just done, in which case you already know everything you need to know. But perhaps you'd prefer to print a number of photos in one operation, or print several photos on a single sheet of paper?

If so, you can, but you have to use the File Explorer method (explained on page 2) to choose your photos. Rather than selecting just one photo, begin by selecting all the photos you want to print (for example, by holding down the **Ctrl** key and clicking each in turn). With the required photos selected, go to **Share > Print** in Windows 10 or Windows 8.1, or click **Print** in Windows 7. This opens the familiar 'Print Pictures' window and you can choose what to do from here:

Option 1: Print one photo per sheet

For this, you don't have to do anything differently. Click **Print** and the 'Print Pictures' window will send each selected

Select multiple photos to print in File Explorer

Print all photos one-at-a-time

photo off to your printer. All you have to do is make sure you give your printer enough paper and (ideally) retrieve each newly-printed photo from your printer's output tray before the next can land on it and potentially smudge it.



The catch to printing multiple photos at once is that they'll all use the same **Fit picture to frame** setting (see pages 7 and 8). You can use the arrow buttons beneath the preview to see how each photo looks with your chosen setting, but you might need to cancel and start again, printing those that need this setting ticked in one batch, and the rest in a second batch.

Option 2: Print several photos per sheet

Choose a larger paper size...

...and pick the layout you prefer

Open the drop-down list headed **Paper size** and choose the size of paper you'll be using (only the large sizes allow more than one picture per sheet), and then choose the best match for **Paper type**.

Now look through the available layouts in the column at the right to choose how many photos to print per page and how to arrange them. When you click a layout, the preview will show you how your photos would appear on paper, and a note below the preview tells you how many pages are needed to print all the photos you selected. You can click the little arrows to see each page previewed. When you're happy with the layout you've chosen, click **Print** to have your photos printed.

