



[Home](#) › [Image file conversion](#) › [Best free Picture Viewers for Windows](#)

Best free Picture Viewers for Windows

Posted on March 18, 2015 by Angela

More often than not, there are better open source and otherwise free software alternatives to native Windows or Apple products. In this article, we want to have a look at the Windows picture viewers and the alternatives that offer you more and better features.

When browsing the help forums on the internet, you quickly come across some problems with the native Windows 7 and Windows 8 image viewing options. **Windows Image** (or **Photo**) **Viewer** from *Windows 7 and 8* is unable to display animated GIFs, for example, only showing the first frame. The modern **'Photos'** app of *Windows 8* does show animation in most cases, yet the app is set to full screen by default, overlapping all other programs in the background.

Thankfully, many free alternatives allow animation as well as the bypassing of full screen mode.



Image by sean hobson <http://bit.ly/1Es0oOv>

IrfanView

IrfanView is a free image viewer that works on all Windows platforms. Under certain circumstances, the program runs on Linux and Next to displaying images, videos and audio files can be opened as well. The possibility of editing and converting pictures is given in some extend as well.

The following files can be viewed. For an exhaustive list, have a look at [this list](#).

- BMP
- GIF (also animated)
- ICO
- JPEG
- PNG
- PSD (Photoshop file)
- TIFF
- WEBP
- RAW camera files
- PDF
- TXT
- FLASH
- OGG
- MIDI
- MOV
- MPEG
- MP3
- MP4
- WAV

Other interesting features involve:

- Scaling
- Slideshow
- Creation of screensavers
- Creating icons
- Communicate with scanners
- Screenshot options
- Cropping
- Resizing
- Rotating
- Brightness & contrast
- Tint
- Gamma level
- Batch processing
- Image conversion

Furthermore, IrfanView is available in over 20 languages. It allows for several plugins to be installed to advance the features even more, and has a thumbnail function for better picture organization. The most striking feature, however, is the compactness of the program, with the basic version occupying about 1.6 MB only.

Picasa

Picasa is an image viewing and organizing software owned by Google. It's available for Windows from XP up to Windows 7, Mac OS X, and

Linux via Wine.

Edit: However, depending on the color profile of your image, Picasa can hit it's limitations. CMYK pictures are not always supported (errors regarding PSD files saved in CMYK are common).

The following file formats are supported by Picasa. For an exhaustive list click [here](#).

-
- BMP
 - GIF (not animated)
 - JPG
 - PNG
 - PSD (Photoshop files)
 - some RAW camera files
 - TGA
 - TIFF
 - WEBP
 - 3GP
 - AVI
 - MKV
 - MOV
 - MPG
 - MP4
 - WMV
 - MP3
 - WMA

Other features provided are:

-
- File import
 - Tracking
 - Tagging on Google+
 - Keywords
 - Facial recognition
 - Collections
 - Slide shows
 - Timelines
 - Page Layouts
 - Size reduction
 - Color enhancement
 - Red eye reduction
 - Cropping
 - Adding Text

Imagine

The image viewer [Imagine](#) was developed mainly for Windows platforms (up to Windows 8). While the program features some useful features, it's last update unfortunately came out in November 2012.

Files supported include:

-
- BMP
 - GIF (also animated)
 - ICO
 - JPG/JPEG
 - PCD
 - PSD (Photoshop files)
 - RAW camera files
 - TGA
 - TIFF
 - XCF (Gimp files)
 - 7z
 - RAR
 - TAR
 - ZIP

Imagine has very strong support for different kinds of animations. The features provided include the following. An exhaustive list can be seen [here](#).

-
- Extracting frames from animations
 - Transparency
 - Thumbnail browser
 - Batch processing
 - Slide shows
 - Screenshots
 - Exif/IPTC information
 - Creation of animations
 - Rotating
 - Flipping
 - Greyscale
 - Negative
 - Color depth
 - Swap colors
 - Effect filters

The [XnView](#) software is a file manager with support of image viewing. It's available for Windows and it's mobile versions, as well as OS X and Linux.

Numerous image, audio, and video formats are supported by XnView, including:

-
- BMP
 - EPS
 - GIF
 - ICO
 - JPEG
 - PNG
 - PSD
 - RAW camera files
 - TIFF
 - PDF
 - MID
 - MP3
 - WAV

Some of the most common features of XnView are:

-
- Screenshots
 - Slide shows
 - Thumbnails
 - Search for similar graphics
 - Exif/IPTC information
 - Rotating
 - Flipping
 - Cropping
 - Color manipulation
 - Filters & effects
 - Batch processing

FastStone Image Viewer

[FastStone Image Viewer](#) is available for Windows platforms from Windows 98 up to Windows 8. It's an image viewing and organization software with stable releases.

The most common file formats are supported by FastStone Image Viewer, including:

-
- BMP
 - GIF (also animated)
 - ICO
 - JPEG
 - PNG
 - RAW camera files
 - TGA
 - TIFF

Among others, the program offers the following features:

-
- Thumbnails
 - Slide shows (including music and effects)
 - Exif information
 - Side-by-side image comparison
 - Rotation
 - Cropping
 - Color correction
 - Red eye removal
 - Clone Brush
 - Curves
 - Masks

A more exhaustive list of supported file types and features can be seen on the [FastStone Homepage](#).

Sometimes, however, you may encounter an image file none of these free alternatives are able to open. In such cases, you can still convert the file in question quickly and easily with an [online image file converter](#).

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