Custom Font Tools; a guide to selecting the most appropriate tool for your purpose

The custom font tools are a set of python plug-ins for creating, manipulating, organising and decorating files of characters as individual Gimp layers.

There are now so many tools that some users may feel at a loss to know which one to use. This guide will, I hope, help people to choose the right tool for the task they have in mind.

The current tools as of Release 15 (Nov 2022) – plug-ins added since Release 14 are:

Custom Font 3D Wordy
Custom Font Breaker Utility

Important Note

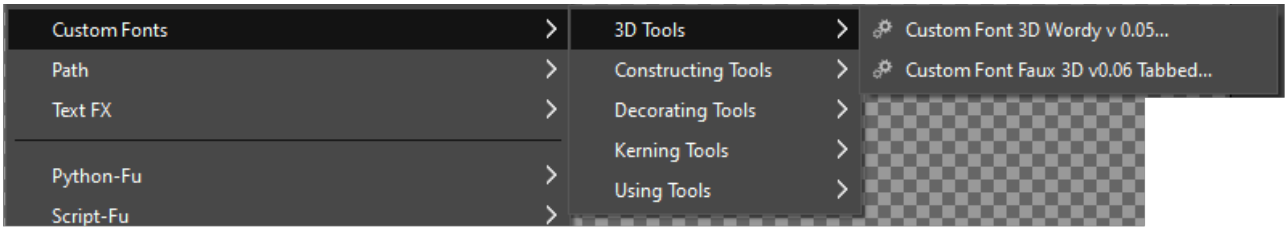
All of the tools have a new menu location. I have done this to reduce the size of the Tools menu and to help organise the tools into their different purposes. The first part of the path is:

Filters>>Custom Fonts>>

The menu then uses the following entries:

3D Tools
Constructing Tools
Decorating Tools
Kerning Tools
Using Tools

which lead to the actual plug-in menu entries.



Most of the tools have help-sheets or tutorials and it is recommended that users view these guides by searching on gimplearn.net for more detailed information and/or the specific user guides.

This guide presents the tools in the order that they appear in the filter menu.

Part 1:
3D Tools
Constructing Tools

Part 2:
Decorating Tools
Kerning Tools
Using Tools

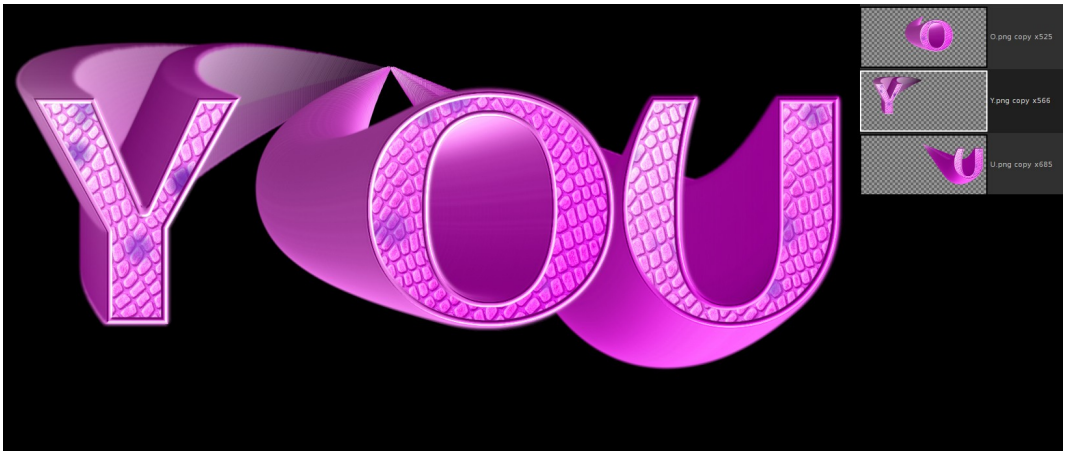
Section 1: 3D Tools

Use these tools to add 3D effects to existing custom font files.

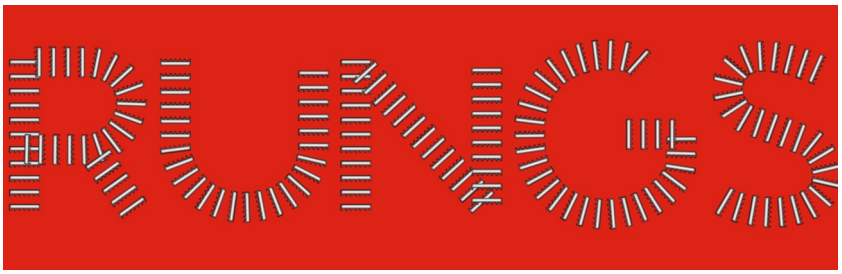
3D Wordy (New to Release 15)

This tool was originally intended to be used to add a 3D effect with paths to groups of characters or words but I have now provided options for applying the effects to custom font files. It can generate a large number of layers which makes it a time consuming plug-in - just right for starting before having a coffee break.

An example using one path with each character:



An example using a font before and after being treated with 3D Wordy.



Link to original 3D Wordy help on GimpLearn

https://gimplearn.net/viewtopic.php?f=3&t=3209&p=41370#p41370



Custom Font Faux 3D

This plug-in adds a 3D effect to blank or existing custom fonts by duplicating character layers and repositioning them.



Link to help pages:

https://gimplearn.net/viewtopic.php?f=3&t=3091

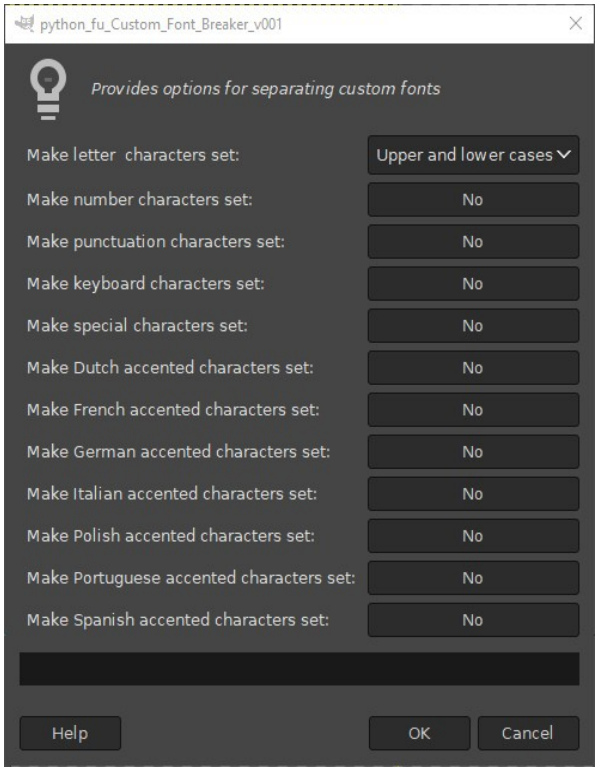


Section 2: Constructing Tools

These plug-ins generally create base custom fonts – usually from fonts in Gimp or from files containing custom paths; they normally need decorating with other tools.

Custom Font Breaker (new to Release 15)

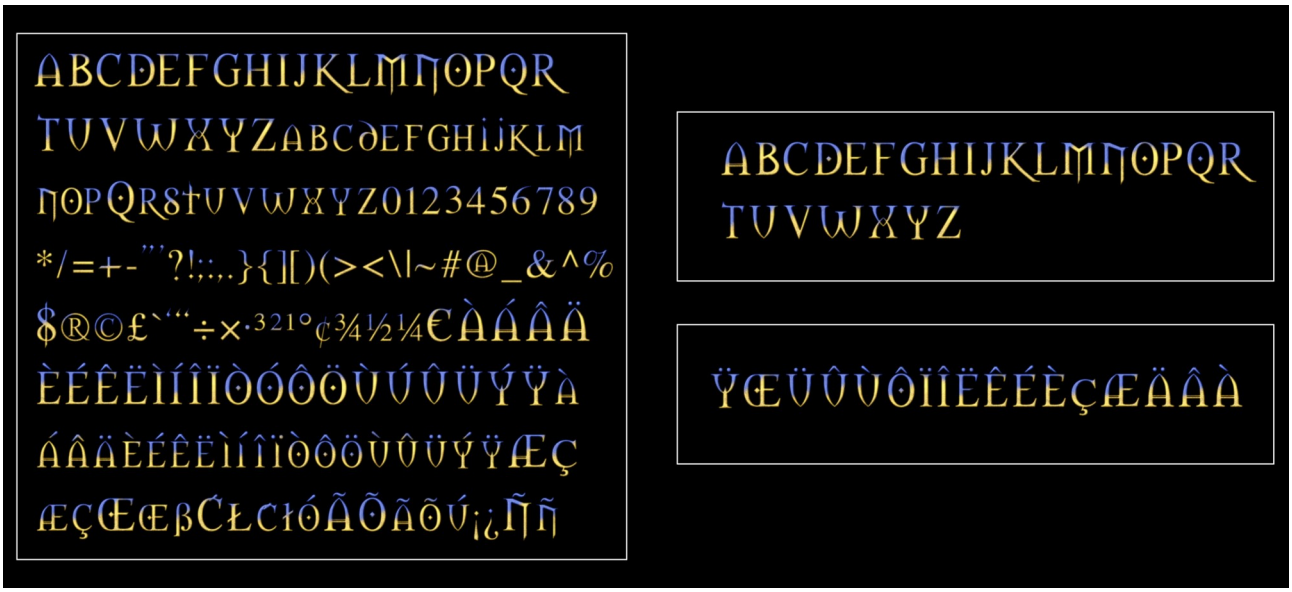
Use this utility plug-in to break up an existing custom font file into smaller parts. If, for instance, you have a full custom font containing upper and lower cases with kerning paths this plug-in can extract smaller sets of characters for you together with the relevant kerning paths.



In the example below, the full custom font set (below left) consists of 175 character layers. Setting the options to Upper case only and French accented characters would be generated as new images (below right).

The original set of 566 accompanying kerning paths would be reduced to 167 (attached to the first newly generated image).

The two generated images can be reassembled using File>>Open as Layers as a single new custom font file.



Custom Font Embossible

This tool can be used to apply different embossing styles to a base custom font. Use it before adding the finishing decorative touches: It produces characters in shades of grey.

Link to Version 1 guide

https://gimplearn.net/viewtopic.php?f=3&t=2973

Link to Version 1.03 guide

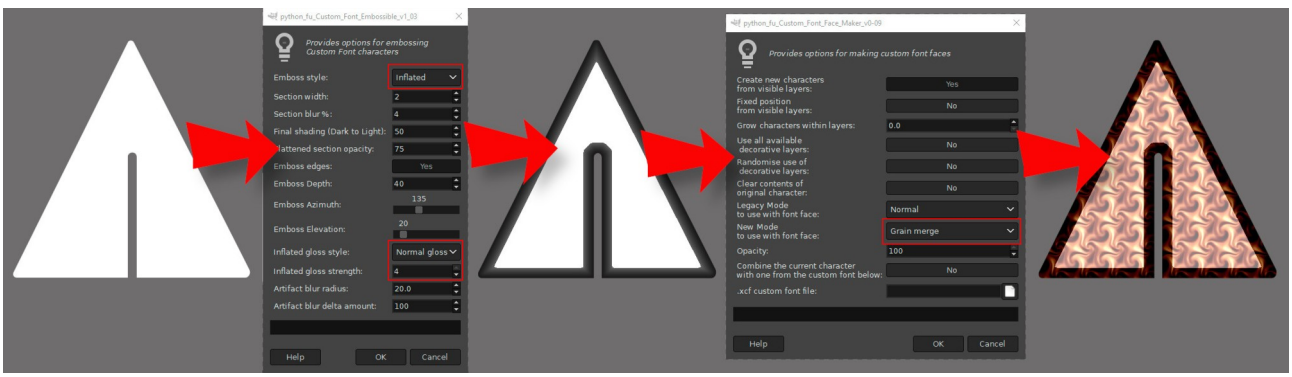
https://gimplearn.net/viewtopic.php?f=3&t=3077



Experiment with different modes when applying the finish.



Options to add a gloss effect to the inflated emboss style were added in version 1.03.

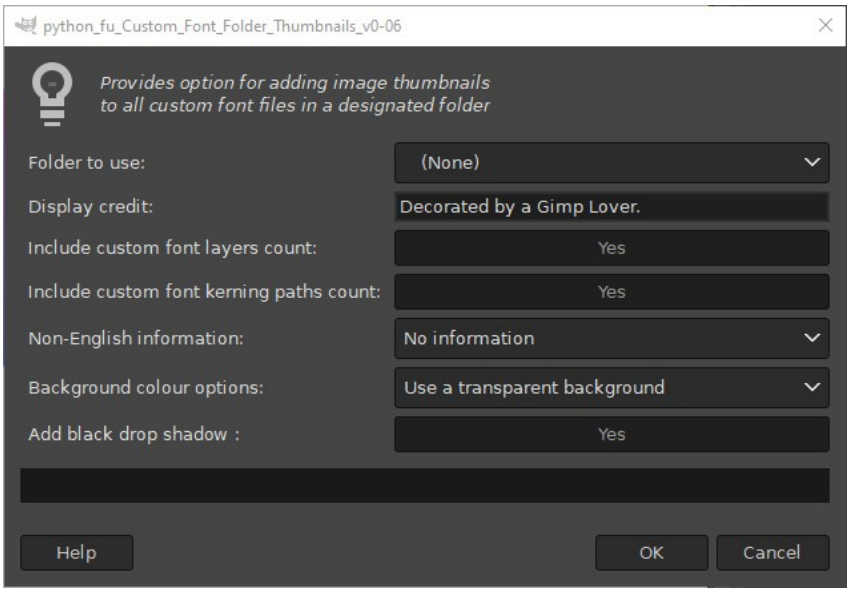


Three edge emboss styles (Rim 1, Rim 2 and Box) have also been added since the last release.

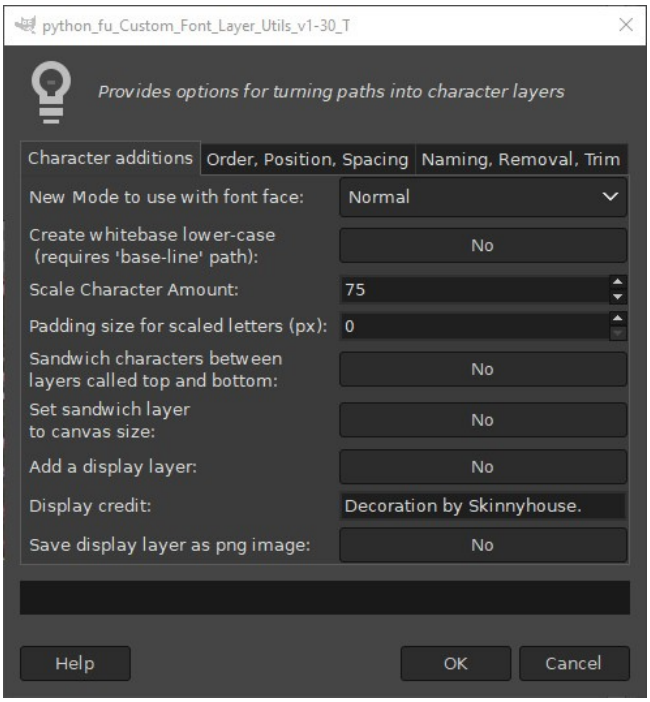


Custom Font Folder Thumbnails

This is a small plug-in that can be used to create a thumbnail image (in png format) to accompany each custom font file in a named folder. The latest release has options for displaying information about non-English accented characters.



Custom Font Layer Utils



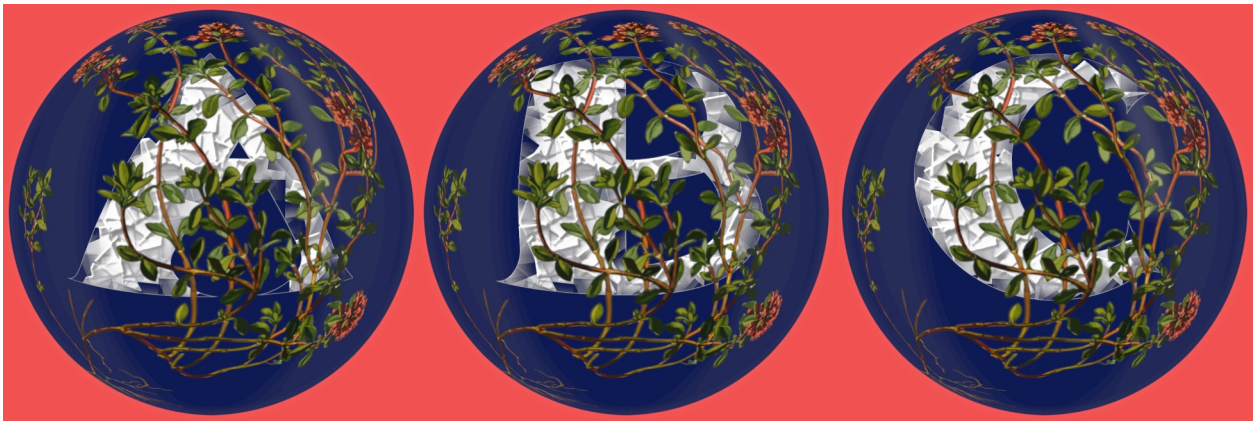
This tool mainly provides a set of utilities for working with character layers in order to speed up the process of creating custom fonts.

Most of the options are self-explanatory.

The option to create a set of lower-case letters does require an additional path (base_line.png) to be first added to the custom font.

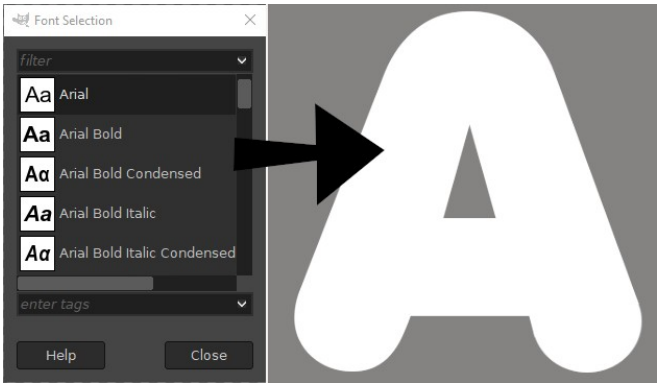
More information about creating sandwich layer characters like this can be found here:

https://gimplearn.net/viewtopic.php?f=3&t=2032



Custom Fonts Layers With Forced Margins

Use this plug-in if you want to turn an existing font into a set of character layers (this plug-in replaces Custom Font Layers from Fonts).



This tool converts any font (True Type etc) used by Gimp into a series of plain filled character layers that can then be worked on in Gimp and saved as an XCF custom font file.

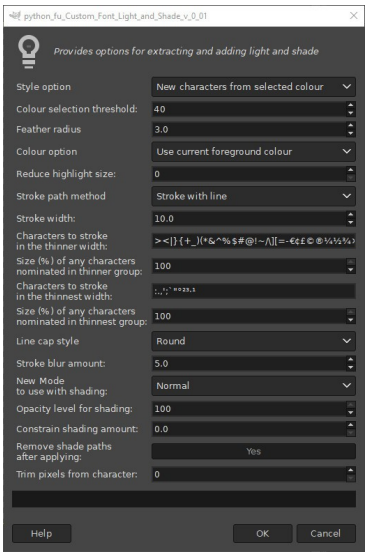
It provides options for adding or removing padding space around the characters within the layers.

There are also options for choosing the groups of characters to convert into layers – including non-English characters and unicode symbols.

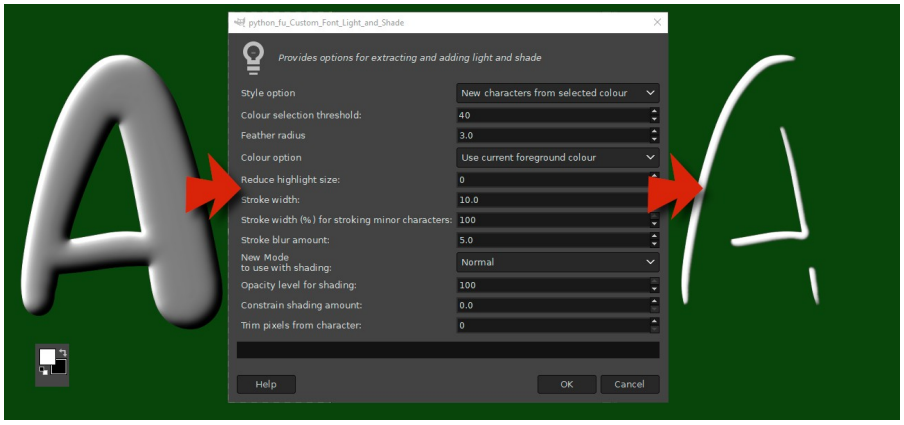
Details found on GimpLearn here:
https://gimplearn.net/viewtopic.php?f=3&t=2614

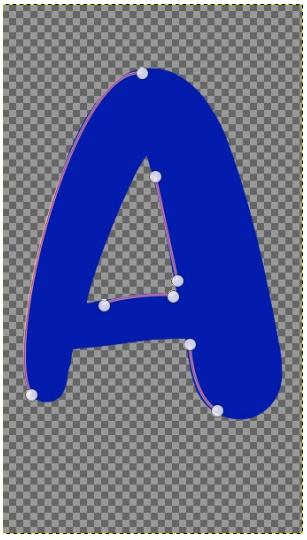
Custom Font Light and Shade

This plug-in can be used to create highlights and shadows from custom fonts which can then be saved to be combined with different versions of the same characters.



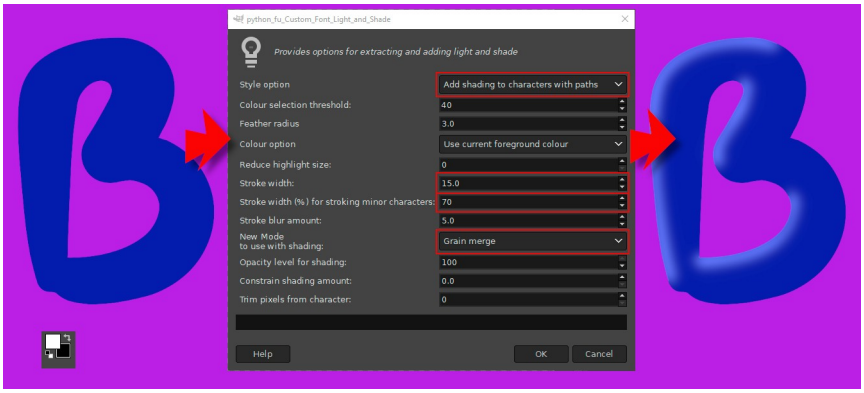
The plug-in uses two methods to produce areas of light or shade. The first method uses Gimp's colour selection tool to capture regions of the currently selected colour for each character. These characters can be combined with another custom font using an appropriate mode with the FaceMaker plug-in. The example below shows the capture of a highlight from a character produced by the Embossible filter.





The second method creates areas of colour with a set of paths which can then be stroked by a line or brush.

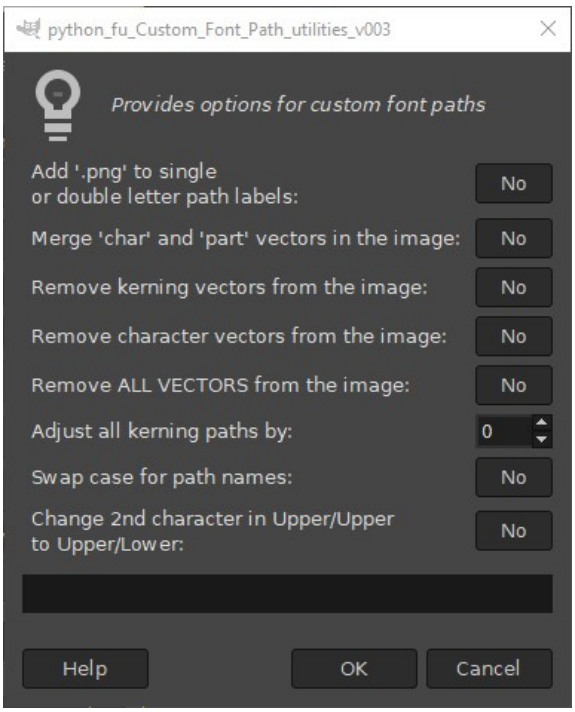
Obviously this requires a significant investment in time but if you have a custom font that you use often, this filter may be a useful addition to your repertoire.



Link to help pages with some path resources:

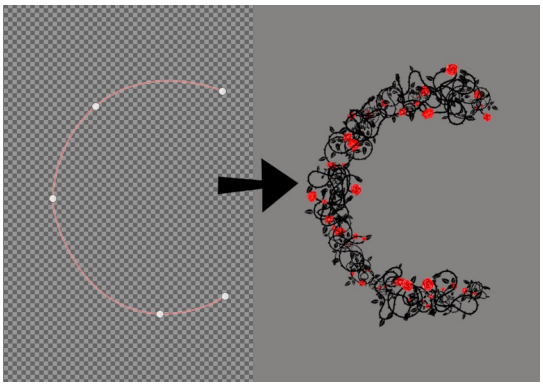
https://gimplearn.net/viewtopic.php?f=8&t=3119&p=39277#p39277

Custom Font Path Utilities



Some path options – mainly removed from the Layer Utils plug-in – which can be applied to all the paths in a custom font or custom path file. If you need them – you need them!

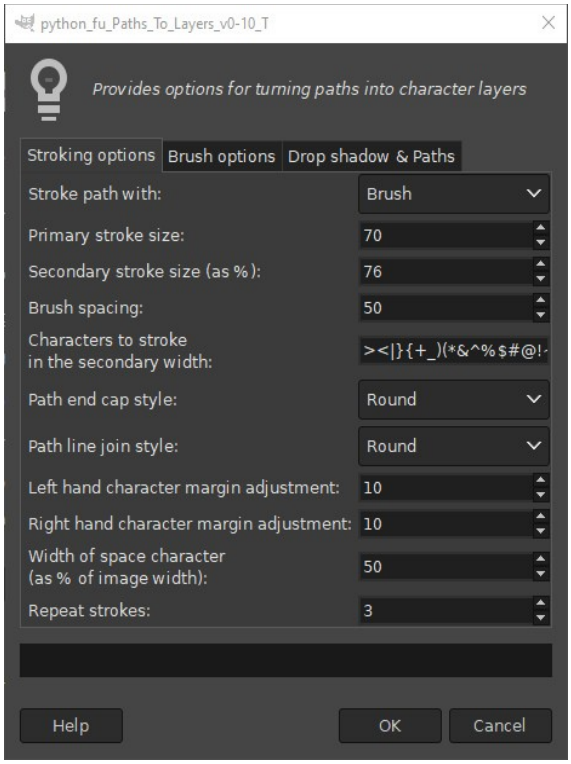
Custom Font Paths to Layers



Use this tool to turn skeleton character custom paths into custom font layers.

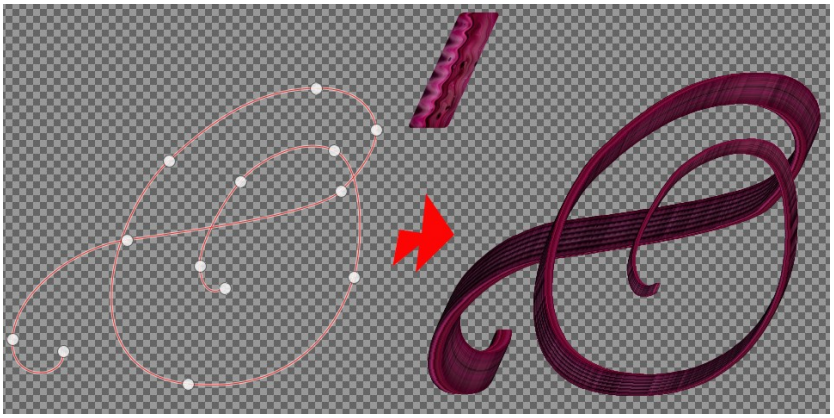
Link to more information
https://gimplearn.net/viewtopic.php?f=10&t=2090

This is a rather specialised tool intended to produce custom fonts with a more natural and/or open style. It uses a series of character shaped skeleton paths to stroke with the brush tool (you can stroke with line if you want to) to create character layers. These effects often benefit from the sympathetic use of brush dynamics.



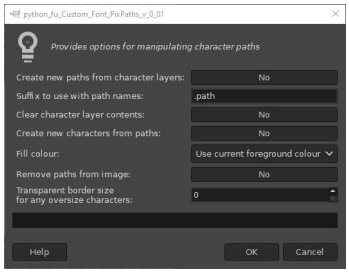
The new tabbed dialog contains a number of options to provide more control over the emulation of brush dynamics and also offers options for adding drop shadow effects

The example here shows the brush and path that were used to create the character with a taper effect.

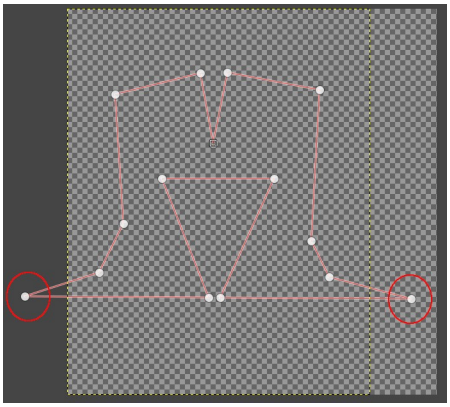


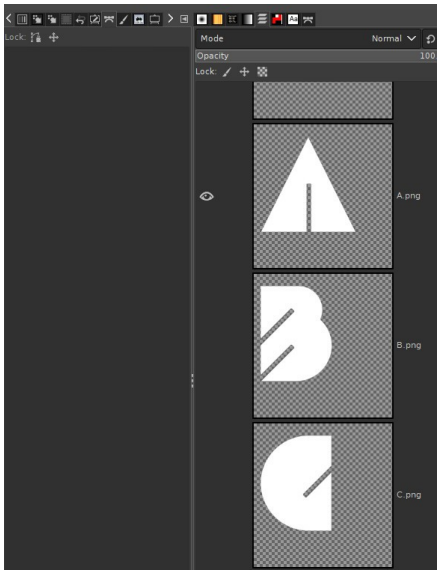
Custom Font PixPaths

This simple filter works with existing Custom Font layers: It provides options for creating character paths so that they can be manipulated with Gimp's path tools and then re-saved. It was made at the request of PixLab who, like me, enjoys working with paths.

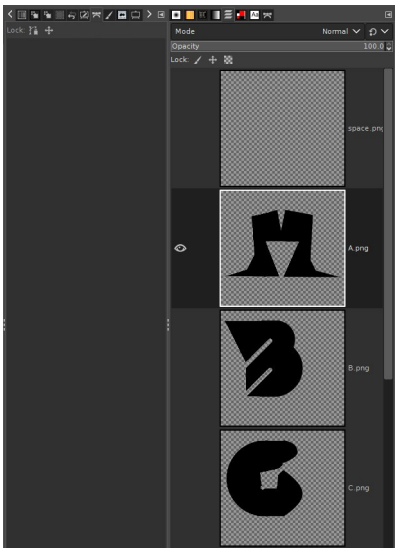


If you need to tweak a character or two, this tool may offer an alternative way of editing custom fonts using paths.



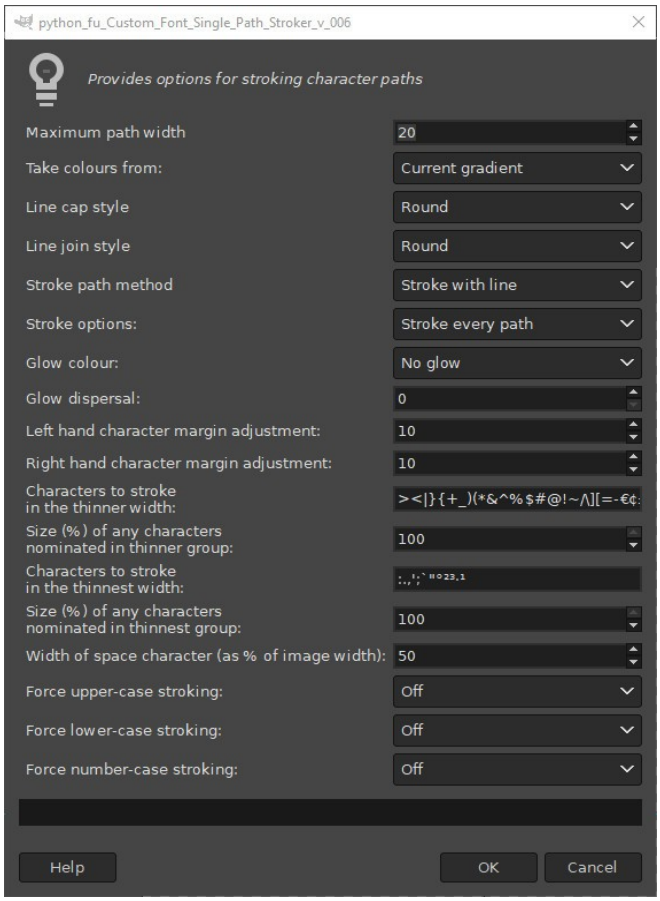


This pair of before and after images, taken of the layer dock, shows a rather extreme set of changes.



Custom Font Single Path Stroker

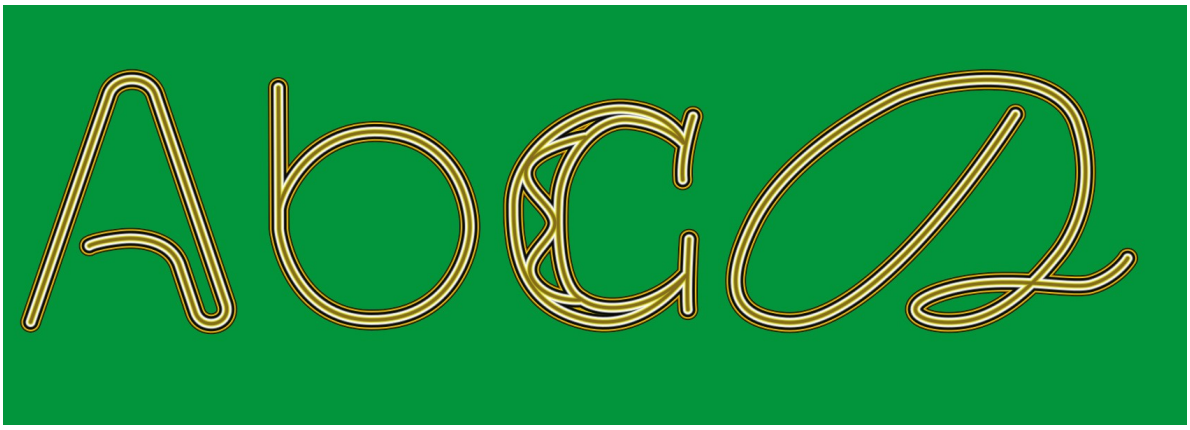
In some ways this filter replicates the output of Custom Font Paths to Layers but it is mainly intended to be used with the line stroking function. It has been updated considerably in version number 0.06 in order to apply kerning path information and to improve the glow dispersal feature.



Some example images:

Paths coloured with gradients





An example to show the glow effect:



There is a brush stroking option and it will quite happily use the same character paths as Custom Font Paths to Layers.



More information at https://gimplearn.net/viewtopic.php?f=3&t=2701