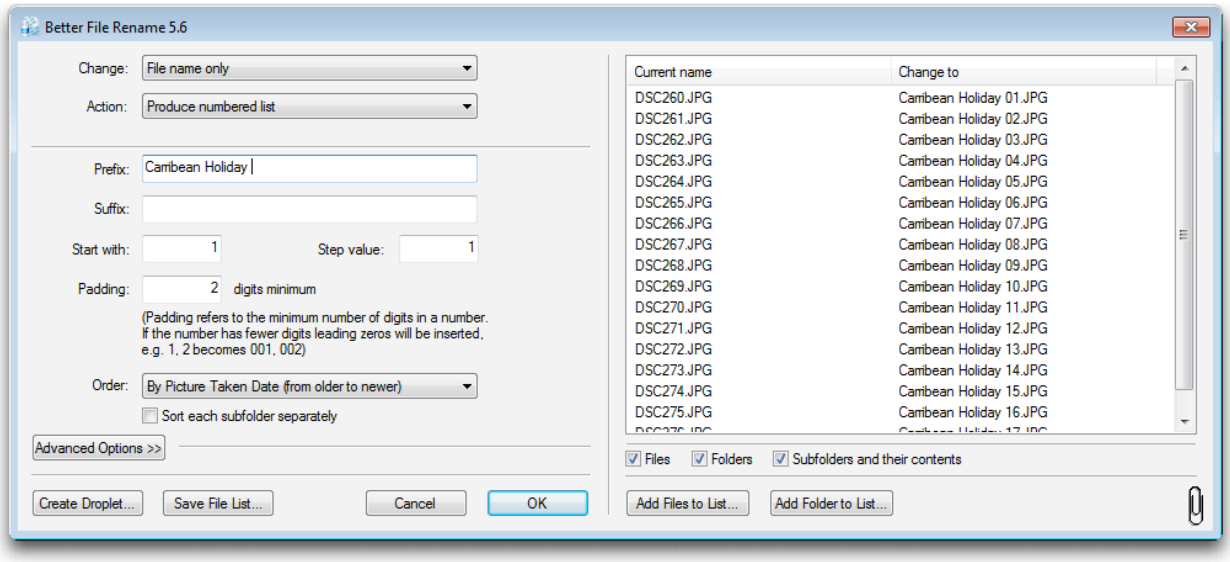

Better File Rename Version 5

User Guide

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Quick Start Guide

Welcome to Better File Rename 5

Better File Rename 5 is a tool that allows you to rename large numbers of files quickly and without fuss.

It is especially interesting for:

- webmasters
- digital camera owners
- graphic arts practitioners
- and anybody else who often works with large collections of files.

The program offers many different renaming features, different ways of selecting the files that need to be renamed, different modes of operation, etc.

This user guide is designed to explain in detail how to use the program to its full potential.

If you have not yet installed the program, download it from the download page, then follow the instructions on installation.

You can use the program in many different ways. Some common usage scenarios include:

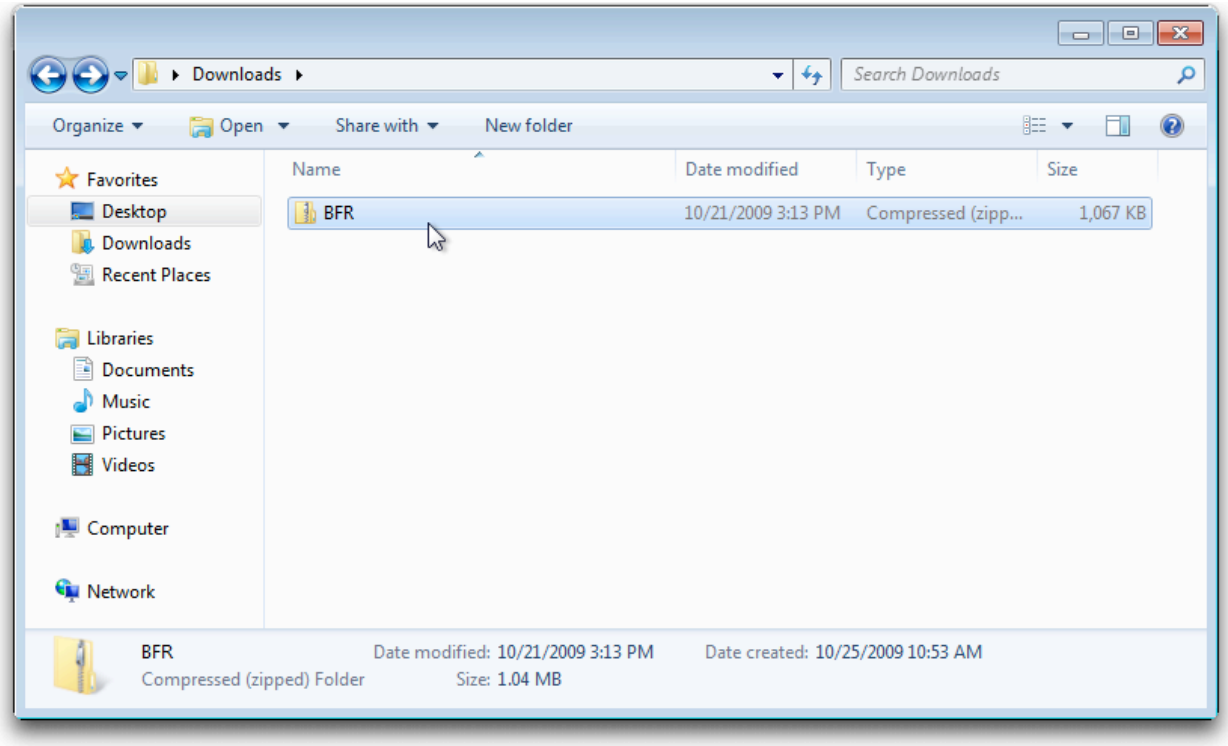
1. launch the program by double-clicking its icon
2. select the files you wish to rename in Windows Explorer
3. drag & drop them into the preview window
4. adjust the settings on the left while previewing them on the right
5. click **OK**
6. check one last time, then confirm

The "**Action:**" menu contains all the different renaming actions that you can apply to the current file names, these include adding, removing, converting or replacing text, sequence numbers, etc..

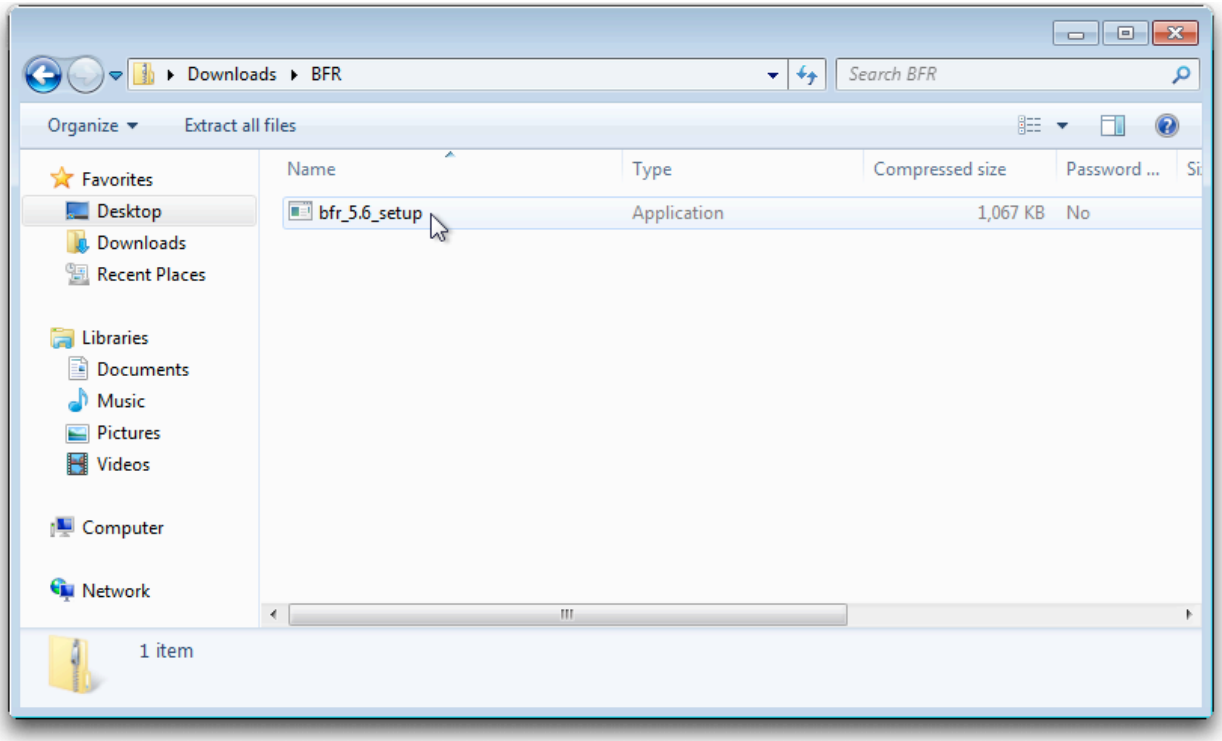
Installation and Uninstallation

Installation

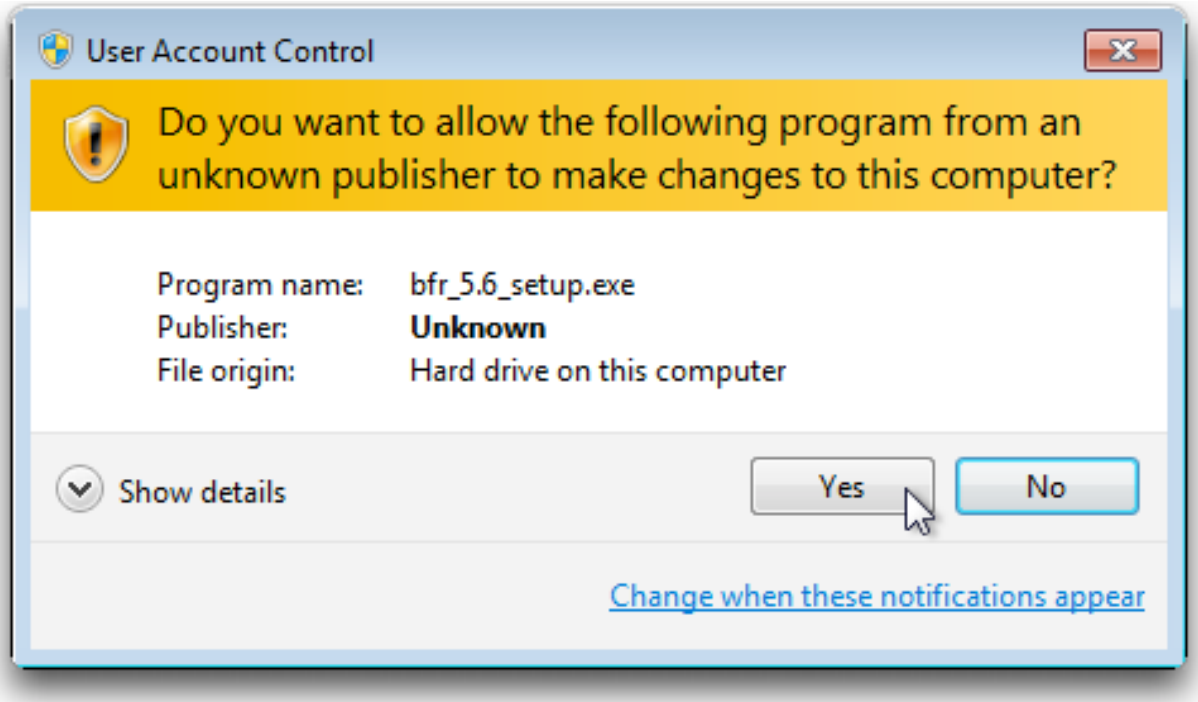
The download is a zip file containing a setup file:



1. Double-click the **BFR zip file** to open it.



2. Double-click the setup file to begin the installation. If you are using Windows Vista or Windows 7, you may be asked if you want to allow the setup program to make changes. Click **Yes**



3. Follow the installation dialogs to complete the installation of Better File Rename. If you are asked to restart your computer, then you will need to do so before using Better File Rename.

Uninstallation

Uninstalling Better File Rename is the same as any other Windows program, although the steps differ slightly depending on which version of Windows you have.

Windows XP Uninstallation

1. Click **Start**, click **Control Panel** and then double-click **Add or Remove Programs**

2. In the **Currently installed programs** box, click **Better File Rename 5** and then click **Remove**.

3. If you are prompted to confirm the removal of the program, click **Yes**

Windows Vista or Windows 7

1. Click the **Start** button , click **Control Panel**, click **Programs**, and then click **Programs and Features**.

2. Select **Better File Rename 5**, and then click **Uninstall**

Upgrading from Version 4

If you already have Better File Rename Version 4 installed on your computer, you may upgrade to version 5 by simply running the version 5 installer. The version 5 installation procedure will upgrade or delete existing version 4 components automatically to avoid problems.

Downgrading to an Earlier Version

If for any reason you want to go back to an older version of Better File Rename

1. Uninstall version 5 using the instructions in the Uninstallation section.
2. Re-run the previous version's installer.

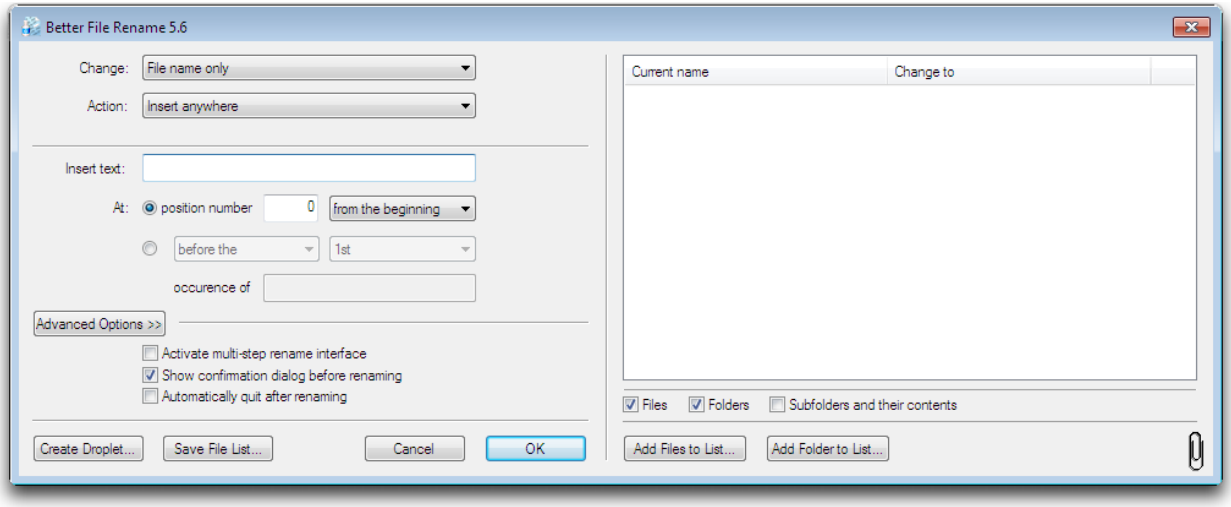
Old versions may be found on the Better File Rename downloads page.

Four Ways to Start The Tool

There are a number of different ways in which you can start Better File Rename to suit your individual needs and preferences.

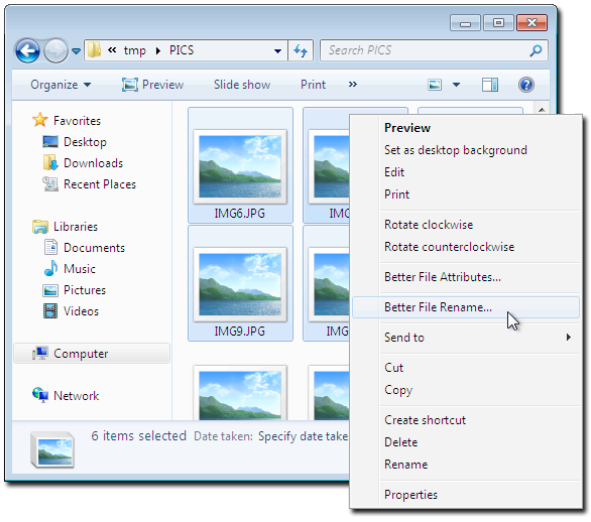
1: As a Standalone Application

Simply double-click the application icon and the dialog below will appear:



2: Using the Windows Explorer Contextual Menu

- In Windows Explorer, select the files you would like to rename
- Right-click on the files, then click **Better File Rename**



3: Using the Shortcut Key Combination

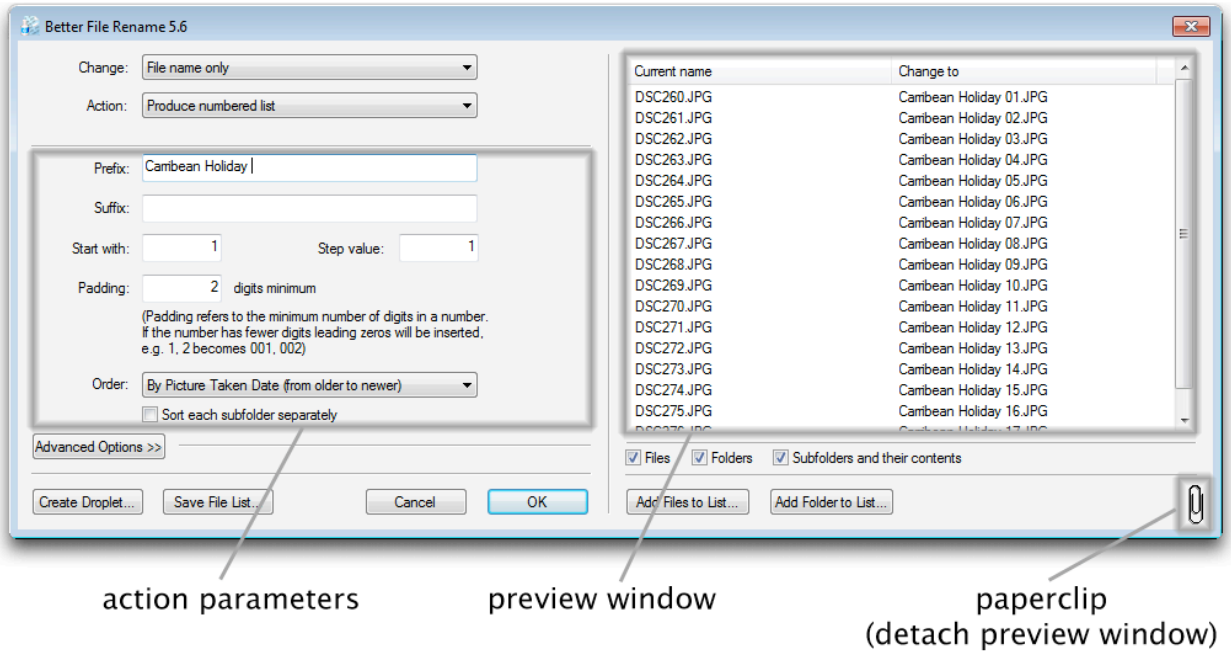
Shortcut keys allow you to quickly open applications that you frequently use. For example, if you frequently need to rename files from Windows Explorer, you launch Better File Rename by pressing the shortcut key combination and then drag the files you want to rename into the program.

See the section on setting and using shortcut keys for more information.

4: Using a Droplet

You can save a set of renaming options to a new independent application called a “droplet.” Dragging files from Windows Explorer onto such a droplet will automatically apply its rename settings to these files.

The Main Dialog



The main dialog of Better File Rename 5 is subdivided into a number of distinct areas:

Change: Popup Menu

The **Change:** popup menu (at the top) allows you to choose which part of the file name is going to be changed:

- **Entire file name** The whole file name including any file extensions (the characters behind the full stop, (e.g. image.gif) will be changed.
- **File name only** Only the file name is going to be changed. The file extensions (e.g. .gif will not be affected)
- **File extension only (including separator)** Only the file extension is changed, the separator (the full dot) is included (e.g. ".gif")
- **File extension only (excluding separator)** Only the file extension is changed, the separator is not included (e.g. "gif")

Action: Popup Menu

The **Action:** popup menu allows you to specify which renaming action will be applied.

As soon as you select a renaming action, its parameters will be displayed below it in the dialog.

Advanced Options

Clicking on the **Advanced Options** disclosure triangle will reveal advanced options discussed on their own respective pages:

- Activate multi-step renaming interface
- Show confirmation dialog before renaming
- Automatically quit after renaming

The Preview Window

To the right of the main dialog, you see the “preview window”.

This shows the “current name” of the file in the left column and previews the “new” file name in the right column. You can customize these columns in the menus.

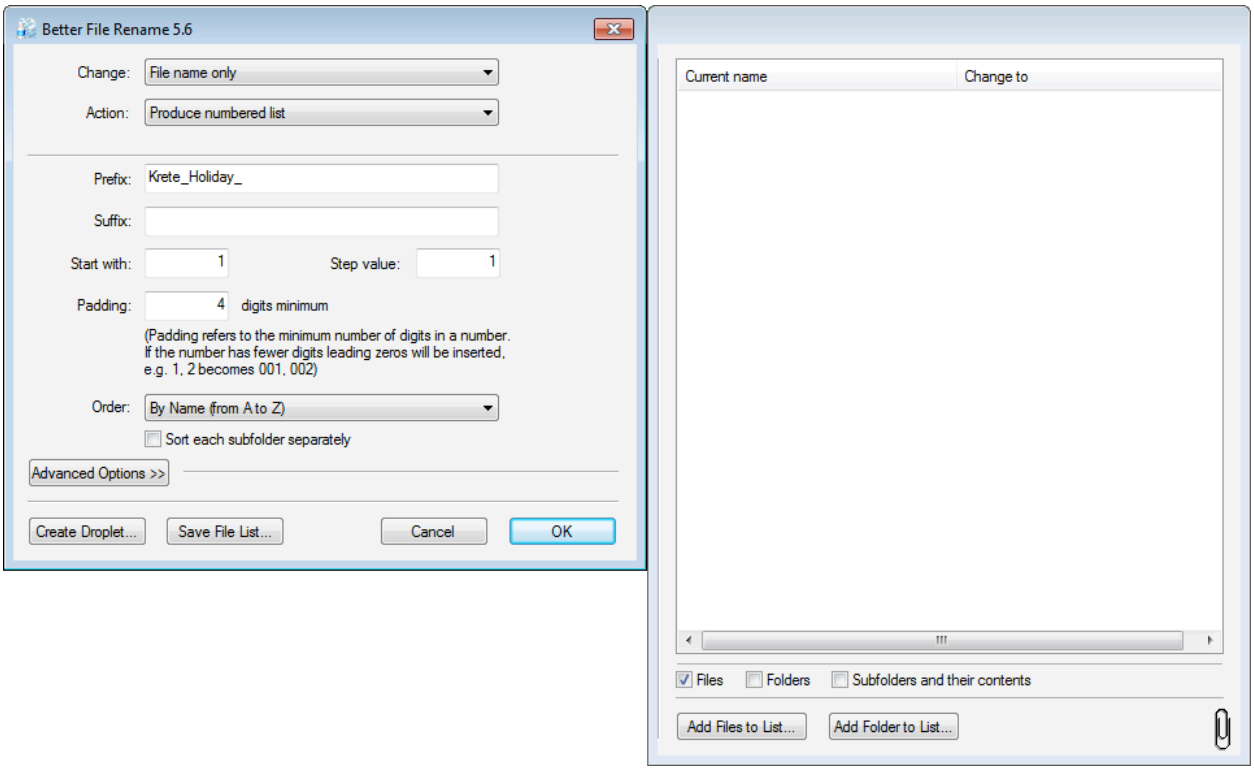
At the bottom of the preview window are three checkboxes, which allow you to rename files and folders separately and to include or exclude files in subfolders:

- **Files** All the selected files will be renamed. This setting does not affect the selected folders.
- **Folders** All the selected folders will be renamed. This setting does not affect the selected files.
- **Subfolders and their contents** Better File Rename will process not only the selected files and folders, but will also rename the files and folders inside of all of the selected folders. In other words it will rename everything within the folder hierarchy of the selected folders.

The settings of the three checkboxes can be combined. Ticking all three checkboxes, for instance, means that all files and folders inside of the file hierarchy of all selected folders will be renamed. Unticking the folder checkbox

will mean that only the files inside of the folder hierarchy will be processed, etc..

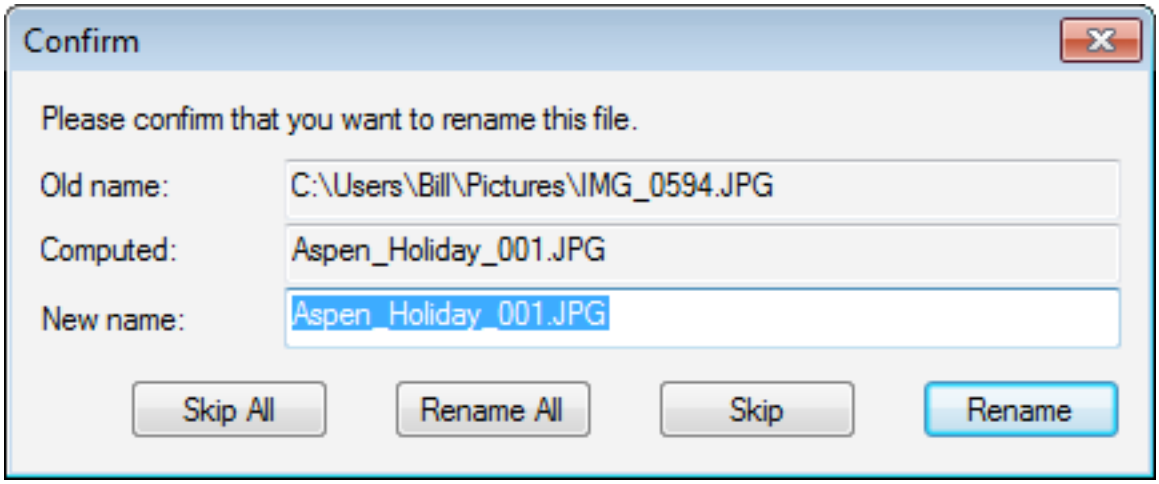
Clicking on the paperclip icon at the bottom right of the preview window allows you to detach the preview window from the main dialog and presents the preview in a separate, re-sizable window.



This may be more convenient for working with large numbers of files or long file names.

The Confirmation Dialog

This dialog is displayed only if the "**Show confirmation dialog before renaming**" is activated in **Advanced Options** section of the main dialog.



The dialog shows the old name, the computed name and the "new" name.

An edit field allows you to manually change the suggested file name.

Clicking on the **Rename** button (or hitting the Enter key) will rename the current file.

Clicking on the **Skip** button (or hitting the Esc key) will skip this file without modifying it.

Clicking on the **Rename All** button will rename all selected files without further interactive prompting.

Clicking on the **Skip All** button will skip all remaining files without renaming them.

Handling File Name Conflicts

What is a File Name Conflict?

There is a very simple rule about folders:

- each file in a folder must have a unique name

This is simply so that the computer and you yourself can distinguish between files without having to look at what's inside.

This also means that when you are renaming files, you can't choose file names that are already taken. This is a "file name conflict".

How does Better File Rename Help Me Deal With File Name Conflicts?

Obviously, the more files you rename, the higher the probability that one or more of the new file names are already taken.

Especially when you choose actions that "truncate" or remove parts of the original file names, you are in danger of getting into trouble, e.g.

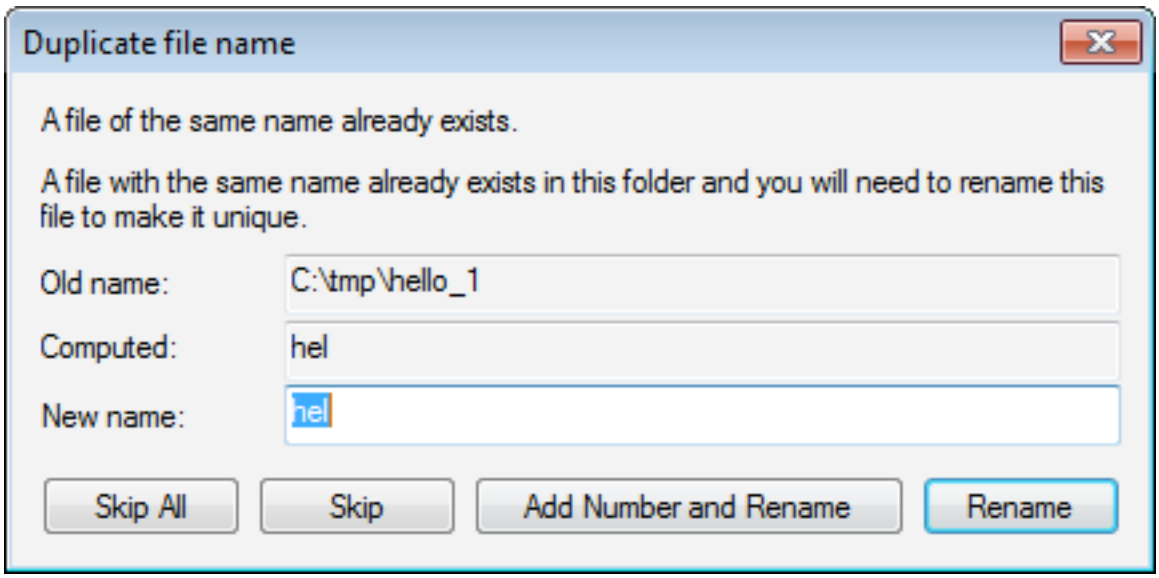
You want to remove the last 4 characters of a file name:

- "hello_1" becomes "hel"
- "hello_2" also becomes "hel"

You now have a file name conflict.

When you click **OK** in the main dialog to begin the renaming process, a dialog will appear if there is a conflict with file names.

If you decide to proceed anyway, the program will let you choose a new name manually when the “problem” files are renamed:

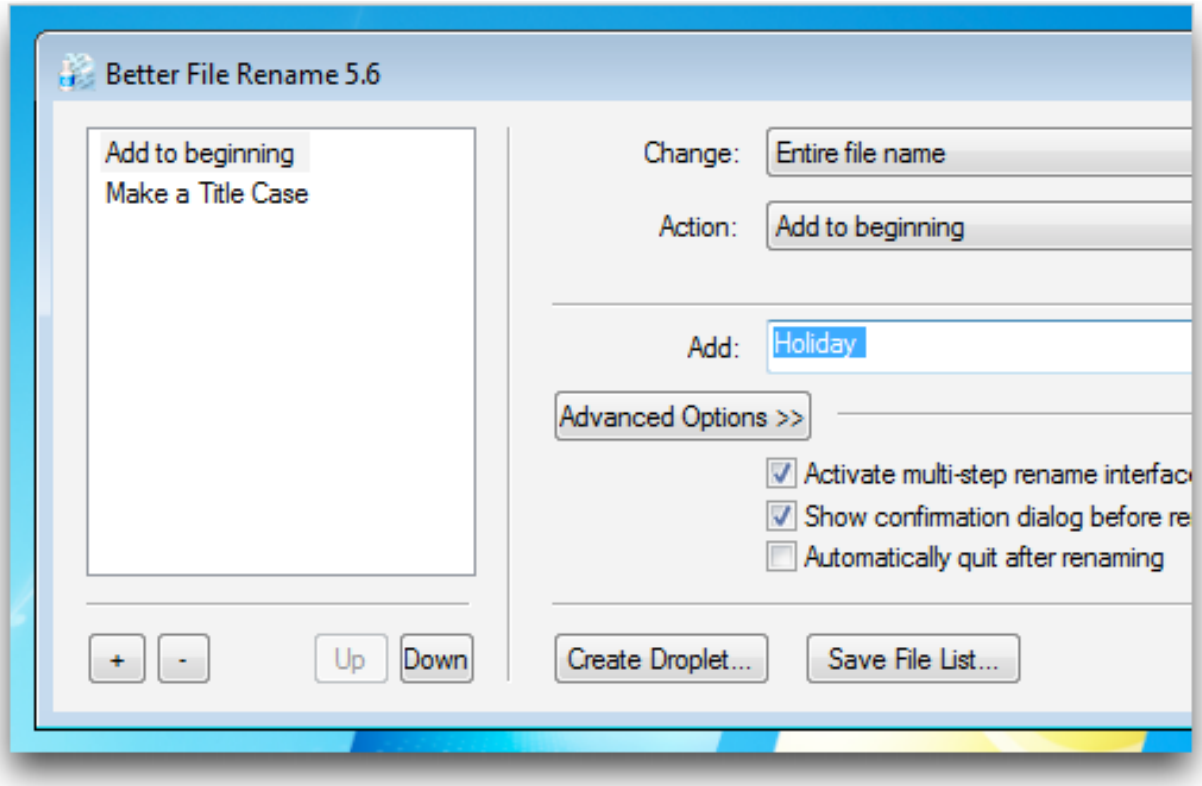


Combining Rename Actions

Overview

Starting with version 5.0, Better File Rename offers you the possibility to combine multiple rename actions in **multi-step renames**.

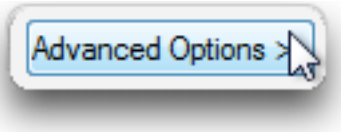
Say for example, you want to add the word “Holiday “ to the front of your picture files **and** make sure that the names are in title case.



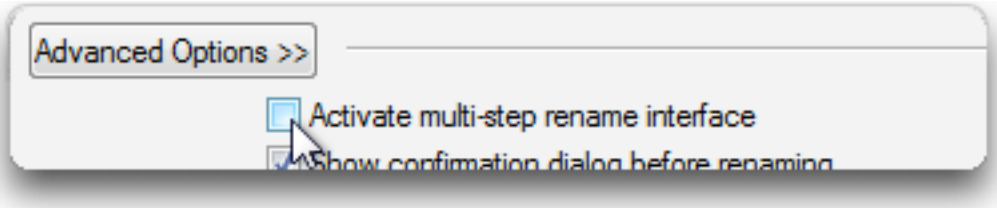
The picture above shows both steps in the **multi-step rename interface.**

Using the Multi-Step Rename Interface

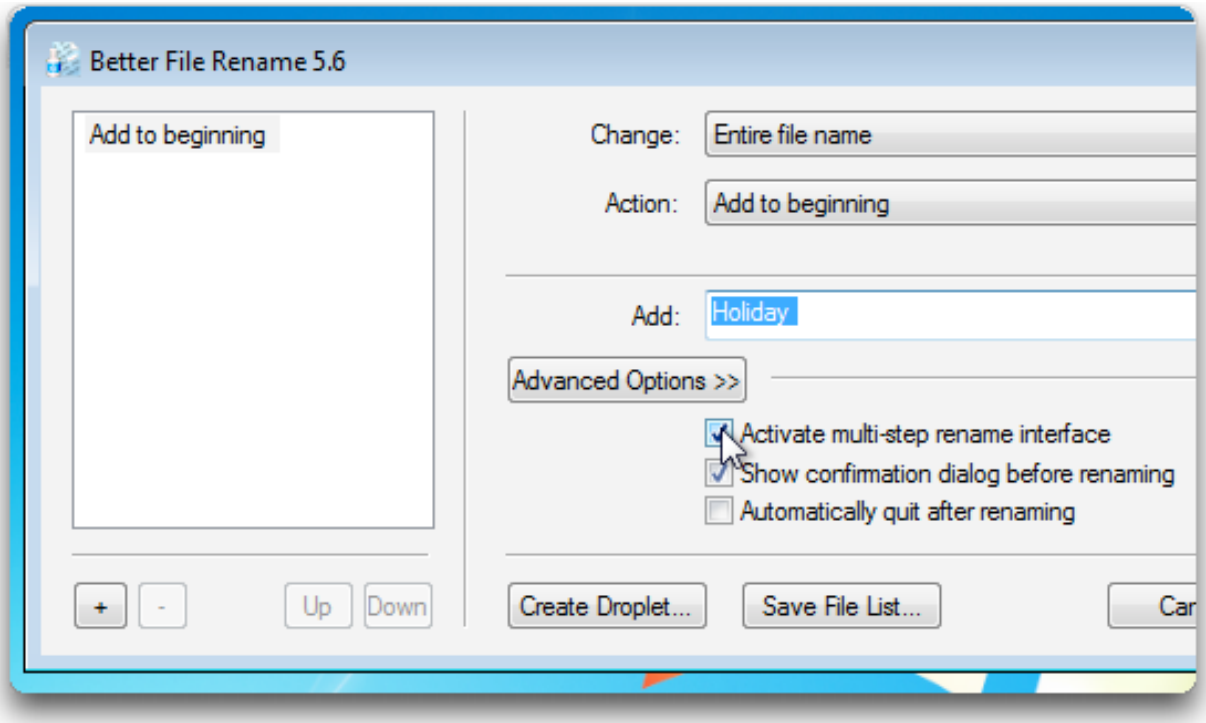
As multi-step renames might confuse novice users, the multi-step rename interface is switched off by default.



- Reveal the advanced options by clicking on the "**Advanced Options**" button



- Tick the "**Activate multi-step interface**" checkbox



The **Action Drawer** will now appear on the left hand side of the main dialog. This drawer displays a list of the current rename actions and allows you to add/remove and re-order rename actions at will.

- **Add** a rename action by clicking on the “+” button in the action drawer
- **Remove** the current rename action by clicking on the “–” button
- **Move** the current rename action up or down by using the up and down arrow buttons
- **Select** a rename action by clicking on its description in the action drawer
- **Close** the action drawer by unticking the “Activate multi-step rename interface” checkbox. **Note:** The multi-step rename interface can only be switched off when there is only a single rename action left in the action drawer.

Using Regular Expressions

Better File Rename allows you to use an advanced technique called "**Regular Expression Substitution**" to replace text segments.

This is an advanced technique which requires a certain familiarity with programming concepts and may thus prove **inappropriate for novice** computer **users**.

The feature is available via the "**Replace using regular expressions**" action.

A regular expression defines a text (i.e. character string) pattern and assigns a variable to each component of the pattern.

The basic rules for patterns are:

- `^` Beginning of string
- `$` End of string
- `.` Any character
- `[` Start of character list
- `]` End of character list
- `(` Start of expression group
- `)` End of expression group
- `|` ORs two expressions
- `\` Escape character
- `*` Preceding expression occurs zero or more times
- `?` Preceding expression occurs zero or one times
- `+` Preceding expression occurs one or more times
- all other characters match themselves

Examples

- `.*` denotes any sequence of characters
- `.* .*` denotes any string of characters that includes a space

Expression Groups

You can use "**expression groups**" to determine which parts of the text will be grouped together and put into a variable. You achieve this grouping by placing braces around the expression group:

- `(.*) (.*)` creates two expression groups `\1` and `\2`; `\1` will contain all characters before the space and `\2` will contain all characters after the space

As mentioned before the different pattern groups will be placed into substitution variables. These variables are denoted by **\1**, **\2**, **\3**, **\4**, etc.. **\0** is a special variable that holds the entire matched pattern.

The **substitution expression** is made up from simple text characters and variables.

For instance:

- regular expression: `(.*) (.*)`
- substitution expression: `\2_\1!`

will yield the following name transformations:

- `hello stranger -> stranger_hello!`
- `Holiday pictures -> pictures_Holiday!`

The `[` and `]` characters can enclose character lists:

- `[ab]` denotes a single lowercase a or b letter
- `[a-z]` any lowercase letter
- `[0-9]` any digit
- `[0-9]+` any number
- `[a-zA-Z0-9]` any letter or digit

Regular Expression Library Used in Better File Rename

The regular expression support of **Better File Rename** is based on the Boost Regex library, which supports Perl-Compatible Regular Expressions (PCRE).

Substitution is limited to replaced the standard substitution variables `\0`, `\1`, `\2`, `\3`, `\4`, `\5`, `\6`, `\7`, `\8`, and `\9`. Anything above `\9` is not supported. Attempting to fill more than `\9` by using more than nine expression groups may cause problems (e.g. the pattern "`(A) (B) (C) (D) (E) (F) (G) (H) (I) (J)`" may cause problems)

In essence, PCRE supports the standard regular expression syntax used by the PERL scripting language.

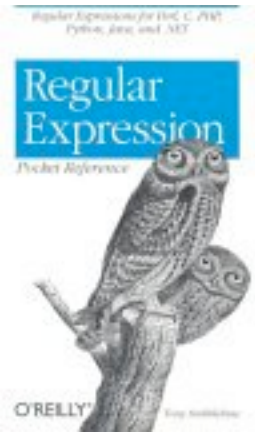
Additional Resources on Regular Expressions

There are a number of good tutorials and books out there:

- Regular Expression Tutorial at regular-expressions.info
- A cheat sheet in PDF format

You can get a complete and very detailed specification of what PCRE supports on the pcrepattern man page.

For those who want to master this technique in earnest, we recommend the following two books:



Using EXIF (Picture Taken Date) in Digital Camera Pictures

What is EXIF?

EXIF is a standard meta-data format for digital camera pictures. The standard is supported by most of the big players in the digital camera market, including Canon, Fujifilm, Kodak, Nikon, Olympus, Ricoh, Sanyo, and Sony.

The pictures taken by EXIF compliant cameras in addition to the picture information also contain information **about** the picture (i.e. "meta-data"). This information typically includes:

- the date and time the picture was taken
- the make of the camera
- the model of the camera
- information about the exposure time, aperture opening, whether a flash was used....
- various camera-specific data

Better File Rename 5 supports EXIF data in JPEG files and utilizes the jhead library.

Why Should I Care?

Better File Rename currently only exploits the creation date and time of EXIF pictures. To use the EXIF date and time in your renaming actions, look for "Picture Taken Date"

This is particularly useful for:

- adding the date and time a picture was taken to the file name, e.g. "my picture 12/01/2004 12:00:01"
- renaming the picture file to the time and date it was taken, e.g. "12/01/2004 12:00:01"
- creating numbered list where the sorting order corresponds to the actual order in which the pictures were taken rather than relating only to the creation time of the file, e.g. image1.jpg, image2.jpg, ...

The renaming actions that currently support EXIF dates are:

- Add date/time to beginning
- Rename to date

You can also use EXIF date and time information when specifying the sorting order with the following actions:

- Add alphabetical sequence to beginning
- Add alphabetical sequence to end
- Insert number anywhere
- Add number to beginning
- Add number to end
- Change Numbers
- Renumber existing number sequence

What Should I Know Before I Use the EXIF Features?

Please note that if a file does not contain any EXIF information:

- the file's creation date will be used for sorting

Using Droplets

Droplets are small, independent applications that automate common tasks. You save a rename action and the correct parameters into such a droplet application and every time you drag some files on the droplet the files are automatically renamed according to these settings.

This feature allows you to automate frequent tasks such as creating numbered file lists, renaming according to picture taken date, etc. All you need to do in order to apply the settings is to drag the new files onto the droplet icon.

The animation below illustrates how droplets work. On the left side you see the “Add ‘.jpeg’ Droplet”. When the “my picture” file is dragged and dropped onto the droplet, the interactive rename screen with the correct new file name is automatically opened. Pressing **Rename** or “**Rename All**” applies the change.

Droplet Tips & Tricks

A number of features of Better File Rename are particularly useful in the context of creating droplets.

Tick the "**Show confirmation dialog before renaming**" if you want the droplet to show you a dialog detailing the changes that will be made before they are applied. Untick the checkbox if you want the changes to be applied without prompting you first. This saves time, but be careful not to apply the wrong changes!

The "**Complete rename**" action lets you create a droplet that always renames a file to the same name. This may be useful in some workflows (for instance renaming catalog files to a standard name when new scans arrive).

The "**Manually rename**" action lets you create a droplet that allows you to interactively rename large numbers of files without having to select them one by one in Windows Explorer.

If you want to use a droplet as part of a fully automated workflow, you may wat to consider creating a "auto" droplet which does not present the user with any interactive dialogs during execution.

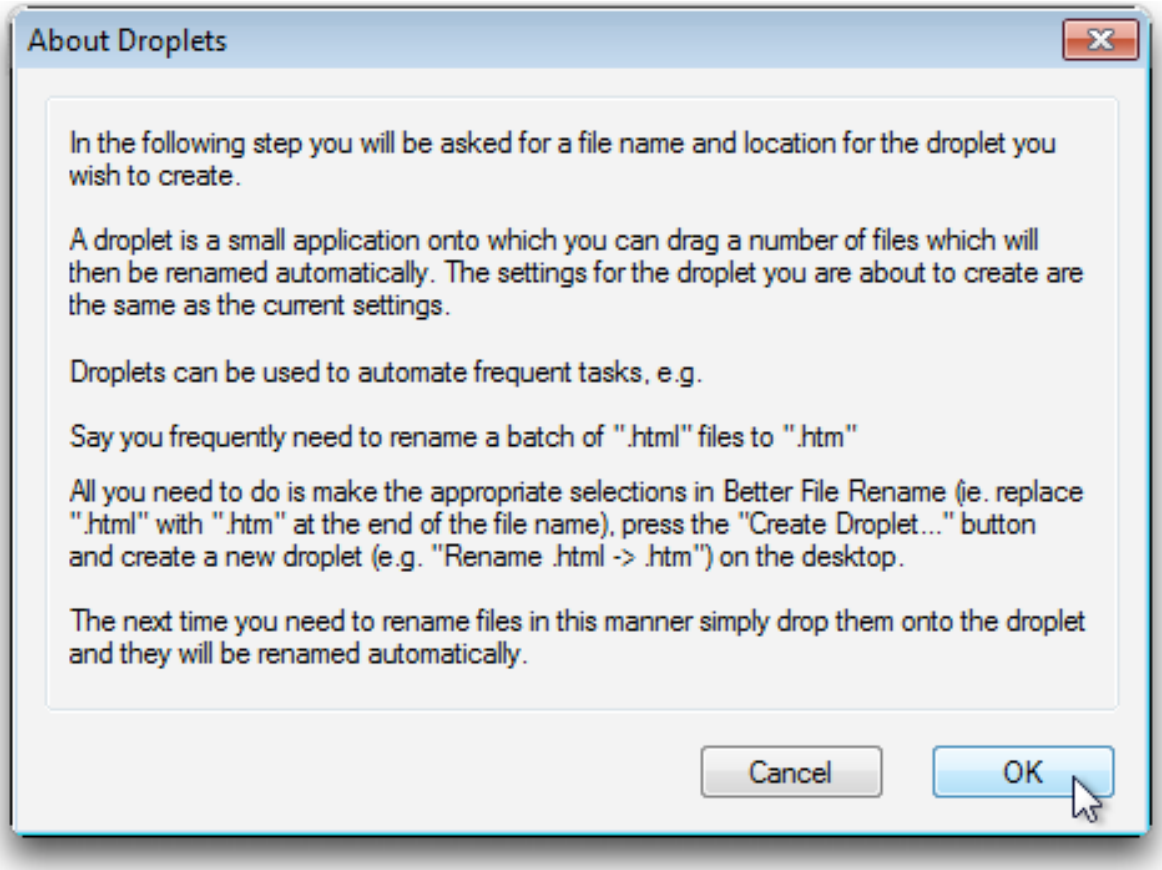
Creating Droplets

Start Better File Rename in the usual manner (see Four Ways to Start the Tool)

Select the action you want to automate and set its parameters appropriately.

Now instead of clicking “OK” to rename the files, simply click on the “**Create Droplet…**” button.

A dialog providing general information about droplets will appear:

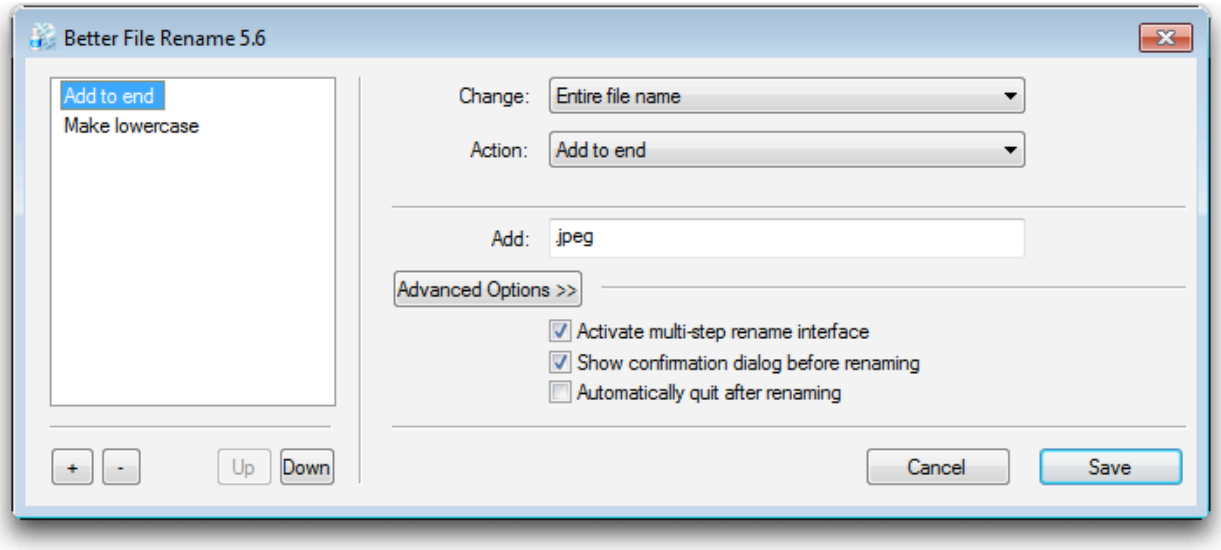


Click “**OK**” and the droplet to the appropriate location.

It is now ready for use.

Editing Droplets

Changing the settings of a droplet is easy. Simply double click on the droplet. The main dialog will appear:



When you have finished editing the droplet's settings, click the "**Save**" button.

Auto Droplets

In normal operation, Better File Rename may present you with a variety of interactive dialogs during the rename phase.

Depending on your settings, you may be prompted to confirm each individual rename.

When you want to run a droplet as part of a fully automated workflow, these interactive dialogs may block your entire workflow. In these situations, the "auto" droplets may prove useful.

An "auto" droplet will execute without prompting you for interaction. It overrides the "Show confirmation dialog before renaming" checkbox, although the manual conflict resolution dialog will still appear.

This mode does not affect interactive (non-droplet) use.

Using this mode will make it difficult to "debug" problems with your workflow as the droplet will silently fail without providing you with any information of what, if anything, has gone wrong. You may thus find it useful to disable the auto mode for debugging purposes.

You can create auto droplets by unticking the "Show confirmation dialog before renaming" checkbox in the Advanced Options" section. If you want to enable or disable the feature after you have created a droplet, you may do so by ticking or unticking the "Show confirmation dialog" checkbox while editing the droplet.

Saving File Lists

Better File Rename allows you to save the current file selection as a preview file, which lists the old file names.

This is useful for tracking and documenting file name changes.

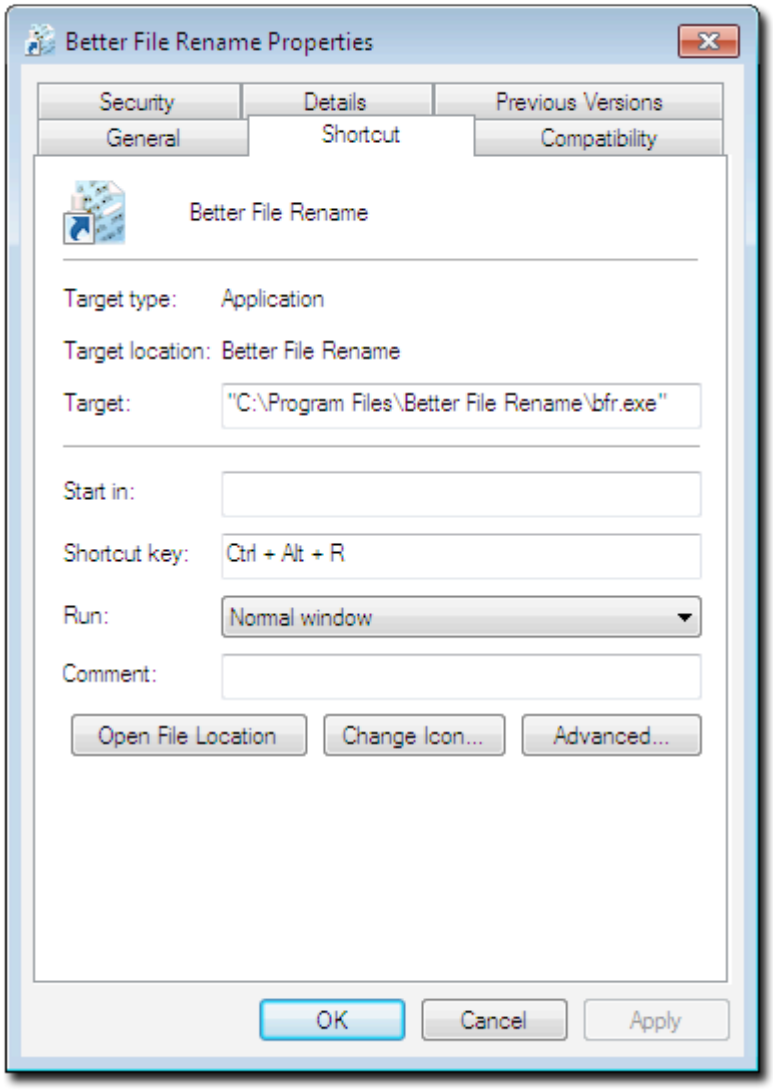
You create a file list by clicking on the "**Save File List...**" button in the main dialog.

A dialog will appear asking for a name and location for the new file containing the list of all files in the preview pane.

Setting the Shortcut Key

You can change the “hot key” combination that will start Better File Rename from anywhere within Windows.

- Right-click on the **Better File Rename** icon, then click **Properties**
- In the **Shortcut key** field, press the key combination you would like to use. In this example, we are using **Ctrl** + **Alt** + **R** (hold down **Ctrl**, hold down **Alt**, and press **R**)



Using the Shortcut Key Combination

- Select the files you want to rename in Windows Explorer. Hold down the **Ctrl** and **Alt** keys and press the **R** key (or what you set your shortcut key to in the previous step)