

10 USING PICTURES

Adding some high-quality pictures to your website can make it look more attractive and more professional. There are a number of ways you can get a digital image (picture) for your site. For example, if you have a digital camera you could always take your own or you could scan a photo and save it on your computer.

If you haven't got any pictures of your own, you could either search the internet for an appropriate image or you could use a clip art picture. Do check however, that a picture you find on the internet is not protected by copyright. Unless a picture clearly states that it is in the public domain and free to copy you must get permission from the owner before you can include it in your website. The good thing about clip art is that it is **free** from copyright and is usually included in most word processing packages but it can look a little unprofessional.

If you do find a picture on another web site, you can save it on your computer simply by right clicking on the image and choosing **Save Picture As...** from the pop-up menu.

Editing a picture

The larger a picture is the longer it will take for a browser to display (download) it when a visitor goes to your website. Ideally the file size should be 20kb (kilobytes) or less but this is only a recommendation. The file size of a picture is determined by its resolution (measured in dots per inch), the height and width of the picture (measured in pixels (px)) and the file format it is saved in (for example .jpg and .gif). The physical size of the picture should be slightly bigger than a credit card but smaller than a postcard. If it fills you whole screen, it is too big!

It is important to get the right balance between the picture size and the download time. In other words keeping the picture as small as possible whilst still being big enough to be clear and visible. To do this you will almost certainly need to edit a picture before you include it on your website,

If you have a digital camera, a scanner or an up-to-date computer you will probably have some appropriate software already loaded on your computer. Otherwise, try searching the internet to find out about some suitable software packages.

To edit your pictures you must first transfer them to your computer. You can then use your picture editing software to open the picture for editing. Because there is such a variety of picture editing software out there, this lesson does not attempt to tell you how to edit your pictures. Instead it will give you some guidelines on how to adjust the file size, picture size etc. to make a picture suitable for your website. It is also worth checking to see if your picture editing software has an option to save/export a picture optimised for the web because this will save you a lot of time and effort.

Resolution

The higher the resolution of a picture the bigger the file size and the longer it will take to download and display. The optimum resolution for a picture for a webpage is 72dpi (dots per inch). If your picture has a higher resolution (which is often the case for scanned pictures and pictures from digital cameras) then simply reduce it. - you will normally be able to do this from the *Image* menu on the taskbar of your editing software.

Picture size

The size of a picture is measured in pixels (px) and the recommended optimum width for a picture on your home page is 350 pixels in proportion to the height. However, for the content pages, you should aim for no more than a width of 200 pixels in proportion to the height. Details about the size of your picture are usually available from the *Image* menu on the taskbar of your editing software. If you do need to change the size of your picture, it is a good idea to make sure that the *preserve aspect ratio* checkbox or equivalent (if there is one) is checked/ticked to avoid distorting the picture.

You can also reduce the size of a picture by cropping (removing) unwanted areas. A crop tool is available with most picture editing software.

Improving the quality of a picture

The quality of a picture on a web page depends on the quality of the original picture. Most picture editing software comes with functions which enable you to improve the quality of a picture before you put it on to your web page. For example, you can make some basic changes such as altering the colour balance, sharpness, brightness and contrast. And there are many more advanced functions which will help you to improve the quality of a picture even more.

Saving your picture

You can save picture/image files in a variety of formats but the best formats for the web are jpeg (.jpg) or gif (.gif) - in these formats the file sizes are a lot smaller and they are recognised by all browsers.

- gif files use 256 colours and are best for logos and graphics which use large blocks of a single colour.
- jpg files can use up to 16 million colours and are best for photos

To save your picture file, simply click on **File/Save As..** and choose the appropriate format. Your picture is now ready to be uploaded on to your website.