

Preparing and uploading image files to DS Colourlabs for printing

Basingstoke Camera Club wants to encourage more members to print your work and enter print competitions. We have been working to remove perceived barriers to creating prints – supplying mount materials and loaning mount cutters, running print surgeries and providing advice and guidance on obtaining the prints themselves. And, of course we can even print the competition labels for you too!

You may prefer to print your own work but many will turn to print services. There are a number to choose from but, as a club, we tend to promote DS ColourLabs (DScolourlabs.co.uk) as they offer professional quality at affordable prices.

The rest of this document serves as a guide to preparing images in the correct format to upload to DS ColourLabs for printing. This is based on experience plus recently received guidance from DSCL which actually contradicts some of the information on their website!

This guide is based on using Lightroom Classic to make image adjustments and creating the required jpeg file for upload but of course, other applications can also be used.

General size requirements for an image

Our competition rules state that the print with mount should be a maximum size of 50x40cm. We encourage you to only use mounts of 50x40cm as this will allow us to use your work in external competitions, where this size is mandated, and in our permanent and temporary exhibitions, where we use 50x40cm frames.

The picture itself should sit comfortably within these dimensions but often, less is more. Leave a reasonable space around the print, at least 5cm and remember that an A4 print in a 50x40 mount can create quite an impact.

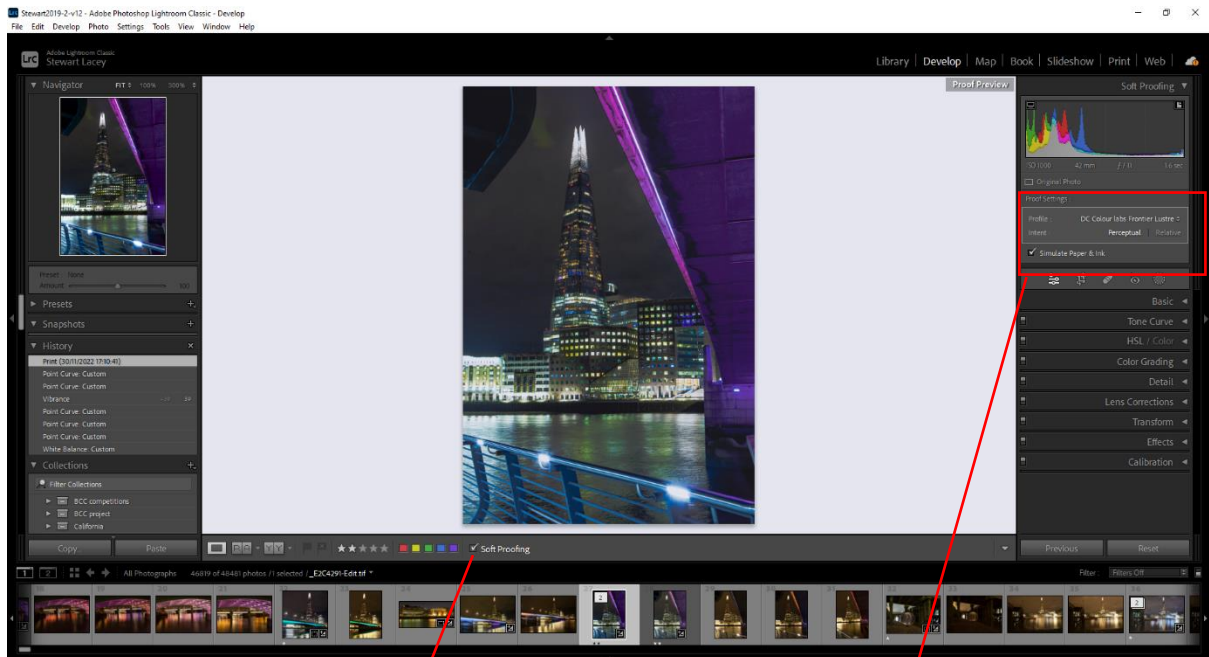
When you have worked out how large you want the print to be in the mount, find the next largest print size offered by DSCL

To keep things simple, we will consider an A3 print which, with appropriate margins (white border) around it, will fit nicely in the prescribed mount. Don't be tempted to go for borderless prints. The printing process that DSCL uses will lose around 2mm on each edge and you will lose more of the image when you mount it.

Softproofing for printing

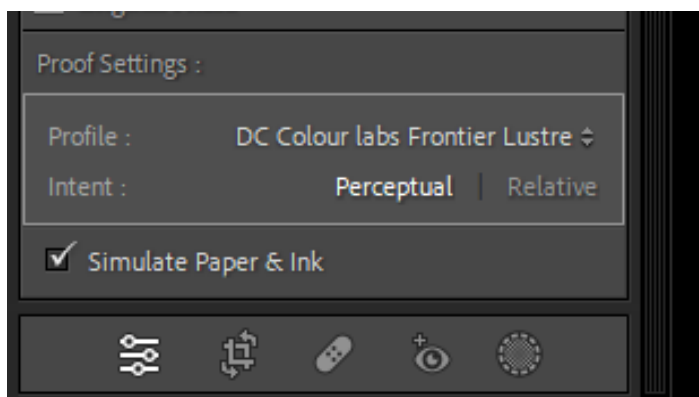
You have prepared an image that you want to print and it looks just right on your (colour profiled) screen. However, what will it look like when it is printed on your chosen paper? The gamut of colours that can be created by the combination of paper and inks will be different from what is viewed on the screen.

In the Develop module of Lightroom there is a feature called Soft Proofing. This is enabled by ticking a box in the toolbar below the image. If you can't see the toolbar, press T on the keyboard. You will see the background change colour (by default it is paper white) and you will probably notice the tones in your image change too. In the menus on the right of the image you will see "proof settings"



Soft Proof Checkbox

Proof settings



For soft proofing we need to select the correct profile for the paper we wish to use, in this case Lustre. You can download the appropriate profile from the DSCL website (<https://dscourlabs.co.uk/about/preparing-your-files>)

Paper Profiles



Installing Paper Profiles

Windows: Right-click the downloaded ICC profile and select 'Install Profile' from the menu.

Mac: Copy the ICC profiles to the 'Profiles' folder located in Finder / Go / Computer / [Your HD] / Library / ColorSync / Profiles

Please note: We do not do any sharpening or colour correction to your file.

Once the profile is installed you can select it from the dropdown menu. If it is not in the list, select other and check the box next to the appropriate file.

Note that the “simulate paper and ink” box should be checked. The “intent” item defines how out of gamut colours are handled. There is some debate over which gives the best results but “relative” only adjusts colours that are out of gamut, whereas perceptual can affect all colour values.. Our recommendation would be to use “Relative”.

If what you now see on the screen is no longer to your liking you can now make appropriate adjustments – maybe increase contrast or change the tonality. You should work on a virtual copy so that you don’t change the original image that you carefully perfected for the screen.

Create the jpeg for uploading

In Lightroom we use the Print module to create the print file.

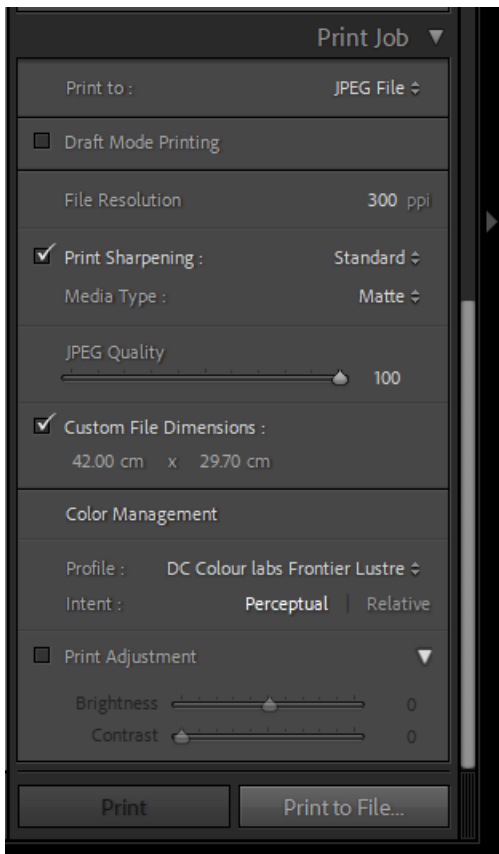
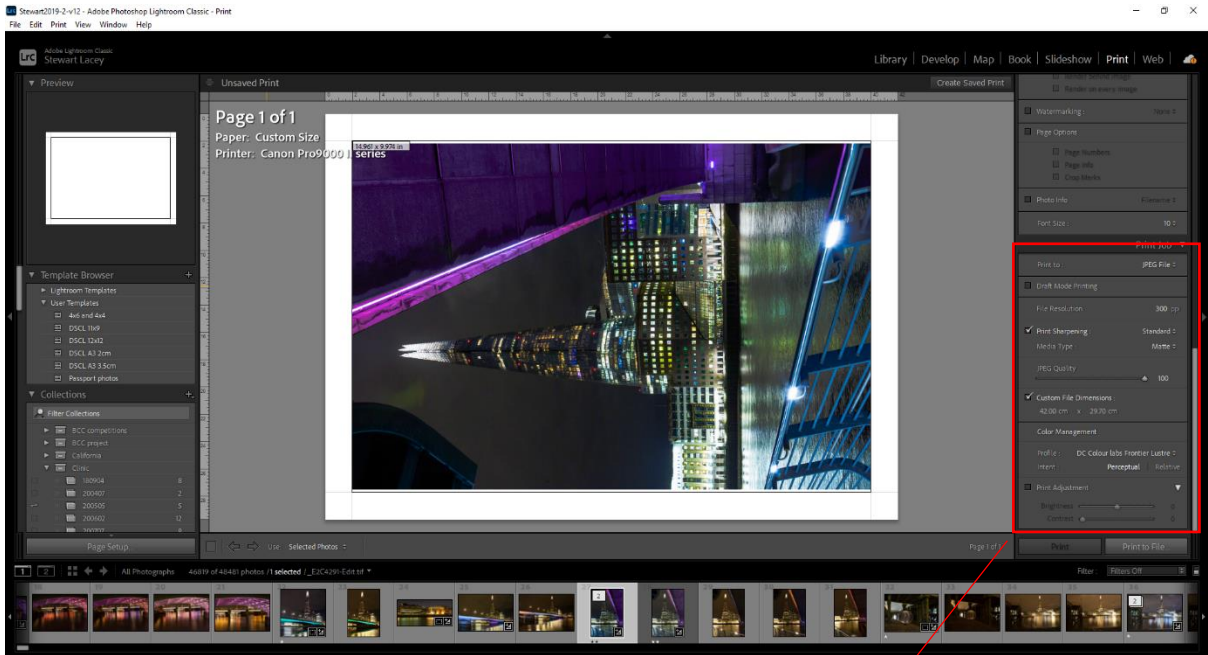
DSCL requires you to upload a jpeg file with a pixel pitch of 300ppi (pixels per inch). The overall size of the image needs to match the size of the paper that you have selected.

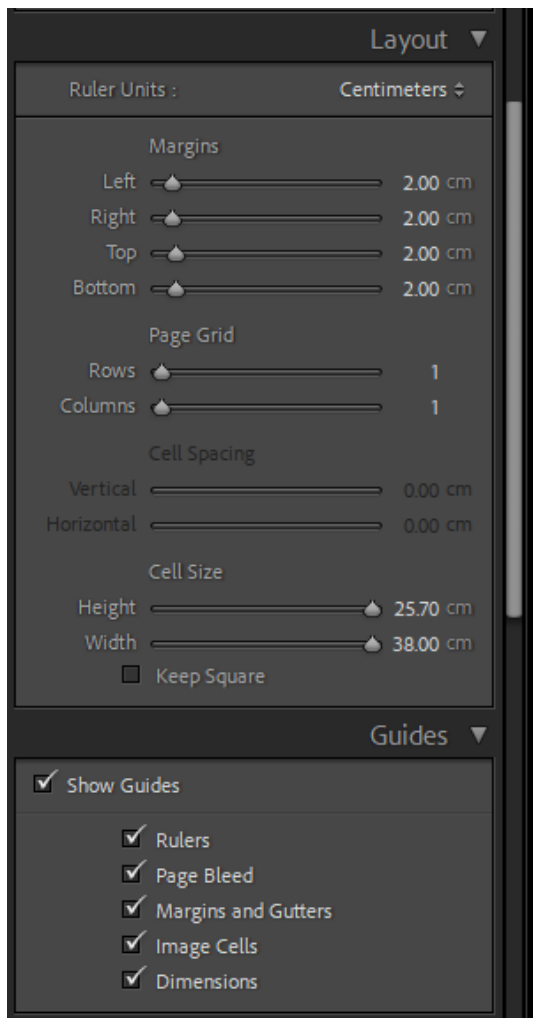
Assume we have decided to request an A3 print the final image size at 300ppi needs to be 16.54x11.69 inches (42x29.7cm). Note, this is not standard A3 size and the DSCL website states that the final print needs to be trimmed to A3.

The jpeg image needs to be created with the correct colour profile for the paper you have selected, ie the same one you used for softproofing. Ignore the instruction on their website that states that you should select sRGB!!!

In the print module menu on the right hand side you will find a section called “print job”. By default the first item will be set to print to: printer. Select JPEG file. You will then see a different set of options appear.

Ensure that the file resolution is set to 300ppi. Also set JPEG quality to 100%. Check the custom file dimensions box and enter the dimensions of the print you are ordering. So for A3 (untrimmed) this will be 42 x 29.7cm. In the colour management section select the profile for the paper you are requesting. Select the intent (relative recommended). Do not check print adjustment as you made your adjustments at the soft proofing stage.





We have “created” an A3 canvas on which to print. Now we want to define how big the image needs to be on that canvas. As mentioned before, we want to create a white border around the image which can be trimmed to fit the mount, rather than losing any part of the image to printing or mounting.

In the layout menu we can either define margins around the image or define the height and width of a cell into which the image will fit. Here we have defined a 2cm margin all around the image which gives a maximum cell size of 25.7x38cm. Alternatively, you can set the margins to zero and define the cell size explicitly. Both approaches are equivalent.

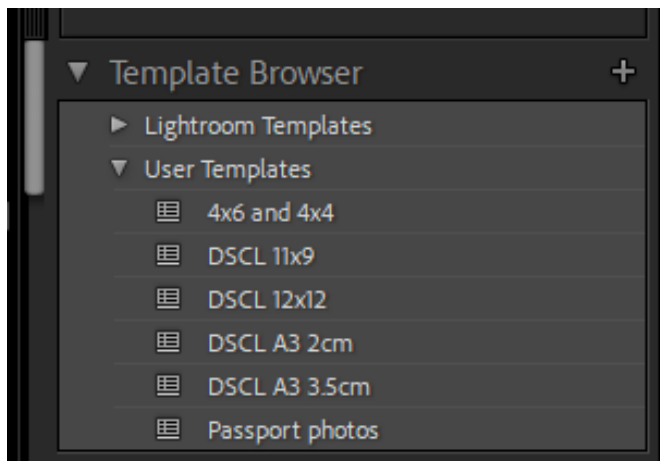
In the image settings section, check “rotate to fit”, if necessary but ensure that “zoom to fill” is left unchecked or you may lose part of your image.

In the “Guides” menu, if you check the “Dimensions” box, you will see the final size of the image displayed in its top LH corner. It is good to check these values to make sure that the print will fit your mount as expected.

When you are happy with all these settings you can click “print to file” and choose a name and location for your jpeg. It is good practice to include the print size and paper in the filename as a reference. Eg Shard A3 lustre.jpg.

All of these settings may seem a bit complex to set up so you can create a user template.

On the left hand side you will find a section called “Template Browser”. Click the + sign and enter a name and folder for the template. By default it is put into user templates but you could create a separate folder, say for DSCL templates. In this example you will see separate templates for A3 with 2cm and 3.5cm margins, 12x12 (inches), which is a good size for square prints in a 50x40cm mount and 11x9, which is another of the many paper sizes that DSCL offer

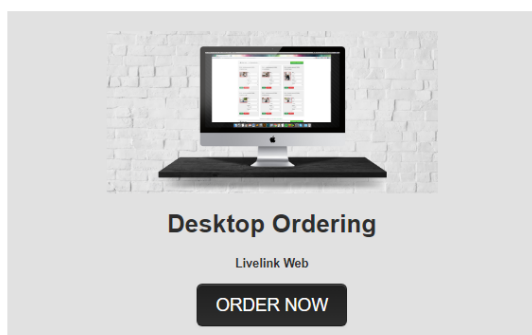


The next time you want to create a print, simply click on the appropriate template and make any adjustments that may be appropriate.

Uploading to DSCL

On the DSCL website select prints and, from the drop down menu, select standard photographic prints. You will be presented with 2 uploaders!

High Quality Photo Printing & Digital Photo Printing UK



The left one says “desktop ordering” (livelink web) and the right one says “mobile ordering” (Dakis web). Ignore the one on the left – it is obsolete! Dakis is actually multi-platform and, despite its name, runs from any browser on a PC/ Mac. More importantly, DSCL have informed us that the Livelink app can strip the printer profile from the uploaded file, meaning that the colours may not be rendered as intended.

In Dakis, you simply drag the images that you want to upload. Once uploaded, click on each image in turn to define the print size and paper type. Of course, this has to match the size and profile that you used to create the file!

You do not need to touch the centre, shrink to fit or rotate buttons.

Once you are happy with your uploaded images, click done and proceed to review and order. On this screen you will see 2 photo border options. Always select “no border” as you have already defined your border. Now you can add to cart and proceed to checkout in the normal fashion and, hopefully, in a few days you will receive some prints for us all to enjoy!