

Gimp 2

Cropping – and a note about Exporting...

Cropping is an invaluable way of improving the composition of an image – or to ‘home-in-on’ a particular portion of an image. Gimp has a number of ways to crop an image, I’ll show you what I think is the most adaptable (and simplest!) way to do it... but before that, our usual warning about saving edited images:

Exporting rather than Saving As... By default, Gimp 2.8 saves images in its own .xcf format which can be a little inconvenient if you'd prefer the more 'universal' .jpg format. To get this format, use the **Export** option provided a bit lower down the **File** menu options, making sure that you type **.jpg** after your chosen file name to force Gimp to save your file as a JPEG.

Always save edited images with different filenames to the original. If you don't, your edited version will overwrite your original, which will be lost – something you may regret later! One technique that both preserves an images 'identity' making it easy to see which is an edited version of which original and also allows reviews of multiple edits is as follows;

Original image:	<i>filename</i>	(e.g. Img_3125)
First edit:	<i>filename_a</i>	(e.g. Img_3125a)
Second edit:	<i>filename_b</i>	(e.g. Img_3125b)
Third edit	<i>filename_c</i>	(e.g. Img_3125c)

... and so on.

Image cropping

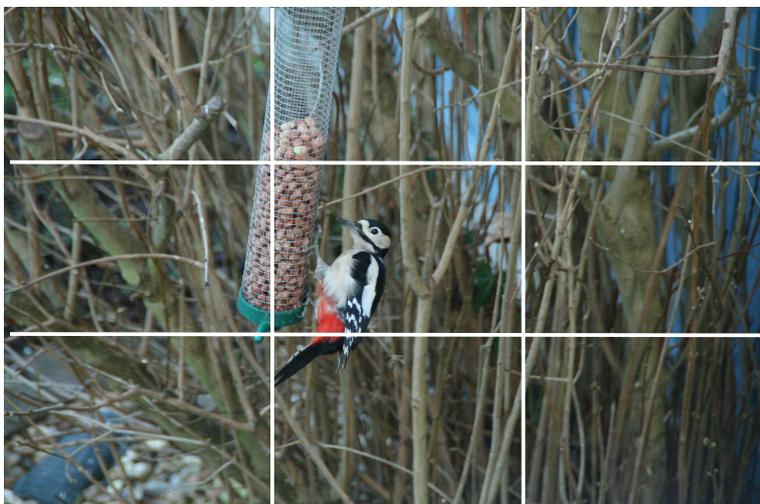
1. Load your chosen image into Gimp in the usual way.
2. Click on the **Rectangle Select Tool** (small dotted rectangle at top, left of the Toolbox).
3. Look at the lower panel of the Toolbox – it shows the options available for the currently selected tool, in this case Rectangle Select.
4. You can use this tool 'straight-from-the-box' so to speak, just position your mouse pointer on the image (it will change to a cross with small square below), **hold down** your left mouse button and drag diagonally. You will see a rectangle 'rubber band' over the image. When you are satisfied with the size, release the mouse button. You now have part of your image **selected** (Note: Gimp's Select menu gives more control over any selection – including **None** to cancel a selection). A *marching ants* rectangle will appear showing your selection.
5. If you want to **move the whole rectangle**, put your pointer inside the rectangle, hold down the left mouse button and drag the rectangle.
6. To **re-proportion** your selection rectangle, put your pointer in the corner of the rectangle – a little square will appear. Now drag (left button) the corner to resize. Similar 'handles' appear at each edge or corner – just pull them in the same way.
7. If you decide that your first attempt has not gone to plan, go to **Select ► None** and start again!
8. To crop your image, so that only that part inside your selection remains:
Image ► Crop to Selection is all that needs to be done.
9. Remember to save your new image with a modified filename as described above.

If you need to crop to a particular **proportion** – maybe you intend to print the final image at 6x4 inches (15x10cm) – you can set Gimp's rectangle selection tool to this proportion as follows...

10. Check the **Fixed:** box which should have **Aspect ratio** in the box next to it.
11. Now adjust the current **ratio**. If you ultimately intend to print your image as, say, 6"x 4" (15x10cm), then the ratio would be 6:4 (or 15:10, 3:2, 1.5:1 or anything that equates to this) for a **landscape image**. For **portrait** simply change the ratio to 4:6 or equivalents. This step forces your editing rectangle to maintain these proportions whatever its actual size.

12. When you repeat step 4 above, the rectangle you create is forced to maintain the proportions set in step 10, irrespective of its actual size. It will contain that part of your image that you want to retain – **everything outside it will be rejected.**
13. Finally use **Image ► Crop to Selection** as before to complete the process.

The impact made by an image can depend so much on the 'point-of-interest' in the image. A key concept that is widely used in professional circles is based on the **rule-of-thirds** which can be illustrated by:



The grid divides the image into thirds, both horizontally and vertically.

The rule-of-thirds simply says that the point of interest in an image should be positioned at one of the intersections of these grids.

[Right] This shows how cropping improves the image, focusing on the important point and removing the clutter. Maximum use has been made of the considerable detail inherent in a modern digital image.



Like all rules, the rule-of-thirds is only a guide – when creative instinct demands something different, then the rule should be ignored. The image shown below could be a good example of the latter:

