

Using Picasa to Crop, Straighten, and Adjust lighting in Photos

We covered **resizing** pictures in this article: <http://euroscug.org/files/2015/10/Resizing-pictures.pdf>

Three other common operations we need to do with photos are **cropping, straightening** and **lighting adjustments**. A good application to do these three things is free Google Picasa.

Lighting adjustments can be complicated, sometimes requiring “curve adjustment”, where you adjust points throughout an image’s tonal range.

Basic *Brightness* and *Contrast* adjustments offered in Word, Publisher and many photo editing apps are not generally useful because they adjust the whole photo.

Picasa has some clever and powerful editing tools to easily adjust the lighting. *Fill light* adjusts the ambient light in a photo. It uses a slider to gently boost the shadows and mid-tones, but leave the highlights, so it brightens a backlit or dark photo while preserving the details in lighter areas of the picture.

Picasa offers two other lighting adjustment tools for difficult pictures:

Highlights: uses a slider that brightens the overall appearance of a picture, causing the light areas to become lighter.

Shadows: uses a slider that darkens the overall appearance of a picture, causing dark areas to become more distinct.

Of course there are plenty of other applications out there that you can use, but *Fill Light* and simple straightening functions are why I choose Picasa.

Whether you use Picasa to manage your photographs or not; or whether it is your default photo viewer or not; you can still use it just to do this basic editing.

In this document we will assume that Picasa is not your default photo viewer.

You can download Picasa free from <https://picasa.google.com/>. After downloading it, double click on the file to install it.

Here is a before and after image of the photo we are going to use in this example.



Before Picasa Editing



After Picasa Editing

Note:

Whenever you edit a photo in Picasa, Picasa will make a new sub folder in whatever folder your photo is in, called *.picasaoriginals*, in which it will store a copy of your original photo so that you can retrieve it if you make a mistake. The only thing is that it is a “hidden” folder, so if you need the original photo, to view it you need to Show Hidden Folders in Windows Explorer:

Windows 7

Tools > Folder options > View > tick Show hidden folders, files & drives > OK

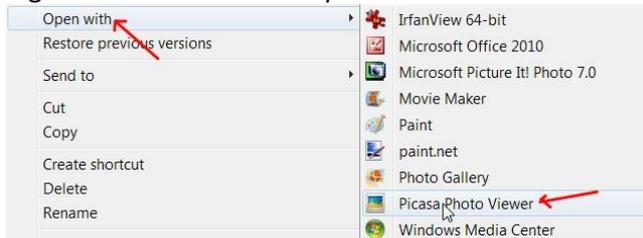
Windows 8/10

View > Options > Change folder & search options > View > tick Show hidden folders, files & drives > OK

Open the photo you want to edit in Picasa

As I don't use Picasa to manage or view photos I do the following:

- Locate the photo in Windows Explorer
- Right click on it > choose *Open with* > choose *Picasa Photo Viewer*



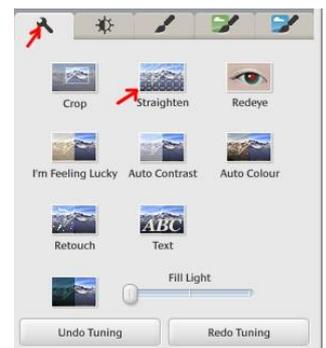
- When the photo opens in Picasa Photo Viewer, open it in the Picasa Editor – run the mouse to the bottom then click *Edit in Picasa*



Straighten the photo

You will notice that the *before* photo needs rotating to the right a bit, to level the water. In the Tool bar click the  tab (*Commonly needed fixes*) then click *Straighten*

Operate the slider until the picture is straight, then click *Apply*. Note that severe straightening will cause the edges of the photo to be reduced.

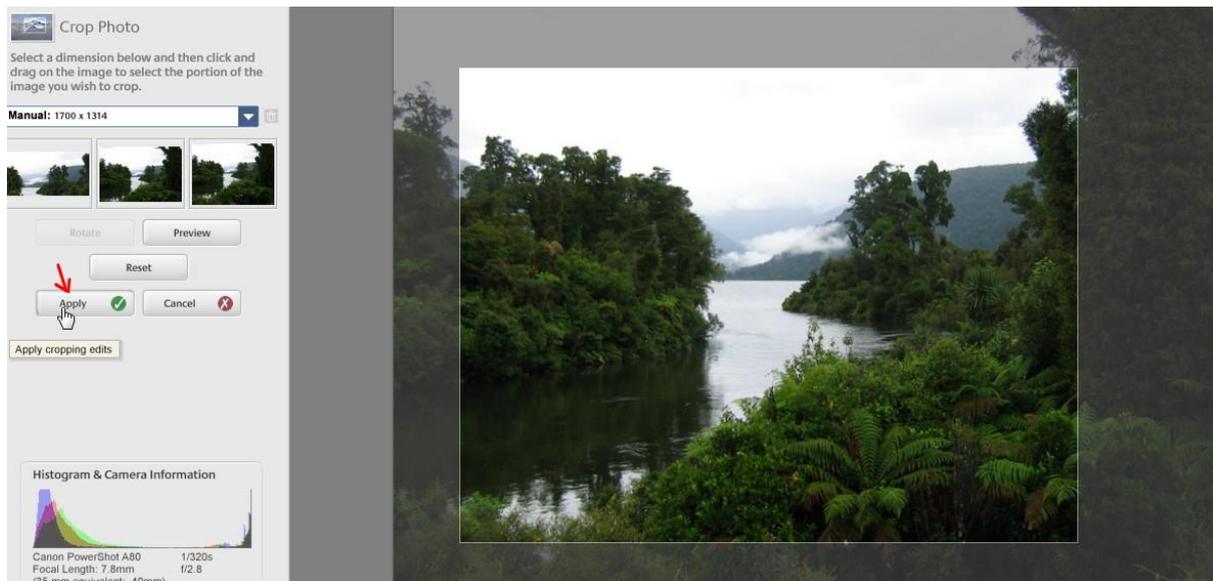
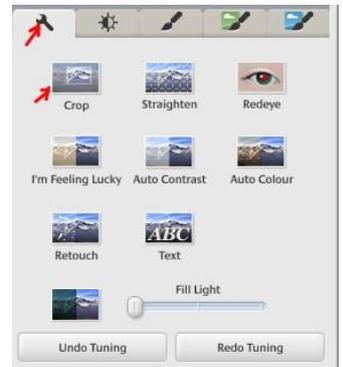


Crop the photo

In the Toolbar, click the  tab, then *Crop*

Left click the top left of the area you want to crop then hold the mouse button down while you drag the crop area to the bottom right. Release the mouse button then you can fine tune the crop area by dragging the individual edges of the crop area.

Then click *Apply*



Adjust the lighting in the photo

In the Tool bar, click the  tab then operate the *Fill Light* slider until you have the desired result. In this case there is no "Apply" button.



In most cases the Fill light adjustment will improve a photo with dark areas. If the *Fill light* adjustment is not to your liking, try the *Highlights* and *Shadows* adjustments. Click on the  button (*Finely-tuned lighting and colour fixes*), and experiment with different adjustments to see if that helps. Use Shadows together with Highlights for best result.

Picasa will remember these fixes for this photo if you open it in Picasa again, but if you want to view, email, upload, or print it using other applications, or move it, **you must save the adjusted photo**.

Saving the adjusted photo

In Picasa, go *File > Save*.

John Allen, January 2016