Batch-convert high resolution images for web or PowerPoint use

Modern digital cameras take photos at much higher resolution than we normally need for use on the web or in PowerPoint presentations, and previewing high resolution images can be slow, because they sometimes take a long time to appear on screen.

The solution is to make copies of the images at lower resolution, a process called “downsampling”. This is fairly simple with any image editing program, but can be tedious when we have lots of images to downsample.

There’s a very useful program called IrfanView, free for non-commercial use, that’s kind of the Swiss Army knife of image processing software. One of its most useful features is the ability to batch process huge numbers of images. You can set it up once, then downsample a whole folder full of images at once.

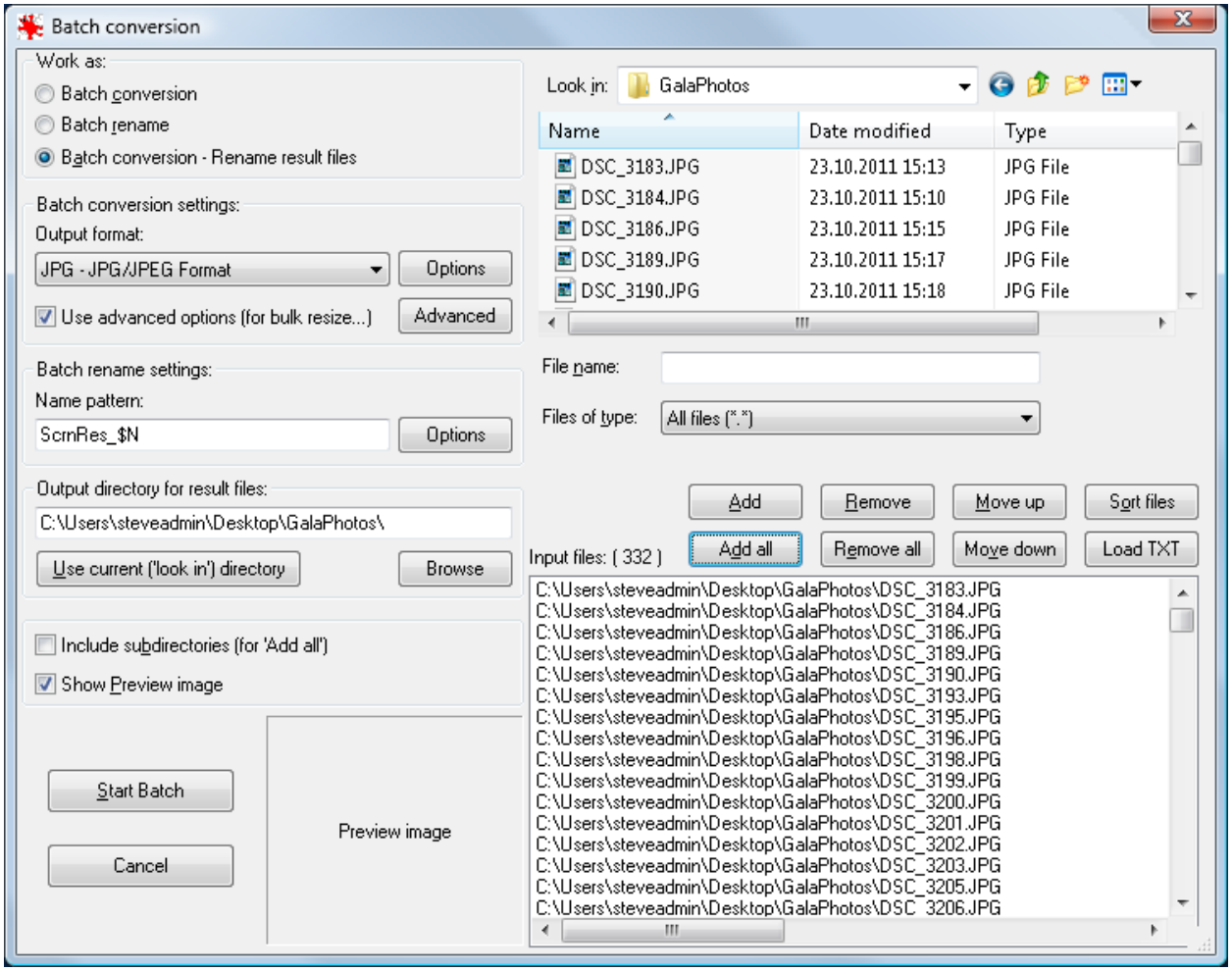
If you don’t already have IrfanView, you can get it at http://www.irfanview.com. Download and install it, then continue reading. We’ll wait right here.

Batch downsampling with IrfanView

The image files should all be in a folder on your hard drive to begin with. Always use COPIES of your original photo files there, just in case you make a mistake.

Start IrfanView.

Choose File | Batch Conversion/Rename (or just press B) . This screen appears (see following page):



Your version may look slightly different, and the pre-selected options may vary. Select the following options:

Under “Work as:” choose “Batch conversion – Rename result files”

Under “Batch conversion settings” choose “JPG – JPG/JPEG Format”

Put a check next to “Use advanced options ….”

We’ll come back to the “Options” and “Advanced” buttons later.

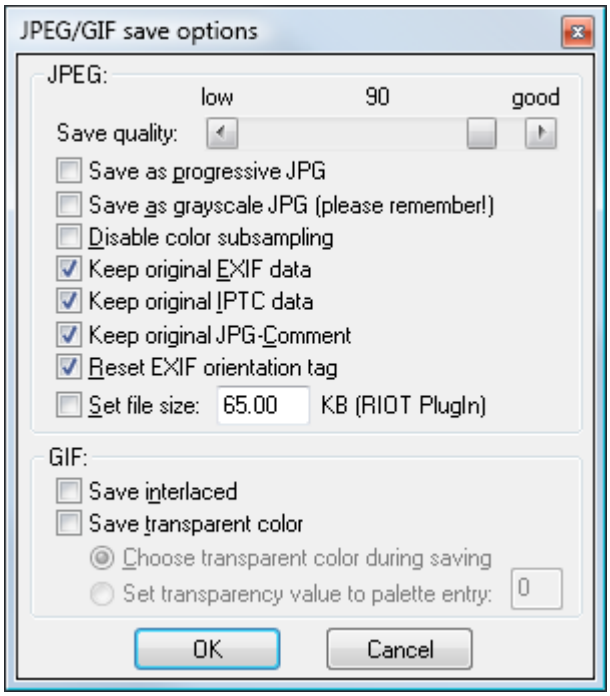
Under “Batch rename settings:” type “ScrnRes_$N” (without the quotes). This tells IrfanView to give the new files the same name as the originals (the $N part) but to tack “ScrnRes_” onto the beginning of the file name so you know that it’s a Screen Resolution version of the original file.

Next to “Look in” browse to the folder where your image files are.

The file names appear in the window below; select the ones you want to convert, then click “Add” or if you want to convert them all, click “Add all”. Here we’ve chosen the GalaPhotos folder on the computer’s desktop.

Under “Output directory for result files:” click “Use current (‘look in’) directory”. This tells IrfanView to put the converted files in the same folder as the original images. If you prefer to put them in some other folder, click “Browse” and choose the folder you want to use.

Now go back to the “Batch conversion settings” section and click “Options”. It should look like this:

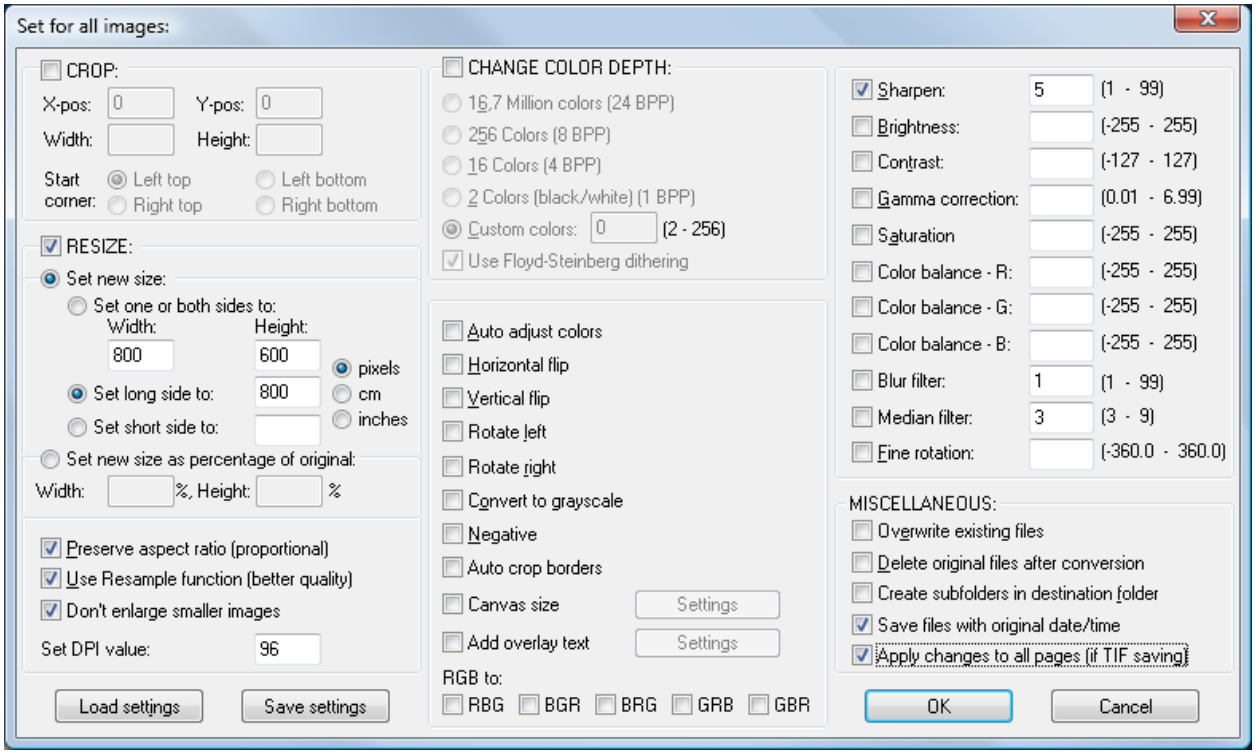


Setting “Save quality” to around 90 will give you considerably smaller files than leaving it at 100, and won’t affect the quality badly. You may want to experiment with small batches of representative images to see if other settings work better for you. For Web use, the goal is to have the smallest possible files with the best quality.

The other checkmarked options will preserve any comments or other information your digital camera has included with the images. For most purposes, this isn’t critical but it’s handy.

Click OK when you’re done with this dialog box.

Again in the “Batch conversion settings” section, click “Advanced” to get a dialog box that looks like this:



Match the settings shown here.

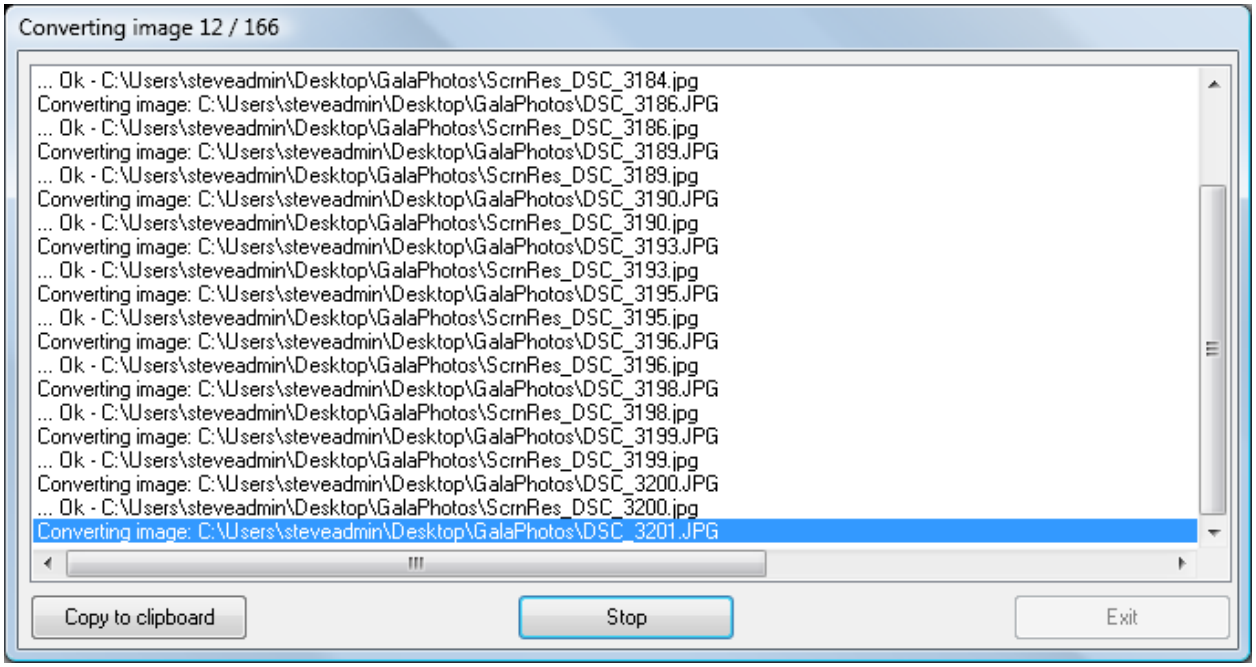
Here we've set things up so that IrfanView makes the downsampled images 800 pixels on the long side. This will give you an 800x600 image for most digital photos. You may want to choose a smaller size if you'll use the images in a blog or on a web page, or a larger size, perhaps 1200 pixels, for use full screen in PowerPoint presentations.

Be certain that there are no checkmarks under "MISCELLANEOUS" next to "Overwrite existing files" and "Delete original files after conversion". That way you won't accidentally erase your original files (but you STILL should work only on COPIES of your originals, just in case.)

Once you've set the dialog box up exactly as above, you may want to click "Save Settings" and save the settings to a file named "ScreenResolution" or something like that. Then all you need to do later is click "Load Settings" and choose the file when you need to repeat this process with a new batch of files.

Click "OK" to return to the main IrfanView batch conversion dialog box.

And … the moment we've all been waiting for … click "Start Batch". And sit back to watch the magic as IrfanView does all of your conversions for you.



Notice that it tells you in the title bar of the progress dialog box which image it's working on and how many total there are to do.