

The idiot's guide to the essential functions of



First things first. Once you open Scribus, you need to choose a page format. When this is done you see the page view. Let's take a quick look at the toolbar which you will use to add elements to the page. We've divided it into two for easier reference



The first seven buttons concern file operations : new, open, save (as .sla format), close, print, check, and export as pdf.

Then we have five typical manipulations : undo, redo, cut, copy and paste.

The next part concerns objects, these are the basic elements of a page such as text boxes, images, shapes etc. The first seven, as seen in the picture above are : select an object, insert text box, insert an image, insert a render frame (for equations, musical notation etc), insert a table, insert a shape and insert a polygon.



The object buttons continue : insert line, draw a bezier curve, draw a freehand line, rotate selected object, zoom in and out, edit frame content, modify text, link text frames, unlink them, measure, copy object properties and select colour.

The final buttons are used for creating pdf forms : button, text area, checkbox, listbox, dropdown list, text annotation and link annotation.

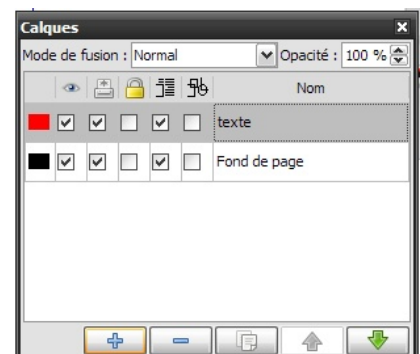
The buttons can also be found in the menu alongside some other interesting items which can be useful, such as import text (CTRL+D), search and replace (CTRL+F), insert new page, preview available fonts (extra menu), manage colours (edit menu)

Two vital shortcuts

F6 - understanding & using layers

You can superimpose objects on top of each other, and by using layers you can alter things more easily. You can also change the blend mode to obtain special effects

When you press F6 the layers window appears. From here you can add, delete, duplicate, rename, hide and change the blend mode, opacity and order of your layers. When you close the window a dropdown menu in the status bar at the bottom of the screen tells you which layer is active, and you can move between layers using this menu.



F2 - properties

This is probably the most important part of Scribus, allowing you to change almost everything about an object. It consists of seven submenus, some of which may be greyed out because they are not relevant to the selected object.

The seven submenus are as follows:

X, Y, Z - position, size, rotation, anchor point etc.

Shape - here you can modify the shape of any frame (including image and text frames). The button with a square allows you to choose a basic shape which can then be modified and the corners can also be made round.

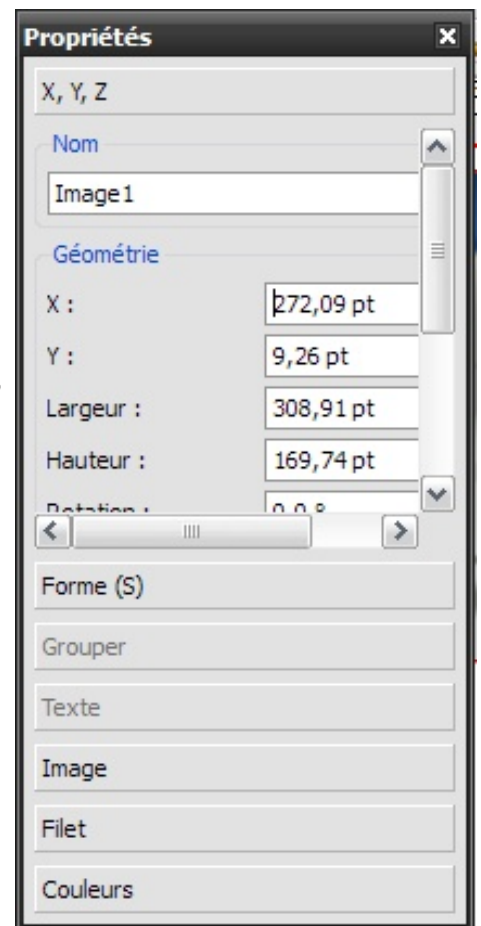
Group - used to link objects together and modify them as a set.

Text - here you can choose the font, font weight, size, line spacing, alignment, colour, style (including outline and drop shadow) etc.

Image - you can change the size and resolution, make it fit the frame and add special effects. (see below)

Border - change the style and thickness

Colours - two buttons allow you to modify the colours of the borders and the fill. At first glance the choice of colours is limited, you can choose from a short list and change the hue, opacity, and blend mode, but you can import or select your own colours from the edit - colours menu.

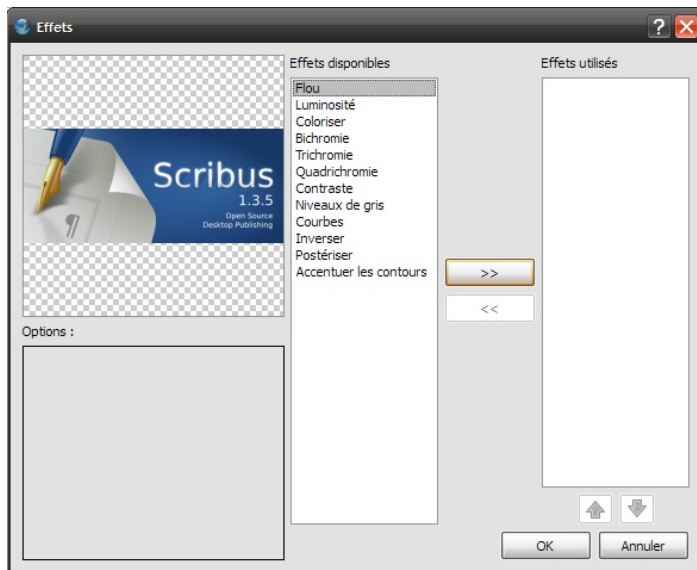


The capture on the left shows how you can add effects to your images, and even combine them.

Remember that right-clicking on an object also brings up a contextual menu which can help you work faster.

If you want to create your own free-form shapes experiment with the shape tools, but also the pen and curve tools and the object-path tools menu where you can tweak things.

Don't forget to explore file-preferences to set some other useful parameters



Despite its imperfections and shortcomings, notably the fact that it is not very intuitive, Scribus is free and capable. And if after all your efforts you still can't get your head round it then try PagePlus SE, a free version of Serif Software's DTP application.