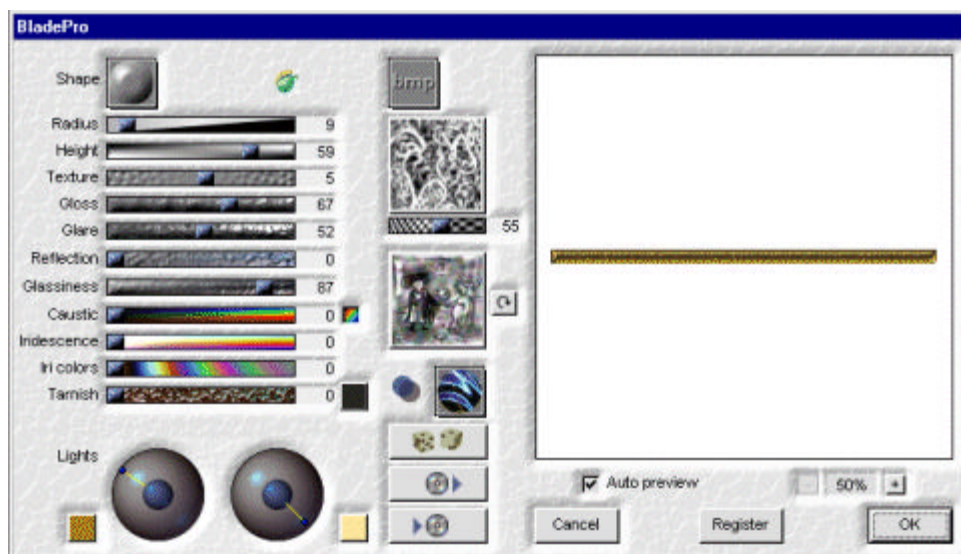


Blade Pro

Well folks...it's finally here. A beveling plugin that works as well as Eye Candy and only costs \$25.00! Now we have the best of all worlds. With Paint Shop Pro and Blade Pro, what more could we ask for? I am writing this tutorial on Blade Pro because, even though it is a good beveling program, it is pretty confusing to learn how to use it. I have struggled for quite some time to grasp how it works and thought I would share that knowledge and some presets to get you going.

Note: Some of the text in this tutorial is taken from the Help document that accompanies Blade Pro with further explanations provided by me. I didn't see any reason to "reinvent the wheel" and thought that since this is basically an advertisement for their program, they won't mind my using their text.

Blade Pro Control Panel



The above is the menu interface for the program. The following is an explanation of the choices.

Shape: Choose the shape of the bevel from this popup menu. Choose from straight, curved, up-and-down, and doubled forms. Try different shapes on your text. You can come up with some pretty amazing results.



Radius: The width, in pixels, of the beveled edge. If this is more than half the width of the widest part of the selection, no area will be left unbeveled. The lower the setting the lower the bevel and vice versa. It is kind of tricky to get small bevels since the slider wants to jump quickly rather than gradually. Takes some practice to master

Height: Larger values here give the bevel a steeper appearance. Positive values cause the selection to rise out of its background, and negative values make it sink in. This actually changes the direction of the light. Positive numbers make the light from the top left and negative numbers from the bottom right. Negative numbers give a

"cutout" effect.

Texture: The slider specifies the amount of texturing, if any. Positive values make the texture rise out of the bevel, negative ones make it sink in.

Gloss: Controls the shininess. Zero gives a chalky appearance; higher numbers are glossier. When you have a basic bevel preset, adding gloss makes the beveled parts show up better and makes your bevel look pretty much like it would look with Eye Candy's Inner Bevel Filter. The bevel on the left below was made with Blade Pro with my "Bevel_Shiny" preset (available in the zip file of presets below) and the one on the right with Eye Candy. One difference between using the two filters is that Blade Pro makes the color a lot lighter. So, to compensate for this, make your original color a couple of shades darker to start with.



Glare: Controls the size of the glossy highlight.

Reflection: Controls how much the selection reflects the Environment graphic. If you don't want any reflection at all, turn this slider down to zero.

Glassiness: Gives the selection a glassy rather than opaque appearance. The color of the original image becomes the color of the glass. Note: As you move the slider to the right on this selection, it makes the color glassier but it also makes the color much darker. So if you are working on a shiny button, you want to start with a light version of the final color you are after.

Caustic: For glassy selections, this slider controls the brightness of the caustic highlight that appears opposite the light source. The tiny square just to the right of the slider lets you choose prismatic or white caustics. I haven't been able to determine that this one does anything at all. Whenever I use this slider, there is really no difference from far left to far right.

Iridescence: Controls the strength of iridescent coloration, and Iri colors controls the choice of colors.

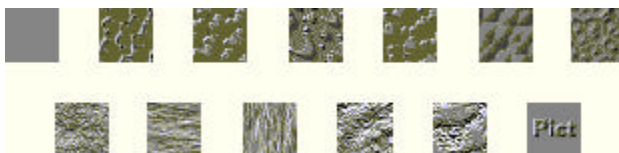
Together, these sliders reproduce the effect that gives soap bubbles their colors: if light is reflected from two surfaces separated by a very thin, transparent layer, interference colors will appear. You can use the combination of these two sliders to alter the color of your graphic dramatically. Play with them, it's a lot of fun!

Tarnish: puts dull, matte color in the concave parts of the surface. The color-button just to the right of the slider lets you change the tarnish color. Tarnish needs a texture to work on so if your texture is blank, you won't see any change.

The light angle controls are the two grey spheres. To change the placement of a light, drag the small blue dot to a new position. Best results come from placing the light somewhere in the upper half of the ball.

To the left and to the right are two color-buttons for changing the lights' colors. If you want to turn a light completely off, set its color to black. You can come up with some pretty neat effects by changing the colors of the lights. Just keep in mind that one light should be a light color and one a dark to get the reflections necessary for a bevel.

Texture popup menu: Choose the texture you want. The first item is 'no texture'; the next eleven items are built-in textures; and the last item is the custom texture.



You can use any greyscale BMP file as a custom texture. To do this, select the custom texture item from the popup menu, and use the file browser you'll then see to choose a picture. BladePro will load the picture and use it as a

texture. You already have a lot of potential new textures in your Paint Shop Pro "Papers" folder. All you need to do is to copy these "tex" files to your BladePro directory and then rename them all to "bmp".

Texture Files: are "height fields" and describe the shape of a surface: black is low, white is high, grey is in between. The slider under the texture square controls the frequency and height of the texture. To the left increases frequency and to the right decreases frequency (thereby making the texture larger). BladePro comes with some texture files in its 'environments and textures' folder, and you can make your own. They can be as large as 256 by 256 pixels (larger ones will be squeezed to fit) and the right edge should wrap seamlessly around to the left, and the top to the bottom (in other words, make it a "seamless" tile). You can make your own textures, just be sure to save them as a "bmp" file. Or, you can create interesting textures by taking a premade seamless tile and making it greyscale, then saving as a "bmp". Experiment!

Environment Files: Below the Texture Panel is the "Environment" files. When Reflection is on, BladePro will produce mirrorlike reflections of the environment graphic. Just click on the graphic and you can load any BMP file as an environment (these should be color, not black and white). You can find several samples in the 'environments and textures' folder that came with BladePro or you can make your own from any photograph. Keep in mind that the program uses all the graphic so if you have something like a sunset you want to make into an environment file, you might want to just crop out the light parts of the sunset. If you don't want your selection to be reflective, turn the reflection slider down to zero.

Some of the example environments, like 'gold', appear to contain their own light source coming from the top left. If that conflicts with your design plan, you can spin the environment with - amazingly enough - the Environment spinner button, so that it better matches the rest of the lighting. This button is the one with the little curly arrow on it.

Glue Mode: popup. This controls how BladePro merges its graphics with the original image. Most of the time you'll want to use Normal, but other modes can be good for special effects. If you're an advanced Photoshop user, you can use the Tarnish and Caustic modes to isolate just those components of the image so you can composite them by hand.

Randomizer: Click it and you'll get random new settings, which is useful for creating new effects or learning how the presets work. If you set the Texture to "none" and have the "reflection" slider at "0" you can see how the different settings work better than if you have a texture or environment set.

Load Preset: BladePro comes with about a hundred presets, which are prefab settings for making particular effects. To use one, click the Load button, and choose any preset file. Since most of the presets that come with Blade Pro are way too wild for my taste, I made a backup copy of them then deleted the presets I would never use from the "Environments and Textures" folder. Since you will undoubtedly be saving your own new presets, deleting the presets you probably won't use will make finding your new presets much easier.

Save Preset: Once you have a combination that you like, you can save it as a "preset". Be careful when you click on this button, though. If you accidentally choose a name you already have as a preset, the program will save over the old preset without prompting you that you are doing this. Exchanging presets has become a new passion for PSP enthusiasts! There is a listing of web sites with BladePro presets at the bottom of this tutorial.

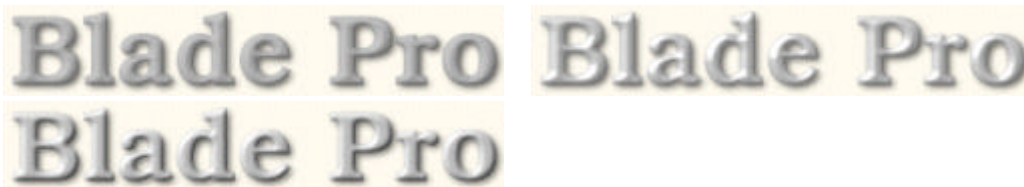
Blade Pro Tips

Blade Pro Setup: Your first instinct will be to install Blade Pro in your Paint Shop Pro Plugins directory. This is a good place for the "8bf" file (this is the file that runs the program) but this is not a good place for your "environments and textures" file. The reason for this is that Blade Pro will default to the last directory you had open each time you use it! I was constantly having to change the directory path to "Program Files/Paint Shop Pro 5/Plugins/Environments and Textures" every time I happened to open a new graphic from a new folder in Paint Shop Pro. So, I placed all my presets and bmp files in a folder called "Blade Pro" at my root directory. Now I just go to my "C" directory, then to the "Blade Pro" directory. Saves a lot of wear and tear on the nerves. You can actually make separate directories for different presets, but when you choose that directory, the program sometimes nags at you that Blade Pro can't find your preset and wants you to tell it where the "Environments and Textures" directory is. If you just hit "Cancel" and ignore this message, it usually does your preset for you anyway.

Learning Blade Pro: As I stated at the beginning of this tutorial, I found using Blade Pro to be pretty confusing

when I started using it because all the presets that come with the program are pretty wild. But, when I figured out how to set the program to do a "plain bevel" without all the added bells and whistles, I was then better able to figure out how everything works. What I did was to create a white "bmp" file and named it "blank". I then loaded it into the "Environment" box, set the "Reflection" slider to "0" and set the texture to "None". I then started working on a button shape. This allowed me to see how the various shapes effected the graphic, how the light angles worked and how changing the colors of the lights worked. It also will demonstrate what happens to a texture when you adjust the various sliders.

Your Basic Bevel: There are three presets in my zipped file for a basic bevel. They are "Bevel_Soft" and "Bevel_Shiny" and "Bevel_Flat". The following are samples of these three bevel presets:



As I mentioned before, when you apply the Blade Pro bevel, it tends to lighten the color of your graphic or pattern. To get around this, you can make the "white" light a shade of gray. This will stop the lightening process somewhat. These wood pattern graphics were created with my "Bevel_Shiny" preset. The wood pattern graphic on the left has the light set to white whereas the one on the right has the light set to a light gray.



Presets

The following are examples of some presets I have come up with. They are all in my Presets zip file which you can download by clicking [here](#). All these presets started with a white fill. You can change the colors somewhat by starting out with a colored fill. You can also colorize the metal preset by playing with the Iridescence settings. Note: The Blade Pro header graphic on this page was created with the "Gold_Old" setting.



Following are some buttons I created with Blade Pro:



The first two are the gold_shiny and metal presets. The two wood buttons and the blue button were made with my "button" preset.



Links to Blade Pro Presets

[New Dawn Graphics](#)
[State of Entropy Webgraphics](#)
[The Cherokee's Home Page](#)

