

## MAKE YOUR OWN CLASSIC FRAME IN PHOTOIMPACT

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**For Version 7 and above**

**Level: Beginner/Intermediate**

**Main tools and effects used:**

- ◆ Selection features.
  - ◆ Trace
  - ◆ Path panel

**By Mark Slater, May 2004**

### Features of PhotoImpact Classic Frames.

PhotoImpact comes with some great classic frames, but it's nice to be able to make your own and apply them just as easily.

PhotoImpact's Classic frame it is transformed to the aspect ratio of your image or object. You'll notice that most of the frames have a square aspect, so if you apply to say a 6:4 ratio image, the sides are 1.5 times the thickness of the top and bottom. Often this does not matter, but if you want the same thickness, make a frame with a 6:4 aspect ratio and it will apply the same (or close to) thickness to all sides of your image.

When applying a frame you may notice that there is a small background border around the frame. If you don't want this, I'll explain an easy way to remove it.

Frames are ufo files made up of path objects and saved in the FrmMask folder in the PhotoImpact program files group.

## Frame making hints

The following example is for a 6x4 ratio frame. Open a new canvas 600 wide x 400 high.

### The first object.

Start by making a base frame. Select all (ctrl-a). From the selection menu choose border. For the example, set width 30 and check "inward" and "box", click OK. From the edit menu choose trace, selection marquee.

The settings of the trace dialog I used were Tolerance 14, jump point 1, threshold 128 (*these are the defaults*). Click OK.

Trace will then change to the path tool with horizontal transform selected in the drop down "mode" list. For the example, change the mode to 3D custom.

Open the material panel. Set the colour. Perhaps pick a colour from an intended image that will suit. You can right click on the colour sample and use "colour on screen" for this. Go to the bevel tab and choose the right hand bevel form.

Next the Border/depth tab and set border to 7. Depth should be OK as the default, leave smooth spine unchecked. For the example, leave lighting at the default (from top left).

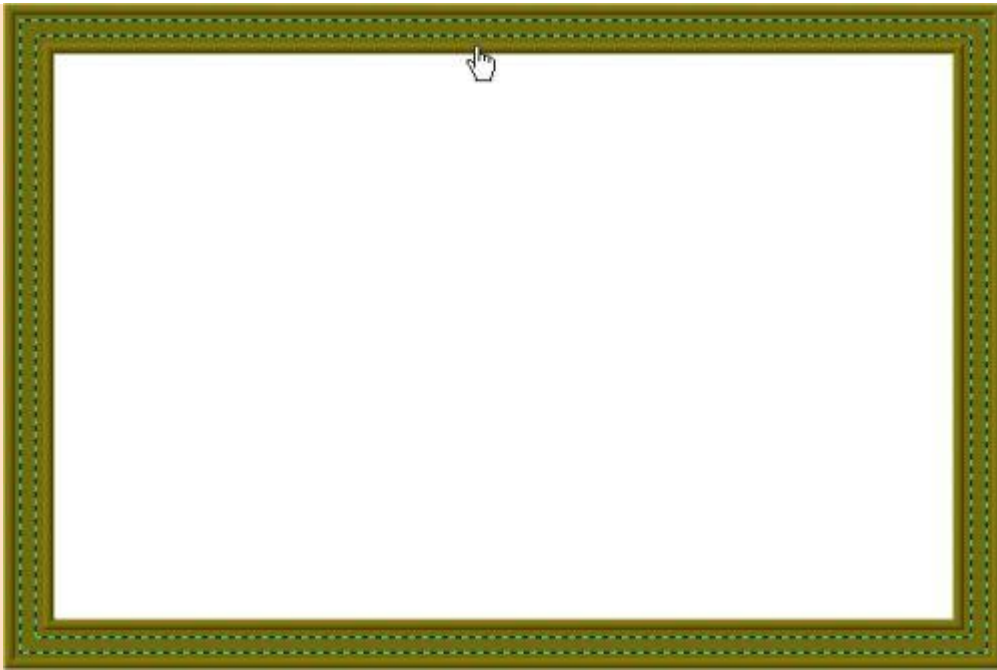
Click preview to see the result. Change the colour if it doesn't suit. Click OK.



### The other objects.

We'll make a coppery/gold strip in the middle of the frame.

Deselect objects (enter, or object menu), select all (ctrl-a). From select menu, expand/shrink and set shrink, 10, box. Selection menu again and choose border with width 10, inward, box.



Trace as before. In the Mode list this time choose 3D trim rather than custom. From the easy palette, material gallery, metal groups, double click on M05. Set border and depth to 3. Position the light on the middle top left by clicking on the preview. Adjust this to suit. To keep the lighting consistent for the next objects, add this preset to the Easy Palette. With the material panel open, click add. Check "partial", and uncheck color/texture, bevel and border/depth. Save to a convenient place in your gallery and name it something like "frame lighting 1"

Now to add a silver strip either side.

#### *The First side:*

Again, deselect objects, select all. From the select menu, shrink 7, box. Our border for the base frame was 7, so this should sit neatly inside it.. The inside strip was shrunk 10 so we have  $10 - 7 = 3$  for the width of this strip. Select menu, border, width 3,inward, box.

Trace as before. Change mode to 3D round. Apply material, metal M23. Adjust border and depth each to 1. Apply your lighting preset. If the strip appears too bright, open the material panel, lighting tab and reduce ambient, you may also wish to reduce strength in the shading tab. To fine tune the light direction, temporarily increase border and depth before clicking on the preview. At very small borders, the light positioning can be too sensitive to control.

#### *The Second side:*

Follow the same procedure for an inner strip by setting the first shrink to 20px. The steps are: Deselect all objects, select all, shrink 20px, border 3, trace, mode 3D round. The presets should have stayed in place from the first silver strip.

To ensure any textures fit correctly when transformed, select each path object in turn and in the material panel\texture\file\options dialog, check "fit the texture" rather than "tile" it.

## The Background

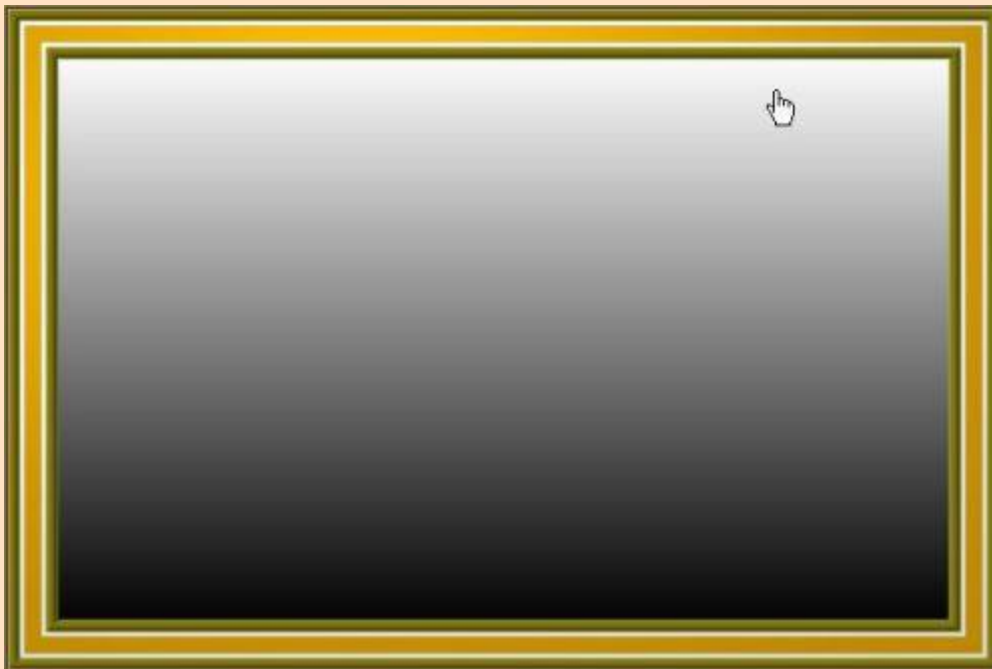
When you use a classic frame, notice that the canvas is first expanded outside your image to accommodate the frame. To set an image placeholder, make an image type object inside the frame.

For our example, deselect all objects, select all, shrink 30 (the frame width), trace (no border this time).

Select 2D mode.

To have the frame look similar to the other classic frames, fill with a white to black gradient top to bottom - go to the edit menu, fill, gradient tab. For fill type use the left hand icon. Choose white for the left of the two color samples and black for the right hand sample, click OK. Now convert to an image object - Object menu, Convert Object Type, From text/path to Image. Finally move the placeholder to the bottom of the stack - select the pick tool and click on the "send to back" icon on the toolbar.

That's it for the frame construction. You may wish to select the base frame and add a shadow, I suggest using an offset of 1 or 2 for X and Y if you do. You could also add more decoration to the frame, but do this only with path objects. To include textures or images, create a 2D path object and add the image or texture in the material panel.



Note that the image placeholder fits inside the frame.

## Saving the frame.

Now you have your frame finished, select all objects (ctrl-shift-a) and group (ctrl-alt-g, or use the object menu). This is mostly for convenience, it isn't necessary to group the objects for the frame to work correctly in the frame gallery.

Save the frame as a ufo type file to the Frmmask folder in the PhotoImpact program folder group. The path should be something like this C:\Program Files\Ulead Systems\Ulead PhotoImpact XL\Frmmask\.

Scroll through the folder until you find the last UFO file starting with FramC\*\*\*.UFO, where

\*\*\* is the highest number that you find. Name your file with the next number. Say the last is FramC070.UFO, then name yours FramC071.UFO. In the save, options, advanced button check both options to save vector and image data.

Congratulations, you now have a custom made Classic Frame.

## Using the Frame

Now open an image, go to Format menu, Frame and Shadow (shift-f), choose Classic Frame and scroll down to the bottom, your frame should be there. Choose it and click OK.

## Removing the excess border

If you applied the frame to the base image, you'll notice a thin border around the outside of the frame. I don't know why it's there, the frame generator appears to add it to the bounding boxes of the frames. However they all seem to be 10 px wide. To remove 10 px accurately, click on the select tool, deselect all objects (if you chose not to merge the frame), select all, shrink 10 and crop - there is an icon on the toolbar.

Alternatively, if the border is not exactly 10px, and you did not merge the frame, select the frame group, ungroup, select the base or largest frame object. With the path tool active choose edit mode then back to path tool. This resets the bounding box. Click on the select tool and crop.

## About aspect ratio

The example starts with a 6x4 ratio canvas, so the aspect ratio is correct for a finished 6x4 image after the frame has been added and the excess cropped. If you start out with a 6x4 ratio image and then add the frame, the final image with frame will not be 6x4 ratio as an equal width (or close) frame has been added to all sides. Should you want to print so that the finished framed image will be a particular aspect ratio, then there's a variation that may help.

If you omit the image placeholder from the frame file, the canvas will not expand to include the image inside the frame, the frame will merely be laid on top. So open the frame ufo and delete the background object, save as a new frame. Open a 6x4 ratio photo - or crop a photo to 6x4 ratio. Apply the new frame without the merge option. The frame will be a group of objects on top of your image. Deselect the frame group, select all, convert to object. Choose the transform tool and resize your image to fit in the frame. It helps to hold down the ctrl and shift keys so that the resize transform stays centred and aspect ratio is held.. You will lose a very small portion of the image under the top and bottom of the frame.

To make a frame that will precisely fit around a 6x4 ratio image and retain equal frame widths, alter the example slightly by expanding the canvas by 30px - or start with 660x460.

## Frame size

The frame size (width) remains in the same ratio of frame width to canvas width as you first created it. So to make a frame that has a larger proportional width, start the example with a smaller canvas e.g. 450 x 300. The smaller canvas will also result in a smaller file too - saving disk space and memory load. Using RLE compression in the UFO save options will also help with file sizes.

### Sharing your frame (untested)

You should be able to share your frame with other PI users, however if you have used any custom textures or image fills, I expect you will need to send these with the frame with instructions to install them in the same relative folder as in your system.

### One final note on maintenance.

The thumbnail for your new frame is generated the first time that the frame and shadow dialog is opened after you have saved it to the folder. To refresh the thumbnail, close PhotoImpact, delete the file PathUFO.pst in the FrmMask folder and reopen PhotoImpact. The thumbnails will be regenerated when the dialog is next opened.

I hope you have lots of fun with your custom Classic Frames. ...Mark

*(Waiver: I have uploaded this tutorial by Mark as pdf to my site since it was so popular on the PI board (PIRC as it was known then) and I felt people would enjoy seeing it back. This upload is without permission from Mark Slater since he is unable to be located. I have done this completely of my own volition and am happy to have it removed if Mark so wishes.)*