



HOW TO MAKE DIGITAL IMAGES FOR WEB AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Being in the Know!

Social media posts with images perform infinitely better than those without pictures. Knowing how to manipulate and create digital images for posting and sharing will make the job of social media manager much easier.

What is a pixel?

A pixel is a tiny “area of illumination on a display screen.” When many, many pixels are put together, an image becomes visible.

Helpful Definitions

Raster graphics: Raster images are made up of grids of pixels. Most photographs you’ll be working with are raster images. Because they are dependent on the original file size, they can’t be scaled up without a loss of clarity. Here are examples of what happens when you try to enlarge small raster images. They get blurry and pixilated!



Vector images

Vector graphics are often pieces of line art, logos, etc. They use mathematical points to represent images on display screens. Therefore, they can be scaled up or down without loss of clarity. Here’s a good example.

Color Modes

Different image settings are often required for images that will be printed vs. those which are strictly for web and social media. Why is this important? If you’re charged with creating an ad for your museum to send for print in the local paper, you must build your image in CMYK for it to look perfect!

CMYK

This color mode is for graphics that will be printed. The **CMYK** color model uses four inks to build an image: cyan, magenta, yellow, and key (black).



RGB

The **RGB** color model is used in digital displays like computer monitors, smartphone screens, and other digital platforms. Red, green, and blue light are added together in various ways to reproduce a broad array of colors.

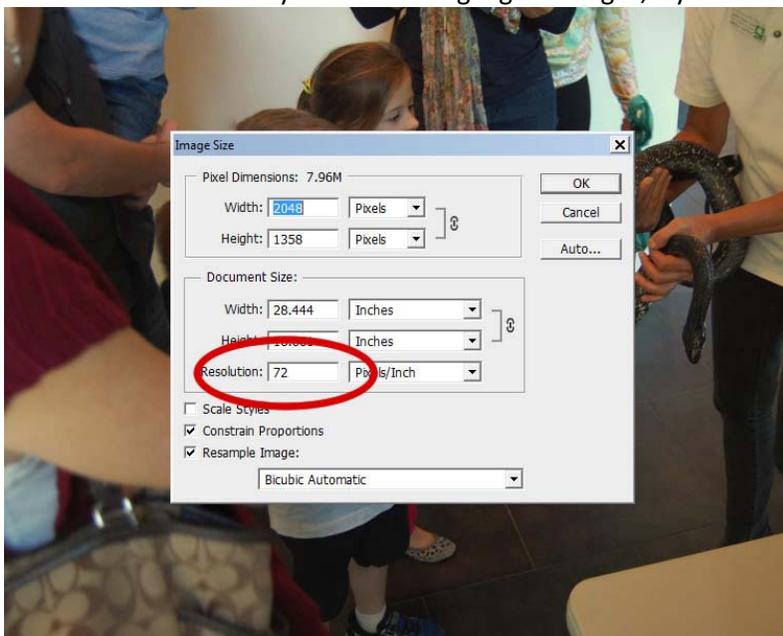
Resolution

When it comes to digital and print images, this is the golden rule to understand. Resolution is measured by pixels per inch (ppi), also called dots per inch (dpi). The higher the ppi, the more refined and clear an image will be. Printers use images that are 300 dpi or higher, while digital media creators typically use lower-resolution images that have 72 pixels per inch (ppi) or dots per inch (dpi).

Why use low-resolution images for web and social? One of the main reasons is that the pictures are smaller in file size and will load more quickly on computers and other devices. Additionally, default display on many devices is geared for lower resolution images.

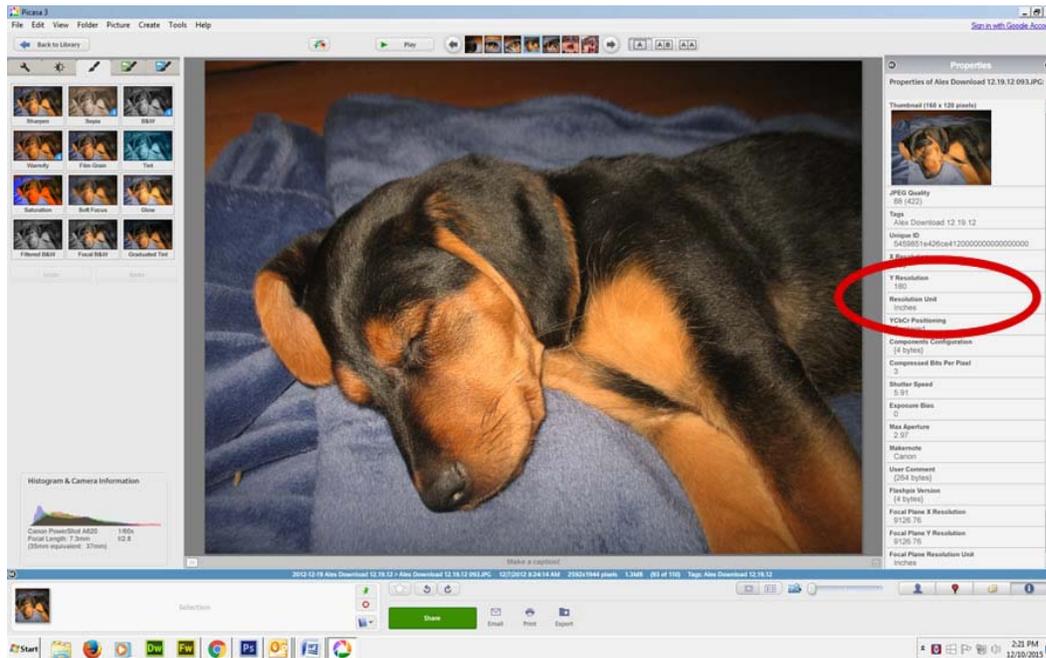
Images for print will frequently not appear clear and crisp at low resolution. If you are working with a printer to create rack cards, brochures, postcards, etc., be sure to send images that are 300 dpi!

How to check the resolution! If you have PhotoShop, go to Image (top navigation), then to Image Size to check the resolution. If you are creating digital images, try to stick with 72 ppi.





If you're using free editing tools like Google's Picasa, resolution can be seen in the right column.



File Formats

Lossy vs. Lossless images

With most file types, every time you save an image, there is a tiny amount of loss of clarity. With a lossless images, such as a .tiff, all original data can be recovered when the file is uncompressed. With .jpgs and other file formats, saving “reduces a file by permanently eliminating certain information.”

JPG: Joint Photographic Experts Group

This is a raster image that has been compressed and is commonly used on the web, social media, and in print.

TIFF: Tagged Image Format

This is a lossless, uncompressed raster image, predominately used in print. When sending images to a printer, these are the best files to send! Social media platforms do not allow you to upload .tiff images.

GIF: Graphics Interchange Format

Often used for line art and logos and animation. Doesn't support that many colors per frame.

PNG: Portable Network Graphic

Raster image that supports lossless data compression. These can be used for social media upload but



the images are often larger, taking longer to download. Layers can be edited in tools like Adobe Fireworks, found in the Creative Suite package.

PSD: Photoshop Document

Files that are native to PhotoShop and can be easily edited because the layers of the image are preserved. Note: If you save an image as a .jpg, you can't go back and move things around later. Try saving files in ways that allow you to edit later on.

EPS: Encapsulated Post Script

These are vector-based images and can be edited. Can contain both text and graphics.

AI: Adobe Illustrator

Adobe Illustrator Artwork (**AI**) is a proprietary **file** format developed by Adobe Systems for representing single-page vector-based drawings in either the EPS or PDF formats. The **.ai** filename extension is used by Adobe Illustrator.

Social Media Images

Most social media platforms allow you to customize your "homepage" with a specific banner and avatar or personal logo. Various platforms have "ideal" dimensions for uploads such as banners and profile pictures.

Platform	Profile Image	Banner/Cover Image
Facebook	180 x 180 px (displays as 160 x 160 px)	851 X 315 px
Twitter	400 x 400 (displays as 200 x 200 px)	1500 x 500 px
Pinterest	165 x 165 px	N/A
YouTube	N/A	2560 x 1440 px
Instagram	128 x 128 px	

There are also "ideal" file sizes for your daily posts as well. These are suggestions for optimal use. If cannot change the file size or don't have time, it's not the end of the world! The platforms will often crop or scale your images to fit specific standards.

Platform	Post Size
Facebook	1,200 x 628 px (Use horizontals)
Twitter	1,024 x 512 px (Use horizontals)
Instagram	1,080 x 1,080 px



Pinterest	735 x 1,102 px
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Find more information about social media images sizes in these 2015 blog posts:

<https://blog.bufferapp.com/ideal-image-sizes-social-media-posts>

<http://www.inc.com/larry-kim/your-one-stop-facebook-image-sizes-cheat-sheet.html>

Graphic Software Tools

People who regularly manipulate digital images frequently use PhotoShop from Adobe. This tool is extremely powerful, BUT it has a high learning curve and can often be expensive to license. Free and low-cost photo editing software also exists. Don't forget to explore the app stores too. Doing a search for "photo editing" yields many apps which allow you to manipulate your photos directly on your mobile device.

Picasa (free from Google. See the learning lab example below.)

Gimp (free and open source image editor)

Redesign Photo (app with great filters)

Canva (allows you to create costume graphics)

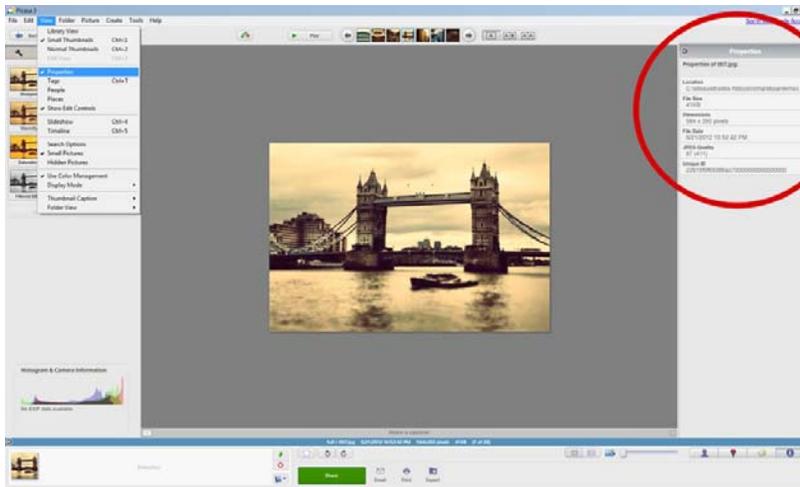
Instagram (app and social platform that allows for fun filter additions)

Learning Lab: Download Picasa and try this exercise:

1. Download Picasa
2. Select or import a photo
3. Double click the photo to open it in the editing window
4. Click on the wrench (top left) to open tools.
5. Select "Crop."
6. Click on the image. Click and drag to select the desired crop to the image.
7. Press "Enter" to execute the crop. (There's also an "Uncrop" option).
8. Try to do color correction. "Auto Color" works well.
9. Add some text to your photo.
10. Hover over the text until you get the "move" icon. It looks like a symbol for the cardinal directions.
11. Press "Apply" to save your edits.



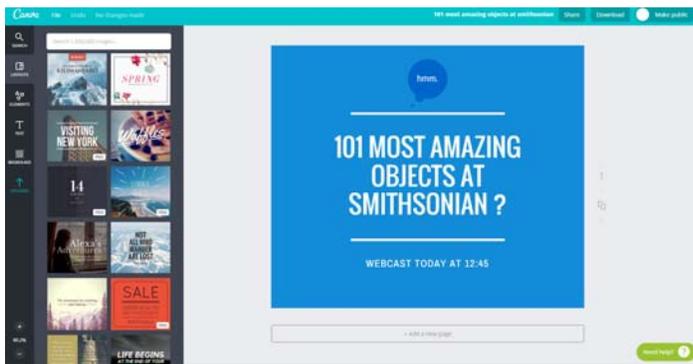
12. Add an interesting filter. Click on the Paint Brush tab.
13. Click on “View” link in the top navigation. Select “Properties” and your image data will appear at right. This is a good way to check to see what size your image is.



14. Click “Export” at the very bottom right. This will give you the option of resizing the image or keeping it the same. Change the size of the photo to 440px.
15. Select an easy-to-find export location and click export. Always remember to save your files with a simple and explanatory name rather than numeric sequences or cryptic shorthand.

Canva

Sign up for a free account with Canva.com. It’s one of the best tools for people who don’t have ready access to design software. It allows you to build layouts like a pro and includes available fonts and templates. If you upload your own photos, it is often free. Some layouts and clipart cost \$1 to use. The tool allows you to download your completed graphics in a variety of file formats.



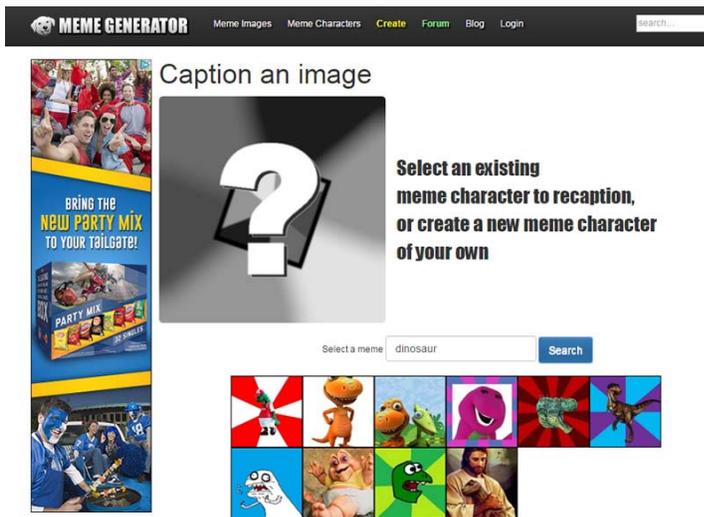


Memes

Memes are fun, big-picture graphics that often make use of popular personalities and pair them with insightful or funny text. The popular Someecards have taken off in many people’s feeds.



You can create your own memes using sites like memegenerator.net, allowing you to pair photos of people or things and type in your own message. Before creating memes, know that they are generally meant to be lighthearted and should match the tone that you consistently portray on your social media channels.



Graphic Design Tips

These days, most museum and cultural organization social media practitioners are not trained graphic designers. So how do you create beautiful graphics that have viral potential? Follow these quick tips:

- Less is often more. Don’t overload your images with text, logos, and flash



Smithsonian Institution

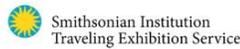
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- Use clear, legible fonts. Remember, many people will be looking at your images on small mobile screens.



This font is not very legible on a small screen.

- Be wary of neon colors and bright reds, particularly for text. They tend to “vibrate” on the screen, making them hard to read.



Image Grab From Google Search



Smithsonian Institution

MUSEUM on Main Street

- Text over graphic ONLY if it's legible. You can barely see the text in the upper right corner. A better choice would be to make it white and much larger.



- Color, font, and extras should match the tone of your post. For example, don't use "Comic Sans" font on something intended to be solemn. In this case, the font is also used over text which is difficult to see.



More smart graphic design tips: <https://www.postplanner.com/these-graphic-design-hacks-skills-make-you-pro-designer-overnight>

Here we are on social:

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/sitesExhibitions>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/museumonmainstreet/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/museumonmainst>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/sitesExhibits>

Instagram: <http://instagram.com/sitesexhibitions>

Flickr: https://www.flickr.com/photos/sites_exhibitions/



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Pinterest: <http://www.pinterest.com/sitesexhibits/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/sitesExhibitions>