

Single-Pane Text Diff

SPDiff v1.0 [on the web](#)

Features

Single Pane Layout offers a more efficient use of screen area, often put to waste by the common side-by-side layout. The single pane displays a composition of the two compared texts, with the removed and added contents highlighted in distinctive colors.

Character-Level Comparison delivers better precision than the commonly used line-level comparison.

Minimalistic, Highly Functional Toolbar: drop-down list of diffs for quick navigation, step through diffs back and forth, and search the removed/added contents as well as the entire text. Keyboard shortcuts are supported - hover over a toolbar icon for info.

External Application Integration via command-line switches and exit codes - as well as custom title and colors set, to match the calling application appearance.

Fully Portable, self-contained single executable.

Toolbar Combo Box - Diff Syntax

Each list item represents a "diff" - an addition or a removal of text. Diff syntax is designed to present the following details in the most compact manner:

- Ordinal number of the diff
- Whether text was removed or added
- Characters count
- Lines count (in case the diff spans over several lines)
- The removed or added text - or part of it; if it's too long, it ends with Ellipses ("...")

Example:

14.[+39/4L] section 4.2 ...

Reads: diff no.14, added 39 characters over 4 lines, beginning with the phrase "section 4.2".

Toolbar Combo Box - Usage

Drop-down List: Select a diff for quick navigation.

Search Box: Type a text to search for, and click the "Play" icon to search within diffs. If the text is not found within diffs, the entire text is searched.

Under The Hood

SPDiff employs the GNU diff utility (ported to Windows by the [GnuWin32](#) project), but extends its core functionality from line-based to character-based comparison. In practice, SPDiff is a pre-processor, post-processor and GUI wrapper for the GNU diff utility.

Auxiliary and Temporary Files

The **GNU diff utility** is deployed to a subfolder of the user's local Application Data folder. This may be left untouched in order to reduce loading time.

Temporary files are placed in a subfolder of the user's temporary files folder. These are automatically removed upon exit, and may be safely removed at any time once SPDiff exits.

Command-Line Switches

<code>/old:"file"</code>	full path to the older file
<code>/new:"file"</code>	full path to the newer file
<code>/title:"text"</code>	text to display in the window title bar
<code>/font:"name"</code>	name of font to use for the main view
<code>/size:N</code>	size of font to use for the main view
<code>/color:{HEX}</code>	custom colors - see hereunder
<code>/f</code>	do NOT display the "File" icon
<code>/w</code>	do NOT display the "Word" icon
<code>/i</code>	do NOT display the "Info" icon
<code>/m</code>	start maximized
<code>/q</code>	silently quit on error and generate exit code - see hereunder

Notes:

- All switches are optional, but `/old` and `/new` are both required for successful initialization.
- Font must be registered. Invalid font forces use of the default font, "Courier New".
- Font size minimum value is 6. Acceptable values are in 0.5 point intervals, e.g. 6.5, 7, 7.5 ...
- If `/old` or `/new` are omitted then `/f`, `/w`, `/i` and `/q` are ignored.
- If `/old` or `/new` are invalid, the file selection dialog is displayed.

Exit Codes: (require `/q`)

- 1 Terminated (by external means, e.g. by Task Manager)
- 2 At least one of the files does not exist or is empty
- 3 The diff utility could not be deployed
- 4 Files texts are identical
- 5+ Unable to analyze files (error number indicates stage of analysis)

In case of an error, `/q` also orders that no notification is presented to the user. This is useful if the calling application is designed to handle the error conditions.

Custom Colors:

A set of RGB hex values for custom colors, separated by commas, in this order:

- 1: toolbar background
- 2: toolbar icons
- 3: toolbar separators
- 4: toolbar selected icons (currently applicable only for Aerial View)
- 5: toolbar input field background
- 6: toolbar input field text
- 7: main pane background
- 8: main pane text
- 9: removed text highlight
- 10: removed text
- 11: added text highlight
- 12: added text

It is not mandatory to specify all colors; specify -1 for colors you wish to leave at default.

Custom Colors Example: "Savannah" theme - featuring brown, beige and green:

```
/color:FEDCBA,005522,993300,009900,-1,005522,-1,772200
```