



April 2008 The Alphabet Soup of Image Types

Have you ever been asked for your organization's logo and been stumped by what type of image to send? Unless you're a graphic designer, the acronyms JPEG, GIF, EPS and TIFF may seem like alphabet soup.

Here's a short primer to help you begin to understand the differences in these files so you use the right image for your next project.

BMP (Bitmap) files are very practical and can be used in any Windows program. This format uses pixels to create an image **GIF** (Graphics Interchange Format) files are limited to 256 colors and can be compressed without losing quality. This makes GIF images load faster on Web sites and the format of choice for buttons and headers on Web pages.

JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts that can have up to 16.7 million colors. With so many colors and pixels, BMP files are usually quite large. If you're looking for Windows wallpaper, this is the format for you.

EPS (Encapsulated Post Script) images are the standard used in professional printing. Rather than using pixels, EPS images are built with vector-based graphics. This makes EPS images easy to resize without losing image quality like pixel-based images.

preferred format for photographs. With 24-bit color, the files can display millions of colors. JPEG files can be compressed moderately without losing visible quality. But the more you reduce the file size or change and re-save the image, the blurrier the image will become. JPEG files work well for online publishing of photographic images, but isn't suitable for text.

PDF (Portable Document File) can be used for Web and smaller print jobs because the documents can easily incorporate text and images. PDF documents aren't ideal for large or high-quality printing.

PNG (Portable Network Graphics) is a newer image format similar to GIF, but able to support millions of colors. These images will not degrade in quality even when compressed.

PSD (Photoshop Document) is the proprietary file format of Adobe Photoshop. It is the format used while an image is in creation. Typically the final images are saved as another file type when complete. If you have a designer creating an image for you, be sure to ask for the PSD files so you can edit those at a later date.

TIFF (Tagged Image File Format) images are saved without any compression, but can include millions of colors. This maintains the image quality, but makes very large files. TIFF files are used for high-end printing.

The next time you use any type of image in your training curriculum, give me a call. I'll help you make sure the images support the material to provide the best learning experience possible.

Karen DeYoung is principal of DeYoung Consulting Services, which provides quality learning experiences for individuals and groups. We develop training materials and activities that advance individual, team, and organizational learning. Our work is done with integrity, reliability, and accountability.

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