

# Transparency in GIMP

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# Guide Notes

## ***About this guide***

This guide should give clear, simple instructions on how to create transparent affects in the GIMP. This guide has a *glossary* which should be used prior to contacting the author with problems. Further documentation (or updates to this document) may be made available on the author's website (see *contact the author*).

## **Contacting the author**

The author can be contacted via telephone, email or postal mail. For updates to this documentation, or for additional documentation please visit the authors website (<http://www.jonsdocs.org.uk>).

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## ***Assumptions***

This guide will assume the following:

- You are using the latest version of the GIMP or at least version 2.2.8
- You are familiar with the basic aspects of GIMP and its interface

If you have a further problem the *glossary* may provide additional assistance. A further assumption is that you know how to turn on and operate your computer (when to double click, when the single click, when to right click).

## ***Who should read this guide***

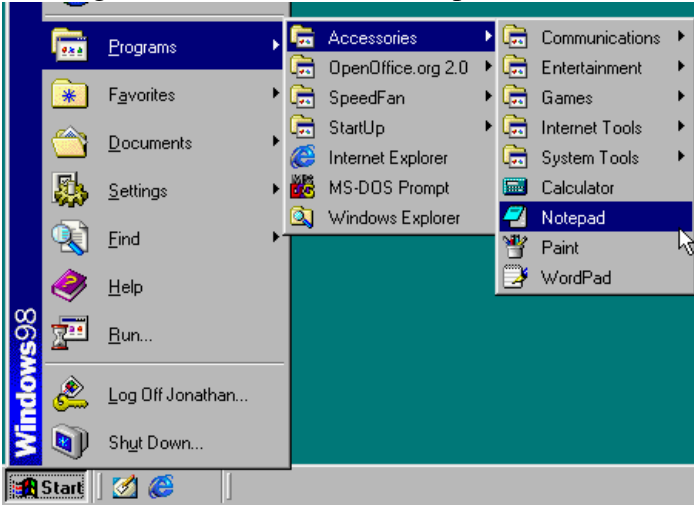
This guide is intended for use by those who want to use the GIMP to create graphics and to add transparency to their images. Do *not* follow this guide if you plan on using Microsoft Paint, Open Office Draw or any other drawing package as they are not the GIMP!

## ***Version***

This is version 1.0 of this guide (2006-07-28).

## Conventions used in this guide

Throughout this guide the following conventions will apply:

<i>Convention</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
<b>bold text</b>	Indicates a word that is present in the glossary, as a general rule words will only be emboldened once although this may change throughout the guide.
<i>italicised text</i>	Shows emphasis
<b><i>bold italicised text</i></b>	Indicates a word, present in the glossary, that is emphasised
<a href="#">blue underlined text</a>	Denotes a link or email address that you may use on the Internet
Something > Something else	<p>The &gt; here indicates you are changing level. For example choosing <i>notepad</i> in this example would be shown as:</p> <p>Start &gt; Programs &gt; Accessories &gt; Notepad</p>  A screenshot of the Windows 98 Start menu. The Start menu is open, showing the 'Programs' folder expanded. The 'Accessories' folder is also expanded, and the 'Notepad' application is highlighted. The taskbar at the bottom shows the Start button and several icons. The system tray on the right shows the clock and volume icons.

## Further Reading

There is help available on using the GIMP but you have to install this separately. Please see the GIMP website for details:

<http://www.gimp.org.uk>

# An Introduction to the GIMP

## ***What is the GIMP?***

The GIMP is an **open source**, powerful and extensible graphics manipulation package. Similar in functionality and power to Photoshop, the GIMP comes without the price tag and is released under the **GNU GPL** software license.

More importantly the GIMP is **free software**.

## ***What does GIMP stand for?***

GNU Image Manipulation Package.

## ***How do I extend the GIMP?***

Scripts can be written in **Python** to add power to the GIMP.

## ***What does the GIMP run on?***

So far, in public release, the GIMP runs on:

- Windows
- Linux
- Mac OSX

## ***The GIMP doesn't exist on my platform!***

Well, the GIMP is **open source** so you could always get the **source code**, **port** it and then release it back to the community...

(it takes a while to **compile** mind)

## To begin

### ***Switching the computer on***

It may sound obvious but you will be surprised the number of people that try to work with a computer that is switched off! Turn the computer on.

### ***Logging in***

**Login** to your computer – if you are looking at the desktop then you are already logged in.

*Linux users note – do not login as **root**, that's just dumb. Create a user account!*

### ***Loading the GIMP***

Load up the GIMP. If you haven't got the GIMP installed you will need to **install** it first.

### **Windows users**

1. Click *Start*
2. Click *programs* or *all programs*
3. Click *GIMP*
4. Click *GIMP2*

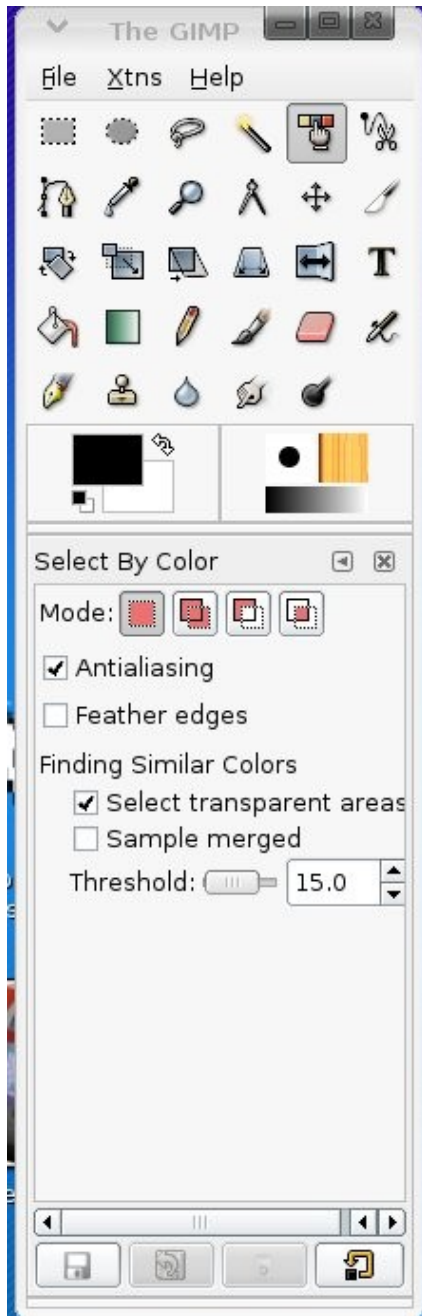


### **Linux Users**

In your *applications menu* / *K menu* / *menu* choose the GIMP (generally under *Graphics*).

Alternatively, load up a terminal window and type *gimp*, press **return**.

# Welcome to the GIMP



Right, well if everything went well you will now be looking at a panel very similar to the one shown left. This shows a majority of the controls available whilst using the GIMP but not, unfortunately all those we will use here.

Obviously, in order to add transparency to an image we need an image to add to. For this guide I have included a graphic, fairly simple, that you may have seen on my site. To get this file please go to:

<http://www.jonsdocs.org.uk>

Goto *documentation > art topics* and download the additional support files archive (*sample\_graphics.zip*).

## **Load the image**

Load the image we will be working with ( File > Open) – if you're using the support files we will be using *begin\_with\_me.gif*.

## Manipulating the image

Don't be put off by the word *manipulating* – it only means to change!

The graphic we're now looking at (*begin\_with\_me.gif*) shows, quite clearly, an image made to advertise *LAN party in the garden* and contains text and graphic element. As it happens I created this image using the GIMP earlier.

You may think it looks alright as it stands and won't have noticed if I placed this version of the image on my website. That is true but only because my website backdrop is white. Imagine what would happen if it were red:



We're left with a not so nice white border which potentially detracts from the look of the whole site, not good.

To get around this we need to tell the *white* area to be **transparent**, to disappear, be see though and just generally not be visible.

### Step 1 – Adding a transparency layer

This isn't as difficult as it first sounds.

From the window showing the image:

1. Click the *layer* menu
2. Click *transparency*
3. Click *add alpha channel*

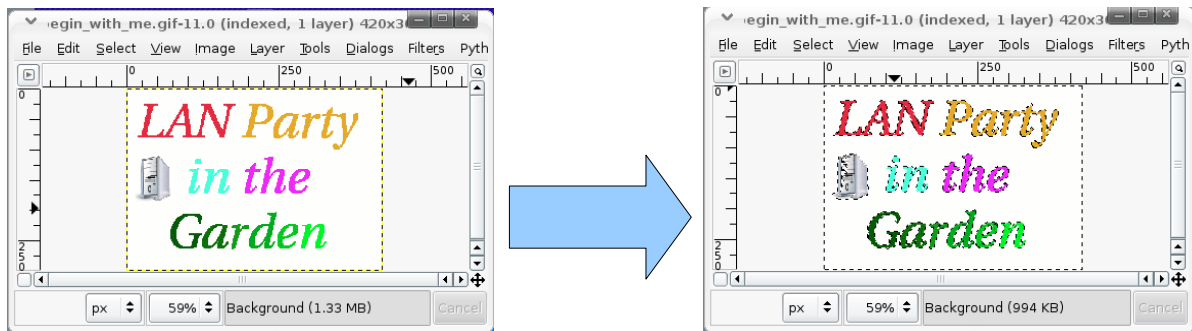
And that's done. All the **alpha channel** is is a layer of nothing that is, in this case, transparent – it serves our purpose well.

## Step 2 – Selecting the white

Again, another easy step.

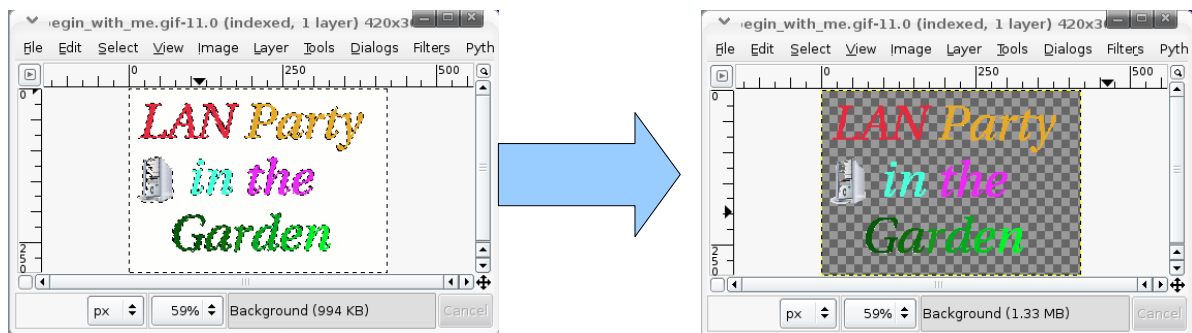
In the image window:

1. Click the *select* menu
2. Click *by color*
3. Click on the white area in the image – any area of white will do.



## Step 3 – Removing the white

1. You will see dotted, moving, outlines around all parts of the image that aren't white (in the provided image's case, around all the letters and the picture of the computer).
2. We now need to delete the white – pressing *delete* won't do this – just to confuse you. The easiest way to remove the white is to cut it. Choose the *edit* menu and then *cut* or hold down *ctrl* and press *x*.
3. You will see the white vanish and a checker board appear.



## Saving the image

It's all very well having done the work but unless you're gonna save it there wasn't much point. It is important that you save this correctly as otherwise all of your hard work has been wasted.

### **A note on file formats**

Now we have made our image transparent we need to make sure that we save it in a format that supports transparency. Many images on the Internet use the GIF format but PNG is becoming increasingly popular.

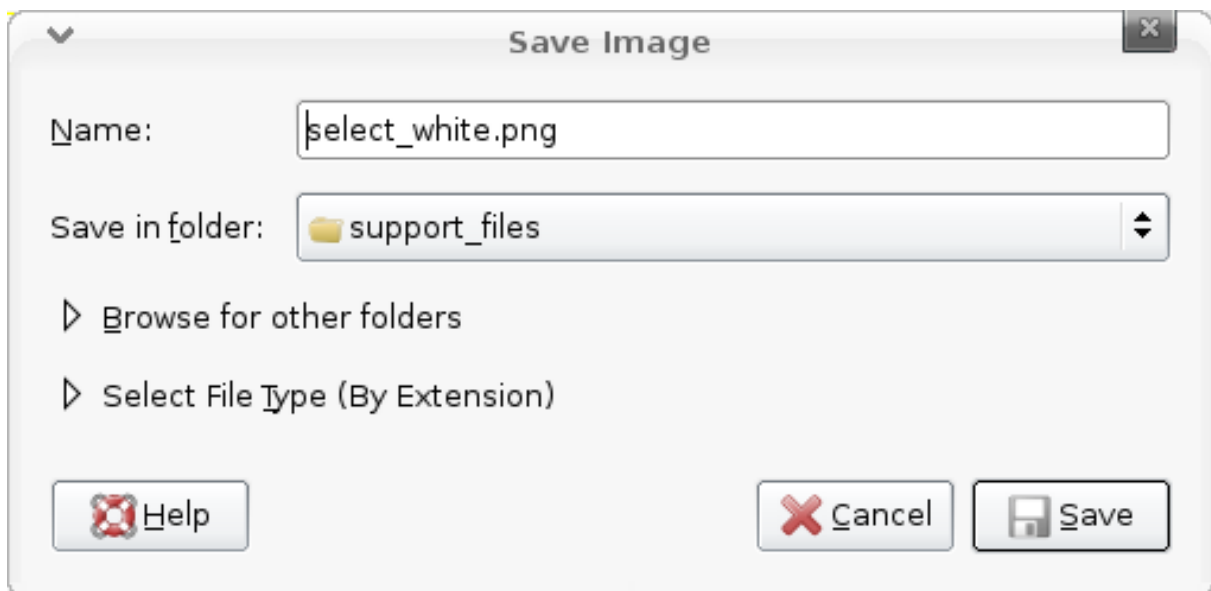
GIF is old school and fairly reliable. It has the advantage that Microsoft's Internet Explorer shows the transparency correctly but the draw back that it only has 256 colours to play with.

PNG is a new format and has many more colours to play with – think JPG but with a transparency layer. Internet Explorer 6 and previous cannot display these correctly and helpfully give you a nice black border.

Personally, I prefer PNG, as IE is a poor browser and shouldn't be used anyway.

### Saving the image

Click File > Save As > and in the box type the file name you want followed by the appropriate extension (.gif for **GIF** and .png for **PNG**). Click *save*.



## **Congratulations!**

You've made your first image with transparency in the GIMP. I hope you found this guide useful – it certainly took me a search on the Internet and a fair amount of hassle to do it the first time I ever had too.

Keep an eye out for more tutorials, including some others I have planned for the GIMP.

# GLOSSARY

## A

*Administrator*

An administrator has full access and control of the system.

*Alpha Channel*

The layer that provides the transparency in images. Consider it a layer of air or complete nothingness!

## C

*Compile*

To compile software is to take the source code (text) and making it into something you can actually run.

## D

*Delete*

If you delete something it is removed, discarded, no more

## E

*End User License Agreement (EULA)*

What you can and cannot do with the software – the software company covers their backside here.

*EULA*

See *End User License Agreement (EULA)*

## F

*Folder*

A folder allows you to organise files and often is represented by an image of a cardboard folder. To view the files in a folder, open it.

## G

*Glossary*

A list of words with meanings. This is a glossary

*GNU GPL*

The GNU's *general public license* which many open source titles are released under.

## I

*Install*

To make something available. You install a piece of software so you can run it.

## L

*Linux*

A free Operating System, often more stable than Windows.

*Login*

By logging in you make services available to yourself

*Logoff*

By logging off you ensure that nobody else can use services available to you only

## M

*My Computer*

The window in Microsoft Windows that displays, amongst other things, the drives in your computer

*My Network Places*

The window in Microsoft Windows that displays, amongst other things, the network shares and connections available

## O

*Open source*

The code is available to everyone and can be changed by anyone at will.

## **P**

### *Password*

A secret phrase known only to you. When paired with a username this provides security

### *Port*

To make a program that runs on one platform run on another.

### *Print*

If you print something your printer outputs it to paper – you get a hard copy

### *Python*

Python is an interpreted script language.

## **Q**

### *Quickstart*

A feature of Microsoft Windows that contains a short collection of icons. By clicking one of the icons a program is launched. The quickstart is often found next to the start button.

## **R**

### *Reply*

To send an email back to the sender of the email you received

### *Return*

Also known as the enter key. Creates a new line or makes things happen.

### *Requester*

A box that appears asking for a decision or additional information

### *Root*

The administrator user under linux. The god of the computer.

## **S**

### *source code*

Source code is the text that makes up programs. You compile source code to make the program usable.

## **T**

### *transparent*

Invisible, not showing, not seeable

## **U**

### *URL*

Uniform Resource Locator – in short, the website address

### *Username*

A word or phrase that represents you, for example Graham

## **W**

### *Webpage*

A page on a website

### *Website*

A place that holds information on the internet, often referred to by a website address or URL