

That CAD Girl

Frequently Asked Questions

How do AutoCAD, IntelliCAD and BricsCAD compare for raster-to-vector capabilities? (a running thread)

Short answer: none of them do a full automatic raster-to-vector conversion out of the box. That work belongs to specialized third-party apps.

This is a running thread. I'll update it when AutoCAD, IntelliCAD or BricsCAD change what they can do natively with rasters and scans.

First, a quick definition so we're talking about the same thing. **Raster-to-vector conversion** means taking a scanned picture of a drawing (pixels) and automatically turning the lines, arcs and text on that scan into real, editable CAD entities (polylines, arcs, text and so on). Attaching an image and tracing over it by hand is *not* conversion. Importing a vector PDF's geometry is also not the same thing as converting a scan.

I get asked this a lot when someone has a scanned survey plat, an old topographic sheet or a blurry engineering drawing and wants that linework turned into CAD. So I lined up the three platforms people ask me about most: **AutoCAD**, **IntelliCAD** and **BricsCAD**.

As of October 9, 2026, this comparison is based on AutoCAD 2027, IntelliCAD 15.0 and BricsCAD V26. It covers only the native CAD

platforms. It does **not** include third-party raster-to-vector apps or specialized toolsets. Those tools do exist and they are where the real conversion work happens.

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The comparison table

Here’s the side-by-side. “Yes” means the feature is built into the core platform. “No” means it isn’t.

Feature	IntelliCAD 15	BricsCAD V26	AutoCAD 2027
Attach raster images (JPG, PNG, TIFF)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Scale, rotate and position raster images	Yes	Yes	Yes
Manually trace raster drawings	Yes	Yes	Yes
Attach scanned PDFs as underlays	Yes	Yes	Yes
Import vector PDF geometry as CAD entities	Implementation-dependent	Yes	Yes
Automatically convert scanned lines to CAD entities	No	No	No
Convert scanned contour lines to polylines	No	No	No

Feature	IntelliCAD 15	BricsCAD V26	AutoCAD 2027
OCR recognition of scanned text	No	No	No

What the rows actually mean

All three platforms let you **attach** a JPG, PNG or TIFF, then scale, rotate and position it so you can draw over it. That's the old-fashioned way and it still works just fine.

All three also let you attach a scanned PDF as an underlay. Same idea: the scan sits under your drawing and you trace what you need.

What none of them do natively is look at a scanned picture of lines and turn those pixels into editable polylines, arcs and text for you. No automatic line conversion. No contour-to-polyline magic. No OCR that reads the text off the scan. If you want that, you're looking at a specialized raster-to-vector tool or a toolset that sits on top of the CAD program.

So what do you do with a scanned drawing?

For scanned survey plats, topographic maps and legacy engineering drawings, all three platforms land in the same place:

- **Attach** the image or PDF underlay.
- **Scale and position** it so it matches your coordinate system or known distances.
- **Trace** the linework you actually need... or run the scan through a dedicated raster-to-vector program first, then bring the resulting CAD entities in.

In other words, don't pick AutoCAD, IntelliCAD or BricsCAD expecting a built-in "turn this scan into CAD" button. Pick them for the CAD work. Handle the conversion with a specialized tool when the volume of tracing would make you crazy.

What about third-party apps?

Yes, there are third-party apps (and a few specialized toolsets) that actually do raster-to-vector conversion. They are built for that job: reading scanned linework, cleaning it up and turning it into editable CAD geometry, sometimes with OCR for the text.

If conversion is a big part of your workflow, look at those tools separately. The comparison table above is about what the three CAD platforms themselves can and cannot do without that help.

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