

Customising PhotoPlus

This tutorial is specific to PhotoPlus, but some tips also apply to other Serif products. PhotoPlus allows users to customise the toolbars, menus, workspace tabs, and keyboard shortcuts. If you use it regularly, its well worth the effort to configure the interface to suit your personal preferences.

Toolbars

See the topic: “Customising Toolbars, Menus, and Tabs” in the help file.

Extra Large Icons

PhotoPlus X8 has small, auto, or large icons, but there is a registry setting to show double sized icons (32 pix) in earlier versions. If you have a high resolution monitor or weak eyesight, you may find this setting helpful. Editing the Windows registry can prevent programs running, so be careful, and keep a backup.

1. Press the Windows Key plus R, to open the Run dialogue.
2. Type “regedit” and click on OK. Press Ctrl F to search for “LargeIcons” — for PhotoPlus X5 locate this registry key:

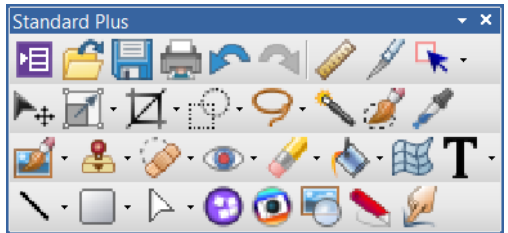
HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Serif\PhotoPlus\15.0\ToolBars\Serif PhotoPlus\Options

— for PhotoPlus X7 locate this registry key:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Serif\PhotoPlus\17.0\ToolBars\Serif PhotoPlus\Options

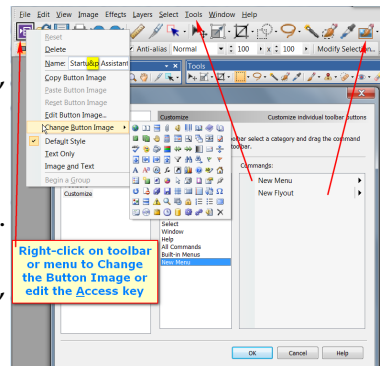
Modify the dword key from 0 to 1 and exit the registry editor.

On restarting PhotoPlus the icons will be 32 pixels instead of 16 pixels. This is just a bit too big for a 1280 x 1024 monitor but should be fine for 1920 x 1080. The screen shot shows my customised toolbar as a floating palette and in four rows to fit this web page. It is normally docked at the top, and is the only toolbar that I use, apart from the menu bar (which cannot be removed), the workspace toolbar, and the context toolbar.



Creating New Toolbars

Open the options dialogue from the Tools menu, select “Toolbars” and add a new toolbar. I added one named “Standard Plus” for the top. Display all the toolbars, select the customize tab on the options dialogue, and drag the toolbars by their handles. The new toolbars will be empty. Hold down the control key, and drag icons from the default toolbars, dropping a copy onto the new toolbar.



Adding A New Flyout

At the bottom of the customize tab of the options dialogue is the New Menu category, which contains two commands: New Menu and New Flyout. A new flyout can be dragged to any toolbar from the dialogue, or an existing flyout can be copied by dragging a flyout from any built-in toolbar by holding down the control key.

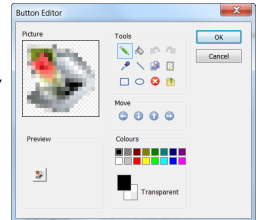
Detaching Flyouts

The built-in flyouts can be detached as floating toolbar palettes. If you open a flyout, you will see that it has a drag handle. Drag it away from the toolbar to detach it as a floating toolbar. The original flyout will not be changed. A floating toolbar from a copied flyout bears the name of the original flyout from which it was copied. This name cannot be changed. Floating toolbars can also be docked, and are automatically added to the list of named toolbars in the Options dialogue.

Editing Command Buttons

With the customize dialogue open, right-click on a flyout, button, or menu to edit its properties. Change the name, the button, or choose the button style: default, text, image and text.

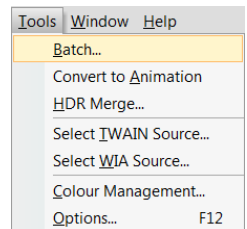
If any command, such as the Acquire command, which I have renamed to “Acquire Scan,” has no button, a new button can be chosen from the list of custom buttons, pasted from the windows clipboard, or imported from a file on disk (Use All Files *.* to include PNG images). If the button image doesn't have transparency, add it using the Button Editor's tools.



Menus

The menu bar is a toolbar, similar to other toolbars, except that it cannot be disabled. It can be undocked and moved to any side of the window, moved below other toolbars, or left floating. Buttons can be positioned on the menu bar, and new menus can be added. Menu items can also have icons. For example, create a new menu and drag the recent files item from the file menu to this new menu. Rename the “New Menu” to “&Recent Files” so that the access key will be Alter R. In Tools, Options, UI Settings, increase the number of recently used files from the default of 4 to 10 or 16 (max).

Add a Tools menu to make PhotoPlus consistent with other Serif applications. Drag the Preferences item from the File menu, and rename it to Options. I also added other functions — Batch, HDR Merge, Convert to Animation, Select TWAIN and WIA source, and Colour Management — to the tools menu. This makes the previously overloaded File menu easier to use.



Move the Studio Tabs submenu to the View menu, where it belongs, and rename it to Tabs to match other recent Serif applications. Remove the Toolbars menu as it's easily available by right-clicking on any toolbar. Rearrange all menus to allow quick access to frequently used items, remove never used items to make other items quicker to find. More than two cascading menus is bad interface design as it takes users longer to find the item they want — one level of submenus is quite bad enough.

Workspace Tabs

This topic is dealt with under “Customizing Toolbars, Menus and Tabs.”

A Few Tips:

1. It is much quicker to access a control that touches the edge of the screen because the mouse pointer doesn't need to be aimed precisely on the target. The edges of the screen effectively have infinite width.
2. Move the HowTo Tab from the left and position it floating at the top, where it can be collapsed, using the free space on the right of the menus on the Windows title bar. When expanded, the tab can be big for comfortable reading.
3. Save custom workspaces for reloading later. Experiment with different layouts for different projects. Workspaces are saved in the %AppData% workspace folder. For PhotoPlus X8 that is:
%AppData%\Serif\PhotoPlus\18.0\Workspace Profiles\
4. Don't forget to save your workspace profile after making changes, and backup any other customisation data in the %AppData% folder to a safe place.



Keyboard Shortcuts

This is under the topic “Customising Keyboard Shortcuts.” Here are a few brief tips:

1. Control key shortcuts are easy to use, so assign them to the most used functions.
2. F11 is almost universally used for Fullscreen mode, so change the default shortcut of Ctrl E which you're likely to forget, to F11. However, F11 is used to initialise Screen Capture, so assign that to another seldom used key like F9. (Screen capture in PhotoPlus is badly designed — it needs one shortcut to set options and another to initialise it. Use [FastStone Capture](#) — the free version 5.3 is adequate — or the PrintScreen feature built-in to Windows. Then remove this useless feature from the PhotoPlus menus, but not before you have changed the initialise shortcut from F11 to F9 or something else).
3. Alter key shortcuts are reserved for menu access keys so use them with caution — you might lose easy access to one of the main menus.
4. The scroll-lock key has a light. Assign it to snapping on/off

5. The Insert/Typeover key doesn't work for text editing, and would be annoying if it did. Assign it to something useful like Paste to Selection.
6. Backup your keyboard profile in the %AppData% Accelerators folder.

HowTo Help

HowTo help uses CSS style sheets to format the text. These style sheets are located in a subfolder of the Program's installation folder:

C:\Program Files\Serif\PhotoPlus\X7\Help\

The style sheet defines the font sizes for the HowTo tab. By editing these font sizes to suit your own needs, you can read the HowTo help without eye-strain, so I increase the sizes by about 33%. Serif use 9.0 pt Segoe UI, which is too small for me, and even 9.0 pt Verdana is too small for most others according to the [HTML E-Mail: Text Font Readability Study](#) (The following quote is set in Verdana 9pt)

"The study seems to indicate that a newsletter set in Verdana 10 pt is considered "not too small" by 93% of readers. Verdana 9 pt, however, is considered too small for body text by two-thirds of the respondents." (Dr. Ralph F. Wilson, E-Commerce Consultant)

Backup default.css and default_ns.css, then replace them with your versions. You will need Admin permissions to save files in Program Files, so save them elsewhere first, then copy them.

Adding WebP Support

It is easy to add support for opening files that use the WebP format by installing a free [WebP Codec for Windows](#). Download and run the installer, then PhotoPlus and other applications will be able to open WebP files.

When preparing photographs for the Web, I recommend using WebP format as the file sizes are significantly smaller than JPG images of comparable quality. Exporting to WebP format is unfortunately not currently possible, but at least you can import them to work on them using PhotoPlus.

[IrfanView](#) can be used to save JPG images in WebP format.