Spot My Difference User Guide

Version 1.1.2

Spot My Difference is a Spot the Difference game that allows use of pairs of photographs edited in graphics software such as Paint Shop Pro or Photoshop. As well as the gameplay mode (with options controlling the number of lives, time limits and multiplayer options), there is a facility to interactively define the differences between pairs of photographs, creating the datafile necessary to use the photographs in the software.

The software is written in Microsoft Visual Basic 5. In addition to the executable file, a number of library files (dll, ocx and tlb) are written to the system by the installation program, along with three wave audio files: correct.wav, wrong.wav and outoftime.wav. These may be replaced by other sound files.

Main Screen
The main screen starts with four buttons displayed:-
- New Game – starts a new game using the currently active settings.

  Pressing the shift key while clicking New Game starts a multi-player game, otherwise a single player game is started.
- Configure… - allows the user to change the pictures used in the game and rules regarding number of lives and time limits. This section of the program can be password protected to prevent access by casual players.

  Pressing the shift key while clicking Configure… allows a playlist (list of picture files) to be selected to override the list of pictures specified in the main Configuration window. The selected playlist remains active for all games until the program is restarted or a different playlist is selected.

  Pressing the Ctrl key while clicking Configure… allows playlists to be created or edited.
- Hi Scores – lists the highest ten scores since installation or since the high scores were last reset. In each case, the player's name, number of differences found, number of pictures solved, date, time taken and whether the game was running in multiplayer mode are shown. A button is provided to reset the high scores (a password can be required to reset the scores).
- Learn… - allows differences between pairs of photographs to be defined or modified. This section of the program can be password protected to prevent access by casual players.

Learn Mode
Clicking Learn… on the main screen allows pairs of graphics files (gif, jpeg, Windows bitmap, or Windows Metafile) to be set up for use with the software. You may be prompted for a password to access this feature – see Configuration Options below.

It is recommended that when the graphics files are edited they are resized to the aspect ratio used by the program. This aspect ratio is displayed by clicking the Aspect Check button. For example, if this returns the number 1.026:1 and your image is 800 pixels wide, it should be 1.026 x 800 ≈ 821 pixels high.

To start working on a new pair of pictures, click Load Picture 1… and select the file of the graphic to be used in the left hand pane. If a file with the same name but with a "2" just before the file extension exists in the same folder, you will be prompted whether to use this as the second picture.

To add a new marker for a difference, click the Add Difference option, then click in the centre of the difference on either photograph (NB: difference markers cannot overlap one another). Press shift while clicking to create a marker that is twice the default diameter or ctrl to create a marker half the default size.

To move a difference marker, click the Move Difference option, click anywhere within the difference to move, and hold the left mouse button down. The cursor changes to a four-headed arrow. Move this so its centre is at the centre of the difference to be marked then release the left mouse button (NB: difference markers cannot overlap one another).

To delete a difference marker, click the Delete Difference option and click anywhere within the difference to delete.

To define a clue for a difference marker, click the Add or Edit Clues option and click anywhere within the difference. Enter text in the box when prompted. Repeat the procedure to edit any clue that has already been defined.

To change the colour of a difference marker, click the Change Colour option and click anywhere within the difference. This can be useful to improve the contrast. Select the new colour from the colour picker. Press shift while clicking to change the colour of the marker on both photographs or ctrl to change the colour on one photograph only, regardless of the default setting.

To change the size of a difference marker, click either Increase Size or Decrease size and click anywhere within the difference (NB: difference markers cannot overlap one another). Press shift while clicking to change the size by double the default increment or ctrl to change the size by one-half the default increment.

Save any changes by clicking Save…, you will be prompted for a new name for the pictures (used as part of the filename), and a title for the photographs.

Clear the work area to start working on a new pair of photographs by clicking New.

Click Open to load information for photographs that have previously had difference information defined (a set of files must exist, two image files *.* and *2.* and a settings file *.ini)

Click Configure to set various options for learn mode: the default colour for a difference marker, whether colour changes are applied to both pictures by default and the default size and size increment for increase/decrease size, entered as the radius as a percentage of the picture width.

Configuration Options
Clicking Configure… on the main screen allows various options to be set. You may be prompted for a password. If you have forgotten your password, delete the file spotdiff.ini from the installation folder, all configuration options will return to default values and a password will not be required.

The Pictures frame defines the graphics files that will be used in games by default (unless a playlist is loaded). See Learn Mode above for instructions on how to set up your pictures.

- To add one or more pictures, click Add then select one of each pair of pictures to add to the list.
- To delete one or more pictures, select them in the list (select multiple pictures by holding the Ctrl or Shift keys), then click Delete.
- To re-order the pictures in the list, select one or more pictures (select multiple pictures by holding the Ctrl or Shift keys), then click the up or down arrow button.
- To allow the use of clues which have been defined for each of the differences, check the Allow use of clues option.
- To select pictures in random order (rather than in the order shown in the list of pictures in this frame), check the Randomise order of pictures option.

The Time Limits and Lives frame defines how time limits and lives are controlled.

- For the first picture (first round for a multiplayer game) the time limit is as defined in the Initial Time Limit box. An entry of zero removes the time limit altogether.
- For each subsequent picture (single player) or round (multiplayer), the time limit is reduced by the value set in the Reduction Per Picture box. This box is ignored if zero (no time limit) is set as the Initial Time Limit
- A minimum time limit is set in the bottom box, if the time limit would be reduced to less than this, this value is used instead. This box is ignored if zero (no time limit) is set as the Initial Time Limit, or the Reduction Per Picture is set to zero.
- The initial number of lives (wrong guesses allowed) is set in the Number of Lives box. A value of zero can be used to set infinite lives.
- If Reset Lives on new picture is checked, the number of remaining lives is reset on each new picture (single player game) or each round (multiplayer). Note that if a multiplayer game is played over a fixed number of rounds, lives are always reset at the beginning of a new round regardless of this setting.

The Password Protection frame determines whether a password is required to access the Learn Mode, this configuration window and to reset scores. The checkbox selects whether or not a password is required; if so, the password must be entered twice, once in each box.

The Working Folder is the path to the preferred location of picture files. Click the Browse… button to interactively select the folder, or type the full path in the box.

Click OK to validate and save your settings, or Cancel to abandon any changes.

Gameplay
On the main screen, click New Game for a single player game or press Shift and click New Game for a multiplayer game.

Single Player Game
The first pair of pictures is displayed.
- Click anywhere on either photo to mark a difference
- Click Pause to pause the timer, and Resume to restart it.

- Click Clue to display a hint (if available).

The current number of lives, time remaining, differences left to find and score (number of differences found) are displayed.

The game continues until all lives have been used up, no time remains or all differences have been found. In the last case, a message is displayed showing a password that can be copied to the clipboard and used to start a game from this position (if randomise order of pictures is not selected in configuration options). At the end of the game, if a high score has been achieved, the player is prompted to enter their name.

Multiplayer Game
Prior to the game starting, a number of options are set:-
- Whether the game is to be played for a fixed number of rounds (gameplay is always for a fixed number of rounds if there are infinite lives and no time limit). If a fixed number of rounds is selected, the number of rounds is set in the next prompt.
- The number of players
- The name of each player (if a multiplayer game has previously been played this session with the same number of players, there is an option to start an new game using the previously defined names.

Gameplay proceeds as for a single player game, except:-
- A scoreboard is displayed at the end of each round and the end of the game.
- If playing over a fixed number of rounds, each player's number of lives left is reset at the start of each round regardless of the Reset Lives option in the configuration options.
- If not playing over a fixed number of rounds, gameplay continues to the end of a round, when a new round would not have at least two active players (players are knocked out when they make too many wrong guesses or run out of time).

Andrew 23/6/2015

Version History

1.0.0   First release – single player. 20/1/2015
1.1.0   First release – multiplayer. 23/6/2015
1.1.1   Bug fixes for crashes when game started and no pictures in list, and arrow buttons pressed in Configuration with no pictures in list. 23/7/2016
1.1.2   Playlist facility added. 6/5/2020