

Using Graphics with Blackboard

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Using graphics on Blackboard is identical to using graphics on web pages. You need to remember the same basic principles.

File Formats

Graphics that are going to be used on the web need to be saved in a format that the web can use. Currently there are many different types of file formats out there: TIF, GIF, PIC, BMP, ESP, JPEG etc. In addition, there are also the file formats used by graphic packages, such as PhotoShop. The most important thing to understand about file formats is **the extension means something**. You CANNOT just rename any graphic file and add a .GIF behind the name.

GIF is perhaps the most common format. It is a type of **file compression** that makes the file smaller, so it can go across the web quicker. GIF or Graphic Interchange Format was developed by CompuServe and uses a type of compression, which reduces the size of the images with large blocks of the same color. It is a lossless compression scheme - you do not reduce quality. You can also create images with **transparent** background in GIF format

JPEG/JFIF format Joint Photographic Experts Groups is a type of compression that is ideal for photographs and other “natural” color images. The compression scheme reduces the file by the image size, not the number of colors. JPEG is a “lossy” compression - it does reduce quality. The human eye cannot distinguish as many colors as are in your original image, so it may eliminate them permanently to save space. You cannot create transparent backgrounds in a JPEG environment.

File Sizes

It is important to remember that the size of a graphic file will slow down the loading of your web page. Remember, not everyone has a fast modem or a direct connection!

Getting Graphics

There are four basic ways to obtain graphics for use on the web or Blackboard

- Create them yourself with a draw or paint program
- Use a scanner to digitize the image
- Use a digital camera
- “Borrow” someone’s graphics

Let’s look at borrowing graphics. There are several ways you can do this:

- Copying images from the web
- Using clip art
- Using graphics from other programs - like PowerPoint, etc.

Copying Images From The Web

Copyright laws do apply to the web. The standard is - everything is copyrighted, unless it says differently! This means that you cannot just copy anyone's graphic images. You need to make sure it is **public domain** or able to be copied by anyone. Most graphics on the web **are not public domain**. Sometimes you can ask for permission to use a graphic image from the owner of the page - if they do indeed own the graphic. Remember that some graphics were "purchased" and used on web pages, so you cannot copy them. The basic rule is - do not copy unless you know you can!

To copy an image from the web, click on the image and hold the mouse button down (Windows can right click). A dialog box will come up giving you some choices - **Save this Image** is the one you want. You can then direct where to save the image and use it in your web pages. Using a link to produce an image, giving the URL takes more time and means that the browser must make another connection with a server to load the image.

The images you copy will already be in the proper format for use on the web.

Many sites offer free graphic images for the web. Everything from backgrounds, to icons, to images, to buttons and horizontal rules are available. Make sure when you find a good page, you bookmark it for future use!

Using Clip Art and Graphics from Other Programs

Clip Art and graphics from other programs can be used for your web pages. Most of the time these types of images are not in a GIF format, so you will need a program that will save or export images as GIF files. Common programs include:

- PhotoShop
- ArtWorks
- Expert ColorPaint
- Corel

The easiest way to convert your clip art to GIF files is to bring the picture up on the screen and then copy it to the clipboard, using Control C or Command C. Then go to your graphics program and paste the picture in a new file. You can then go through the steps of saving your pictures as a GIF format.

Make sure you are looking at the picture at **100%**. It is common for graphic packages, to show the picture at 66 or 75%. You need to see it at 100% to understand the size.

Scanning Images

Using a scanner is another way to get an image for your web pages. The same rules of copyright apply! **You cannot just copy any image, from any book, any time.** You must have permission or know that the image is public domain.

There are several things that increase the resolution and clarity of images that are scanned in. These include:

- Making sure you have an idea of the **final size of the graphic**. This can be in pixels or in inches.
- Scanning the image in at the size you will use - determined above.
- Setting the number of colors and the resolution to be compatible with the web. Usually that is a resolution of 72 and 256 color.

Make sure you are looking at the picture at **100%**. It is common for graphic packages to show the picture at 66 or 75%. You need to see it at 100% to get a true understanding of the size.

Digital Camera Images

Digital cameras are another way to get images into a digital format for use on the web. The concept here is similar to the scanner, but you take a “picture” instead. You still need to get that picture “into” the computer and then crop and scale it down, saving it as a GIF file.

One thing to remember is that digital camera images tend to be bigger than they appear. Again, you need to make sure you are looking at it in full size (100%). You also need to crop the image down to only the parts you really want. You might also want to scale the file before saving it as a GIF.