

Graphics Image Builder

Great advice on how to improve your corporate identity, marketing materials, and product design.

This Month's Topic: What Are the Proper Graphic File Formats for the Web and Print?

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Brought to you monthly
by Karen Saunders
of MacGraphics Services

Karen Saunders specializes in designing ads, logos, one-sheets, book covers, and marketing materials that win awards. A professional graphic artist for two decades, Karen answers your artistic and technical questions through this monthly ezine. Visit www.macgraphics.net to see samples of her work, or call Karen directly at 303-680-2330 to discuss your project.

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Graphics Image Builder

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Using the proper file format and resolution for the job can mean the difference between a professional-looking document and one that looks blurry or is missing graphics. Graphic file formats for the Web and offset printing are totally different animals. Do *not* interchange them!

Graphics for the Web

Low-resolution raster graphics are used on the Web. These graphics are made up of thousands of pixels (squares of color). Web browsers will read **JPG** and **GIF** graphics, which are best scanned or sized at 72 PPI (pixels per inch). Because of the limits of screen resolution, anything greater will result in larger file sizes and longer download times than necessary. All web graphics are limited to a special palette of 256 colors.

Scan your photos using RGB colors to the JPG file format. JPG file sizes are very small and compatible with nearly every graphical browser. This format is best suited for photographs and any image that contains a complex mixture of colors.

The GIF format is best suited for images with a limited number of distinct colors and graphics that have sharp, distinct edges (most logos, menus and buttons). A special GIF89a file format gives you the option to make the background transparent so you don't get a white rectangle behind the graphic.

Graphics for Offset Printing

Graphics for offset printing require much higher resolution. If you use a low-resolution graphic (ie: a logo copied from a Web site) on an offset printed job, a fuzzy or "jaggy" image or no image will result.

Offset printed graphics can be one of two types: Vector-based or high-resolution raster. Raster images that are color or greyscale photographs must be at least 300 DPI (dots per inch) and in the **TIF** (Tagged Image File) or **EPS** (Encapsulated PostScript) file format. Your scans of B&W line art (images that *do not* contain any shades of grey) must be at least 1200 DPI. Be careful *not* to enlarge your raster graphics, because the pixels will also enlarge and become more noticeable.

Vector-based images are made of mathematically defined lines and curves. Because they are not made of pixels, these unique files can be scaled to any size without losing their crisp, smooth edges. Use professional drawing programs such as Adobe Illustrator or Macromedia Freehand to create these types of graphics, saving them in the **EPS** format. The most commonly specified inks for offset printed graphics are PMS and CMYK.



72 PPI JPG
photo for the
Web. Note the
large pixels.



300 DPI TIF
photo for offset
printing.

Graphics used above are
for simulation purposes only.

If you enjoyed this FREE e-zine, please forward it to your friends.

Have a question to be answered in a future issue? Send it via email to Karen@macgraphics.net.

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