

Ten Tips for Using Images on the Web

1. Use the JPEG (**J**oint **P**hotographic **E**xpert **G**roup) format, with the .jpg file extension, for photographs. It is designed specifically for photographs. Drawings and logos with blocks of color tend to not look very good when saved in the JPEG format.
2. Use the GIF (**G**raphic **I**nterchange **F**ormat) for images that are not photographs, such as drawings, logos, and maps. The GIF format is designed to display such images as clearly as possible. The GIF format works especially well with images that have solid blocks of color or lines.
3. It is OK to use PNG (**P**ortable **N**etwork **G**raphics) in place of GIFs. PNG files are often smaller than GIF files, and PNGs handle color better. The PNG format will very often work well for photographs. PNG images can also have transparency.
4. Web images should not have resolutions higher than 100 ppi (**p**ixels **p**er **i**nch). Current monitors display images at about 96 ppi. Resolutions higher than that serve no useful purpose because computer monitors only display at 96 ppi. The files will be too large and download times too long.
6. Animated GIFs are not your friend. Animated images are now considered to be old fashioned. They are larger than static images and have longer download times, too. If you use them, make sure they are appropriate for your project.
7. Browser safe colors are less important than they used to be. Browser safe colors are the colors that Web browsers use in common. While a computer monitor may be able to display up to 32 million colors, browsers used to be limited to 256 colors, and show only 216 of them on the screen consistently. Mixing pixels of several browser safe colors makes up any other color. A solid block of color may look smooth if it is browser safe, but it may appear blotchy if the color is not browser safe. All the newer versions of browsers have improved "engines" that display images better than ever before, so staying strictly to the browser safe colors is not as important as it used to be.
8. Big images have long download times. Make sure the file size of all images is as small as possible.
9. JPG images are "lossey." This means you loose data each time you save the image when you are working with it in an image-editing program. It is the compression process that causes the image to loose detail each time it is saved. To edit a JPG file, convert it into a native file format for your editor, PDS for Photoshop, for instance, edit the image, and then save the finished version as a JPG.

10. The most important thing you can remember about images on the Web is that planning is essential. Know where they will be used, how they will be used, what physical size they should be, and how the file sizes can be reduced.