



To avoid costly and unpleasant surprises it is best to understand the limitations and quirks of digital images, proofing and fonts.

There is a common misconception that because a file was created on a computer that it is universally usable on other computers. Although compatibility between programs and computers is becoming more common, there are still countless incompatibilities. To make matters worse, with the aid of computers, we are now expected to turn work around faster recycling materials from previous projects and outside sources.

To follow is list common issues that arise when working with digital files:

FONTS

Fonts are small programs which run on your computer within other programs. Most fonts are available for both Macintosh and PC platforms. However the programming for those fonts are different. If you wish to use the same font on a Macintosh and a PC you will be required to purchase both Mac and PC versions of that font.

IMAGE FILES

File Types: When you send images for others to use you will want to send the source image file. (.tif and .jpg files are typically the most universally usable) When an image is placed in another program like MSWord, WordPerfect, PowerPoint, or PageMaker the file use becomes more limited. They useful only to people who have the program the file was saved in or worse yet they are not useful at all.

File Sizes: just because an image looks great on your computer monitor does not mean that it will look as good in print. The size and resolution of a file is crucial in traditional printing and often misunderstood.

The rule of thumb is that your image file DPI (dots per inch) should be twice the LPI (lines per inch) your printer will print at.

For example: you want a photo of your product to print in a newspaper ad. Newsprint typically prints with an 85-100 line screen so to print your photo best on newsprint you want the resolution to be 170-200dpi. Magazines typically print with a 130-150 line screen so the required resolution of your digital image needs to be around 300dpi.

Black and white line art prints best at an even higher resolution.

PDF PROOFS

A PDF is a file that can be read in any computer regardless of the program used to create it. To view a PDF you need to have Adobe Acrobat Reader on your computer. You can download it for free from the Adobe at adobe.com. PDFs cannot be edited for they are read only files. PDF files are great for proofing documents because they can be emailed from one site to another.

When proofing a PDF keep in mind that the colors look different from those of the actual printed piece. A color may look a certain way on the PDF and completely different on the final printed piece.

Also consider that when printing a pdf it often shrinks to fit your printer's page. Keep in mind the possibility of size variation when viewing a PDF, especially if your piece is going to be folded. It may be prudent to have your designer provide a print dummy as well as a pdf proof.



The three letters that appear at the end of a file after the period “.” show the file type. These file extensions tell you whether the file is a text file, a graphic image, a sound file, or a program.

Below is a list of common file extensions and their file types.

<p>.ai Adobe Illustrator document</p> <p>.arc compressed file using the program ARC (archive).</p> <p>.art an AOL compressed file format.</p> <p>.bmp Bitmap. Graphic image file. Also known as raster graphics. Some types of bitmap graphics are GIF, JPEG, Photoshop, TIFF, Macintosh or Microsoft Paint, PNG, FAX formats, PCX, and TGA.</p> <p>.dat Data file</p> <p>.doc Microsoft Word Document. Word processing office program.</p> <p>.eps Encapsulated Postscript File. usually vector based graphics used in drawing programs like Adobe Illustrator and Macromedia Freehand.</p> <p>.exe An executable file. A program usually designed to function in a DOS or Windows environment. .EXE files may contain viruses. Avoid downloading a .exe file to your computer unless you are certain of their purpose and origin.</p> <p>.gif Graphics Interchange Format. commonly used internet image file. Gif files are a compressed image file format and display up to 256 colors.</p>	<p>.htm or html HyperText Markup Language. The coding language used to create documents for use on the Web. HTML uses codes, before and after text to define its appearance. HTML files are viewed using a Web Browser.</p> <p>.jpg or .jpeg Joint Photographers Experts Group. An image file designed to retain image quality and use as little space as possible. JPEG images allow for more colors than GIF images and are usually smaller.</p> <p>.mme or .mime (Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions) files are programs, word processing documents, or images that are converted into a text format for emailing. AOL often uses this type of file compression. Can be decompressed with Stuffit Expander.</p> <p>.pdf Portable Document Format. PDF files are readable and printable, across programs and platforms with Acrobat Reader available free from Adobe.com. PDF files preserve the fonts, formatting, graphics, and color of the source file. Most program files can be converted in this universal read only format with a variety of programs.</p> <p>.pcx Older graphics files, commonly used for clip art.</p> <p>.pct or .pict The original Macintosh graphics format.</p> <p>.pm Pagemaker File.</p> <p>.png Portable Network Graphics format. PNG is used for high quality compression of web images. PNG supports images with millions of colors and can maintain background transparency without jagged edges. Older browsers do not all support PNG images and file sizes are larger than GIF files.</p>	<p>.psd Photoshop Document. An unflattened file in photoshop.</p> <p>.qxd Quark Express Document. Desktop publishing file</p> <p>.sea Self Extracting Archive. A Macintosh compressed file that when opened extracts several smaller files.</p> <p>.sit Macintosh compressed Stuffit file. These files can be decompressed by Windows users with UnZip. Some of the files with this extension will not run on Windows, even after extraction. Stuffit expander is available for free at digitalriver.com</p> <p>.site Adobe GoLive Working File.</p> <p>.tga TARGA. Graphic image format used in Television.</p> <p>.tif Tagged Image Format a commonly used bitmapped graphic image.</p> <p>.ttf True Type Fonts are scalable fonts commonly used in Windows.</p> <p>.txt Text files. Plain text that can be read by most programs. Examples are: Notepad for Windows, Simple Text for Macs.</p> <p>.wp or .wpd Word Perfect. Word processing office program.</p> <p>.xcl Microsoft Excell. Spreadsheet Program file.</p> <p>.zip PKzip archive file. Commonly used file compression format used in a Windows environment.</p>
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