



Paint Shop Pro 6's new Picture Frames is an exciting and fun addition to the program. But, creating your own frames can be a little confusing. This tutorial will teach you how to create your own Picture Frames and give you some tips and tricks on how to use them.

Creating a Picture Frame

A picture frame works a lot like a tube. You create it on a transparent background and save it as a "pfr" extension. When you apply a frame to a graphic, PSP creates a new layer, scales the frame to the graphic and if you have a selection saved for a frame with transparent areas outside the frame, prompts as to who you want to fill this transparent area. When the frame is done, you end up with your graphic on one layer and the frame on a layer above the graphic.

When you save your frames, all you need to do is to save them into your Paint Shop Pro 6 Frames folder. I'm not exactly sure how PSP deals with the names. It doesn't show them in alpha order once you start adding new frames. The new names show up in the order you add them.

I start all my frames with a template I save in the Frames folder of Paint Shop as a "psp" file. That way I can create variations of my frames without having to start over from scratch. My tutorials show you how to create a frame template, then how to make a frame from the template.

Configuring Associations for PFR Extension

If you add the "pfr" extension to your "psp" extension, you can directly save your graphic as a pfr by choosing the psp extension and typing pfr over the psp extension. Otherwise, you can save your frame as a psp extension and then change the extension to pfr by renaming the graphic in PSP's Browser. To add the association:

1. Go to File|Preferences|File Format Associations
2. Click on the Paint Shop Pro Image association so that it is highlighted
3. Click on the "Extensions" button and add "pfr" under the "psp"
4. Click on the OK button then OK again to save your change.

Now when you choose the psp extension when you choose Save, you can directly save a frame as a "pfr" file by just changing the extension from "psp" to "pfr" before you save.

Rules for Creating Picture Frames

1. Frames must be created on a transparent background.
2. The frame must completely fill the graphic, otherwise you will get unexpected results.
3. Always start out with a rather large frame. The frames are sized to the graphic when you apply them and if you apply a small frame to a large graphic, the quality of the frame will suffer.
4. When you save it as a "pfr" file, it can only be one layer.
5. If you save a frame with any transparent background outside the frame (such as an oval or an irregular shaped frame), you must have the outline of the frame saved as a selection and save the selection with the frame. This will prompt a "next" button on the Frames control panel where you can set the background color.
6. You can save a frame with a transparent background outside the frame without saving the selection for the frame. When you apply this frame, all the transparent areas on the frame graphic will be transparent. To correct this, just make a selection around the frame with a selection tool on the picture layer, invert your selection and flood fill with a background color or pattern.

Using Frames

Open the picture you want to apply the frame to. If the frame is oriented in a horizontal position and the picture is oriented in a vertical position, rotate your graphic 90 degrees to the right before applying the frame, then rotate back when the frame has been applied. You may need to rotate the frame layer to get the light orientation correct after a rotation. The light should be coming from the upper left corner. Image|Flip usually works fine to correct this problem. If you apply a square frame to a rectangular graphic, you will get a distorted frame. The same goes for applying a rectangular frame to a square graphic. When you apply an irregular shaped frame, you may get spare pixels of color around the interior and the exterior of the frame. To clean these pixels up for the interior, select the interior portion with the magic wand, feather your selection by 2-3 and hit delete a few times. To clean spare pixels around the outside of the frame, select the area outside the frame with the magic wand tool, feather by 2-3 and flood fill with your background color or pattern a few times.



The Template

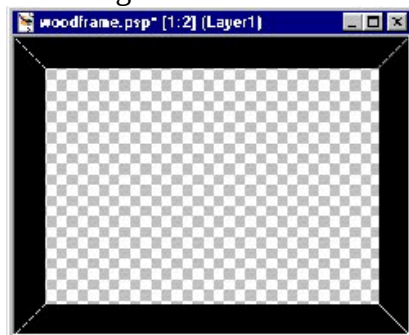
1. Create a new transparent graphic 600x450. It is always best to create a frame you will be using with PSP's Picture Frame Plugin rather large. When the frame is

applied to the picture, it is scaled down or up to fit the picture. Scaling up dithers graphics so you always want it to scale down.

2. Set your foreground color to black.
3. Set the Preset Shapes tools to the following:



4. Starting at 0,0, drag the cursor as far as you can into the lower right corner, then release. You should now have a black frame. The line width setting of 100 may seem very large to you, but when you draw with the shapes tool, the program draws half on each side of the cursor. By setting the width to 100, you are actually ending up with a frame 50 pixels wide. If you want a thinner frame, just set the width to 2x the size you want the frame to be.
5. Click on the black frame with the Magic Wand tool and save this selection to an alpha channel as "Frame_Out". Click on the transparency inside the frame and save this selection to an alpha channel as "Frame_In". Deselect.
6. Zoom in on graphic 4x. Bring upper left corner into view on the screen.
7. Set foreground color to white.
8. Choose the Draw Tool, set to Single Line, Stroked, Width 1, Antialias checked, Vector unchecked.
9. Start at 0,0 and draw a straight line to the corner of the frame (if you hold down the shift key while dragging, you will be constrained to a straight line. Don't worry about going past the inner corner, we'll take care of that in a minute.
10. Move to the top right of the frame and at 599,0 (you can't get to 600 for some reason), draw another straight line to the corner.
11. Repeat for lower corners. You should now have a graphic that looks like the following:



12. Load the selection "Frame_In" and hit delete. This will get rid of any spare pixels of color in the inner transparent section if your line went past the inner corners.
13. Click on the top part of the frame with the Magic Wand tool. Save this selection as "frame_top".

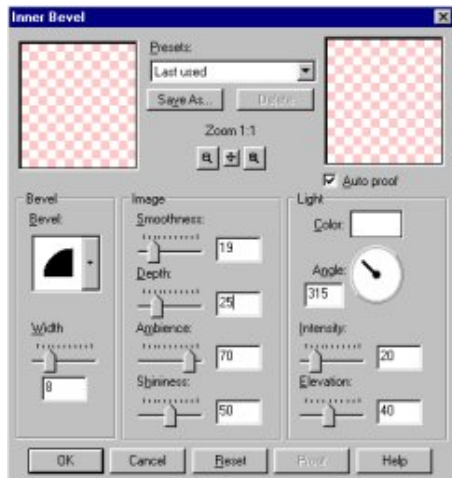
14. Click on the sides and save the selections as "frame_left" and "frame right".
15. Click on the bottom and save selection as "frame_bottom".
16. Save your graphic as WoodFrame.psp.
17. Now you can use the template to create frames with different wood patterns or any pattern that has a grain to it. This also works well with wallpaper patterns used for frames.
18. You can use the "Frame_Out" selection for any quick frames that you don't care about the grain of the pattern.

The Frame

1. Load your frame graphic.
2. Hit delete (this will clear the graphic and you will see the transparent background).
3. Open a wood pattern (you will find a selection of wood patterns in my Frame Kit which you can download from the main page of this tutorial).
4. You will want the grain of the wood going horizontal for the top and bottom and vertical for the sides. Rotate your wood pattern so the grain is horizontal (if necessary) and set flood fill tool for wood pattern.
5. Load frame_top selection.
6. Flood fill with wood pattern.
7. Go to Image|Flip and reselect your wood pattern for the flood fill tool.
8. Load frame_bottom selection and flood fill.
9. Rotate your wood pattern 90 degrees to the right and re-select wood pattern for flood fill tool.
10. Repeat process for side frame parts, but this time you will choose Image|Mirror to flip the pattern before the flood filling the second side.
11. Using the Eye Dropper tool, click on a dark part of the wood color (you might want to make the color even darker).
12. Add a new layer and drag it under the wood frame parts layer. Load the "Frame_Out" selection and flood fill with the very dark wood color. This will fill in the corner gaps.
13. Choose Layers|Merge|Merge Visible.
14. Your graphic should now look something like this (depending on your wood):



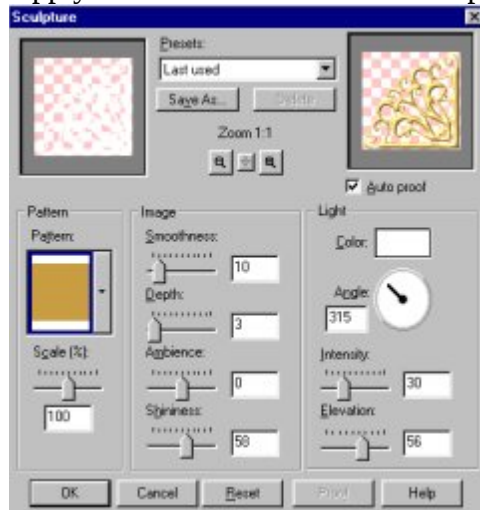
15. Load your "Frame" selection. Apply PSP's Inner Bevel filter. Hint: Turn on Auto Proofing to see what the frame looks like real-time. If you downloaded my Frames Kit, this is the "Picture Frame" preset for the beveling filter. Otherwise, here are the settings I used for my frame:



16. To save as a Frame, copy your entire graphic (Ctrl-A, Ctrl-C) then Paste "As a New Graphic" (Ctrl-V). Save the new graphic as a "pfr" file type into the PSP 6 "Frames" folder if you have set your associations per my tips on the first page of this tutorial. If you have not set your associations, save as a "psp" extension and then change the extension to "pfr" by renaming the graphic in PSP's Browser.

Adding Decorations

1. Open your frame psp or pfr file.
2. Add a new layer.
3. Work on the new layer.
4. Find a decorative font that will work as a corner. I used Borders Corner 2 letter "d".
5. Place your dingbat font with the color set to white.
6. Apply a filter like PSP's Sculpture filter. Here is the setting I used:



If you download my Frames kit from the first page of this tutorial, this is the "Gold" sculpture preset.

7. When you have your decorations in place, choose Layers|Merge|Merge Visible
(Do not choose Merge All (flatten) as this will lose your transparency).

Save the graphic as a "pfr" file to the Frames folder. I called mine Wood_Fancy.