

Using Images

Clever use of images will improve the visual appeal of your website, however, the images used should be chosen carefully. Always choose images that complement the text on your pages, don't use images just for the sake of using images!

Preparing images of products and services for your company website may seem a daunting task for the non-graphic designers or image gurus amongst us. The reality is however that the process of transferring images from other sources to the web isn't as complicated or as painstaking as you may have thought.

By following a few simple steps and guidelines, you too can create high quality, professional looking images for the web from your existing catalogue or brochure.

Web Image Guidelines

There are a few common sense guides to creating good images. Perhaps the most important of these is the size of the image. The larger the image is, the bigger the file and the longer the image takes to appear in your visitor's browser. How many times have you visited a site only to wait impatiently for large images to appear? How many times did you actually wait for the image to finish loading? When people visit your site they want information on your products and services as quickly as possible. Big images mean slower browsing speeds. It is important to get the right balance between image size and download time, keeping images as small as possible whilst still remaining large enough to be clear and visible.

Consider the content of each image; are there peripheral areas of the image that are not essential? Many pictures of your products may contain a lot of background information that is not relevant to the product and therefore unnecessary. Cropping the original image down to show only the essential area will reduce the file size, aiding faster download of the image to the browser.


Editing Images

Not everyone has copies of the latest image editing software such as Adobe Photoshop or Paint Shop Pro, but if you have purchased either a scanner or digital camera you will usually have some editing software included. If either of these options are not available then download your free software here which can be used to resize and format images for the web (please note that no crop tool is available in this software as detailed in step 1 below, for full instructions on how to use this software please refer to the help files within the package). [Click here to download now](#), file size 2.17Mb. Once the download is complete, unzip the file and double click on the setup.exe icon.

Preparing Images for upload to your website

Step1 - editing your images

To begin editing your images, transfer them to your computer. Open your image editing software and open the required image file for editing. First assess the image. Is the entire image you see necessary or do you only wish to display a small part of it? If so then the excess area of the image can be removed by selecting the area you want with the crop or marquee tool. The standard icon for the crop tool is shown below. This is located on the toolbar of the image editor you are using. The crop tool creates a rectangular selection (shown by a rectangle of dotted lines) on the image.

Crop tool icon: 

To create a selection simply press and hold down the mouse button and move the mouse in any direction. As you move the mouse a rectangle is created on the image. The area within the rectangle is the area you are selecting. When the selected area is at the required size then release the left mouse button and the selection will have been made. You may need to do this a few times to correctly select the area. Once you are happy with the selection press enter and the image will be reduced to the selected area.



Step 2 - Changing the Image Size

The standard file size you should aim for is around 17kb or less, but this is only a recommendation and is generally used as a guide to keep the overall page weight (size in kilobytes) to a minimum. Files above this can take a long time to load and will discourage visitors to browse further. Please note that this is a maximum recommendation and the size of an image should be as much below this as is practical wherever possible. The factor that most affects the size of the file is the physical dimensions of the image on the screen. Images for display on screens are measured in pixels (px). The maximum dimensions of the image will ideally be 350 pixels wide in proportion to the height, this will also depend on the space available on the page for the image to fit into. Product images should be approximately 200x200 pixels. Again this is only a recommendation and images should be kept as small as is practical.

Information on the size of the image file and its dimensions can normally be found within the image editing software through the taskbar menus, under the "Image" menu. It will be called "Image Size" or "Image Dimensions" or similar. This will then open a new window displaying information on the image. This window should allow you to change the size of the image by clicking in the textbox containing the image height or width. Unless you intend to alter both these values it is usually a good idea to ensure that the "preserve aspect ratio" (or similar) checkbox is checked to avoid obscurely altering the image.

Step 3 - Saving Your Image

Finally, when saving your image for the web it is best to save it as either a jpeg (file extension .jpg) or aif (file extension .aif). Whilst saving the image you will be able to make a direct

comparison between the file size and quality of the image. Photographs generally work better when saved as jpeg's whilst company logos with large flat areas of colour work better when saved as a gif. Once you have chosen your desired level of optimisation save your image to the appropriate folder.

Image Manipulation

The instructions above take you through the process of ensuring your images are the correct size for upload. You also need to remember that the quality of a website image depends very much on the quality of the original scanned image. If you have scanned a poor quality or blurred image, or an image that is too small for the scanner to pick up enough detail, this will have a direct affect on the quality of that image once it is uploaded to your site.

Most scanning software now offers functions that can be used to improve the quality of an image once it has been scanned. These include correction of colour balance, sharpness, brightness and contrast. In addition, there are tools for more skilled image correction and manipulation available to those with appropriate experience.

If you are unable to achieve the quality of image you require, Freecom offers an image scanning and upload service, to ensure you get optimum quality. The cost of this service is based on the amount of work involved in each scanning project. Please contact one of our Production Team on 08708 800 100 for further details.