File formats explained

IMPRESS

DESIGN

Supplying images and logos

Working with designers or studios opens many people up to new terminology that is never really explained. So here are the main concepts that might be encountered, explained for those without a graphic design background.

WHAT IS IMAGE RESOLUTION?

Image resolution describes the detail an image holds at its original (or 100%) size and its ability to hold that quality at various sizes or uses.

To maintain quality communications, Impress Design advises the following standards:

Resolution Type	Minimum DPI*	Usage
High res	300dpi	quality printing
Medium res	150dpi	in-house printing
Low res	72dpi	web usage

The image resolution must match the usage requirement. Higher resolution images have larger file sizes, which can have adverse impacts on documents made for web or email distribution.

Note: Images can still be used for printing if they are less than 300dpi, however they will need to reduced in physical size to recover the resolution quality (e.g. a 72dpi image could only be used at 20% of the original dimensions).

*DPI = DOTS PER INCH

The number of individual dots that can be placed in a line within the span of 1 inch (2.54 cm).

FILE FORMATS

Images may be saved into many formats. The most commonly used formats in graphic design are TIFFs. Most photo libraries will supply an image as a JPEG because they are compressed and make smaller file sizes which are easier to email. The designer will then convert it into a TIFF – all of the image quality will be retained.

COLOUR FORMATS

Documents need to be setup for the colour format they will be used for. There are two common colour formats to be aware of:

- **CMYK** – for quality printing
- **RGB** – for web design and digital viewing.

Note:

- Some colours available in one format are not available in the other

- Conversions of files can occur, but colour shifting is common.

Raster file types

MADE UP OF LOTS OF LITTLE DOTS (PIXELS)

JPG

- Typically used for photographs and images with complex colour grades
- Doesn't support transparency (the ability to see through an image and see the background behind it)
- Moving/removing or editing elements can be more difficult and time consuming.

WHERE TO USE

Product shots, portraits/headshots, landscapes and other images.

PNG

- Supports transparency.

WHERE TO USE

Generally created for websites and Word or PowerPoint documents.

PSD

- Layered working file that is editable in Adobe Photoshop.

Vector file types

MADE UP OF FANCY MATHS EQUATIONS THAT PRODUCE SMOOTH LINES

AI, EPS

- Typically used for logos and illustrations
- Can be scaled to any size without losing quality
- Supports transparency
- Layered working files that can be editable in Adobe Illustrator.

WHERE TO USE

Printed collateral – especially large scale printing (banners, posters, etc.) and complex diagrams that need to be edited.

PDF

- In some cases, vector elements such as logos and illustrations as well as text can be extracted from PDF files, if no other file is available. Doing this may also result in inaccurate colour conversions.

Hints and tips that could save time and money

The planned usage always dictates the file type requirements

Logos or images should always be supplied as vector files to retain their quality.

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The most important thing to check when supplying images is the resolution. Does it match the usage requirement?

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In web design and online documents, there is always a balance between image quality and file size. When briefing the designer/studio, identify any file size restrictions to be considered.

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Designers can change the file format and colour format where required, but be sure to check for colour shifting, especially when adhering to brand guidelines.

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Where possible, collect and provide all of the images you wish to include in the design to the designer/studio during the preparation stage, to allow for file corrections to be included in the quote up front.

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