Photoshop: Save for Web

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This is an outline on how to use the *Save for Web* feature (sometimes called *Save for Web and Devices*) in Photoshop. This feature is a useful tool for optimising images prior to insertion in a web page. The Save for Web feature makes a copy of the open document and saves it as the optimised version.
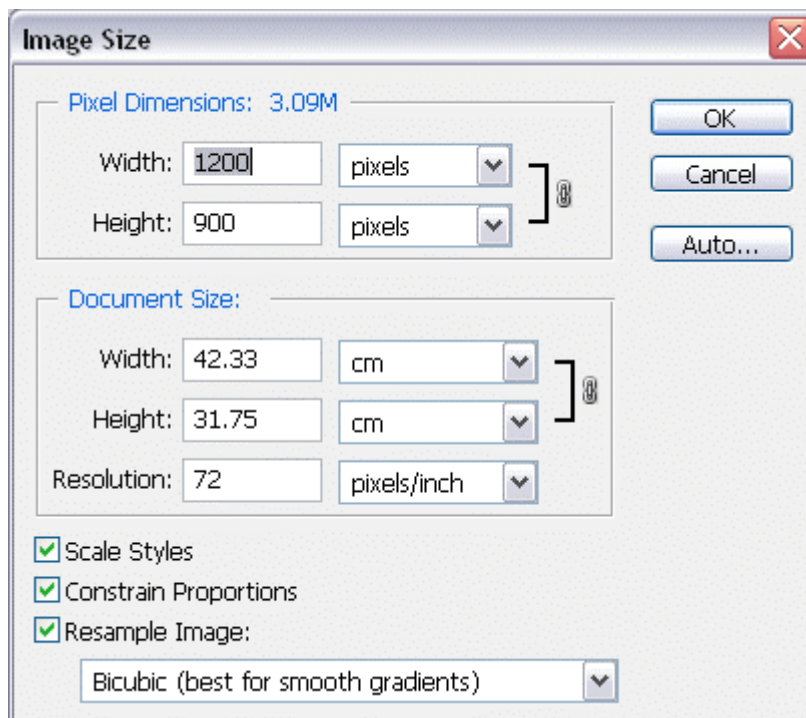
Resizing an image

If you are creating a graphic for insertion into a web page, your document will probably already be the size required to fit the allocated space. In this case, resizing is not necessary.

Resizing is often required when preparing an image from a photographic source. To resize an image either go to: *Image > Image Size* or resize the image within the Save for Web… dialogue.

Image Size dialogue
For the web, the unit of measurement is pixels.

The *Image Size* dialogue displays two sections for resizing an image. The one to use for web graphics is the top section labelled *Pixel Dimensions*.

The Document Size section is for output for print. There is no need to alter the resolution here as the important factor is the width and height in pixels.

The lower part of the Image Size window displays checkboxes which, in most cases, should remain checked.

- *Scale Styles* for when Photoshop Layer Styles are used.
- *Constrain Proportions* is necessary to maintain height and width proportions when resizing.
- *Resample Image* refers to the method by which the pixels in an image are reordered or *resampled* when an image is resized. Generally, the method to use here is *Bicubic*.

The drop menu provides alternatives for resampling an image. Here is an explanation of the resampling methods:

- *Nearest Neighbour* for the fast but less precise method. This method is recommended for use with illustrations containing non-anti-aliased edges, to preserve hard edges and produce a smaller file. However, this method can result in jagged effects, which become apparent when distorting or scaling an image or performing multiple manipulations on a selection.

- *Bilinear* for a medium-quality method.

- *Bicubic* for the slow but more precise method, resulting in the smoothest tonal gradations.

- *Bicubic Smoother* when you're enlarging images.

- *Bicubic Sharper* for reducing the size of an image. This method maintains the detail in a resampled image. It may, however, over-sharpen some areas of an image. In this case, try using Bicubic.

To resize an image, enter a value in either the Width or Height fields. With Constrain Proportions selected, the other dimension will adjust in relation. Click *OK*.

The Save for Web and Devices dialogue
This dialogue provides settings to determine the best optimisation method for a particular given image.

With an image file open go to: *File > Save for Web and Devices*.
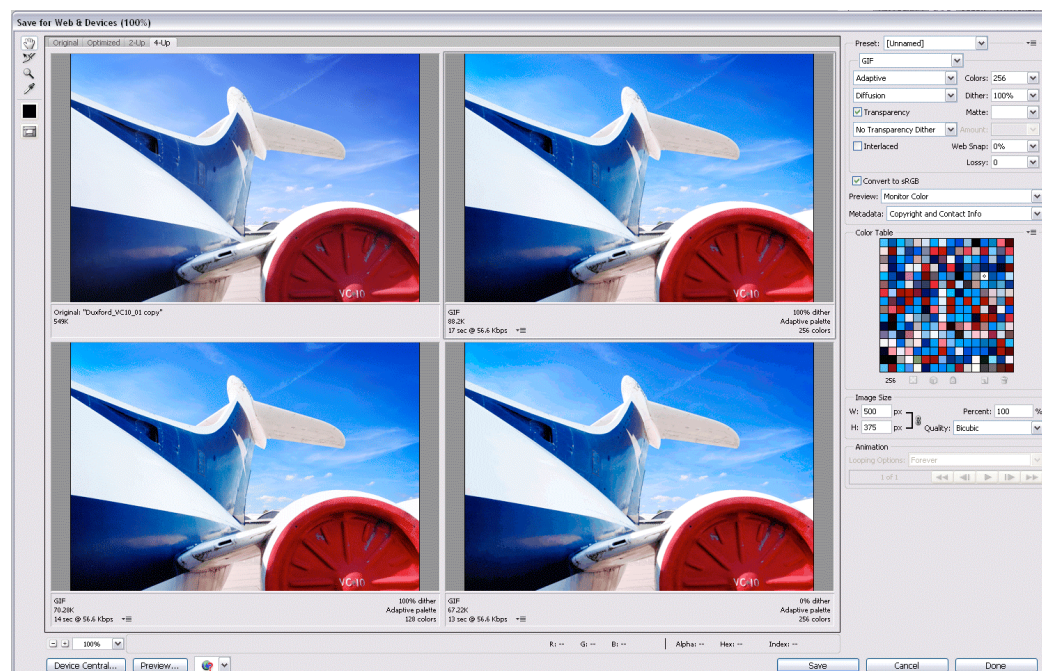
The dialogue allows you to:

- Set optimisation settings
- Compare optimisation settings
- Determine file size
- Determine visual quality
- Compare visual quality
- Resize an image

To compare between various optimised versions and the original version, click on the *4-Up* tab at the top of the dialogue. This will display four versions of the image file. The top left, or left, is the original, non-optimised version and the remaining three windows display optimised versions.

| Original | Optimized | 2-Up | **4-Up** |
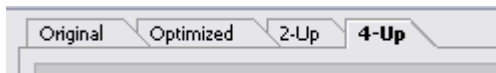
To change the size, enter values in the Image Size section in the panel to the right. Press the Return key or click on an image window for the resizing to take effect. There is also an option to choose a resample method as found in the Image Size dialogue.

Image Size
W: 2362 px   Percent: 100 %
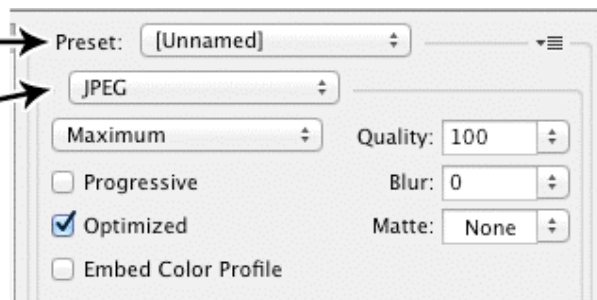H: 1772 px   Quality: Bicubic   **Resampling options**
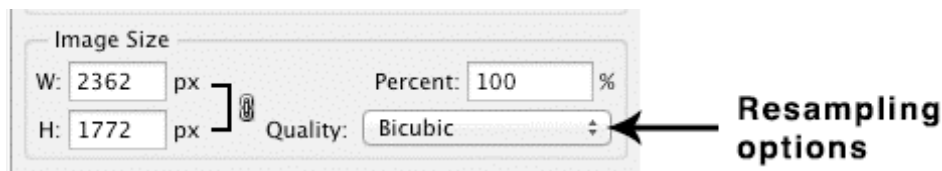
To set and compare optimised versions, click on an image window (not the original). The outline of the image window will become highlighted. Set the optimisation values in the panel to the right of the dialogue. Only one image window is active at any time.

Select preset optimisation ⟶ Preset: [Unnamed]

or

Select method type JPEG

Maximum   Quality: 100
☐ Progressive   Blur: 0
☑ Optimized   Matte: None
☐ Embed Color Profile

Preset values are available and it is also possible to adjust values as required. The results of the chosen settings will be displayed in the selected image window. These are:

- The visual affect on the image,
- File size
- Estimated download time. *This is only a rough guide as many issues can affect download speed.*

JPEG
36.4K
7 sec @ 56.6 Kbps ▾≡

60 quality
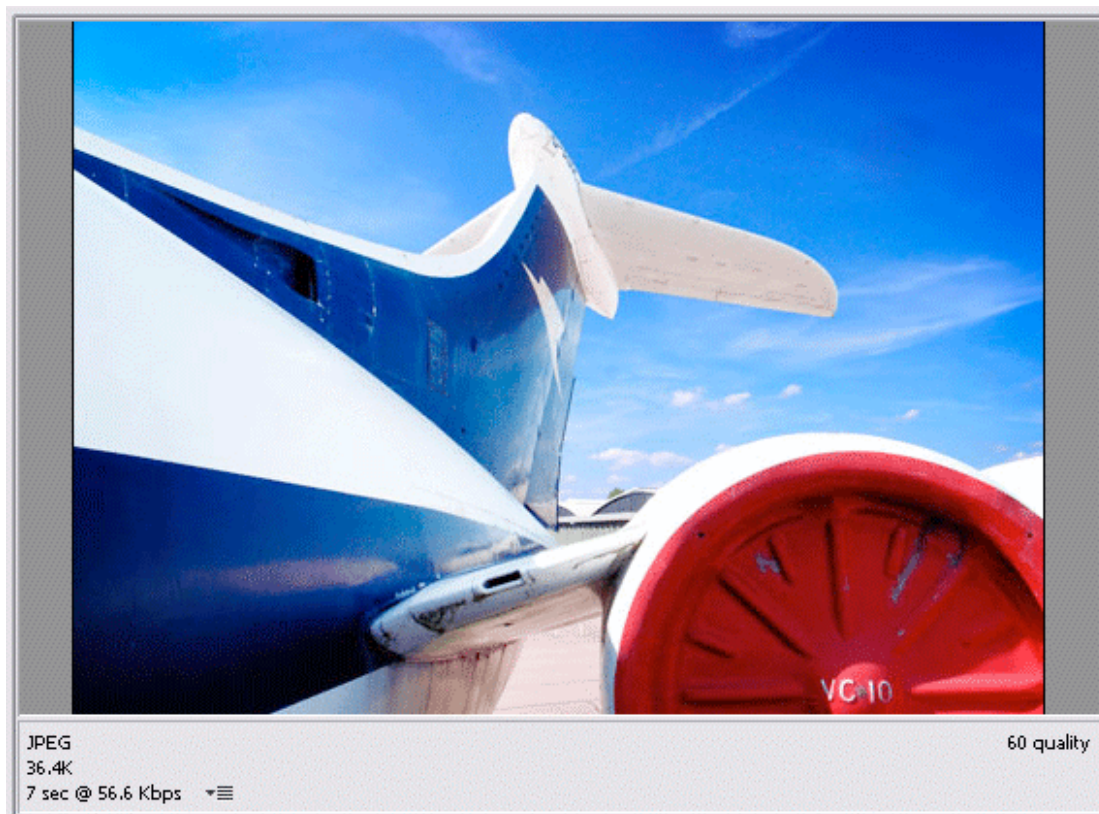
Image window showing currently selected optimisation settings, file size and download speed. To change download speed settings click on the menu button by the download speed.

Click on another image window and set alternative values to enable a comparison.

Values can be reset by selecting the image window. The settings for that window can be adjusted in the panel to the right of the dialogue.

JPEG, GIF and PNG settings explained
Many of the settings in the Save for Web and Devices dialogue are not usually required and can be ignored. Here is an explanation of the commonly used ones.

JPEG
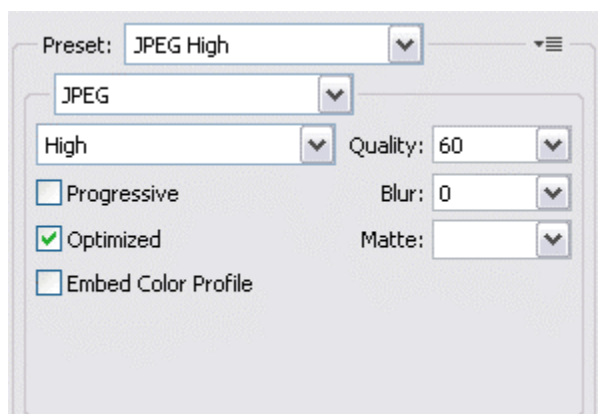
JPEG & Quality: Preset quality values that can be selected i.e. Maximum, Very High, High, Medium and Low. Selecting one of these presents a value

out of 100 in the *Quality* field. The amount can also be altered for fine adjustment as required.

Progressive: With this setting the image will download *progressively* in the web page. That is, before the image is completely downloaded it will appear gradually.

Optimised: The image is completely downloaded before it appears in the web page. This creates a slightly smaller file than Progressive.

Embed Colour Profile: Not required for the web. If selected, it can add to the file size.

Blur: Blurs the image. Can be used to smooth an image that is of poor quality or highly compressed (low optimisation settings).

Matte: Usually not required. This can be used if the original image being optimising has transparent areas. A Matte colour can be chosen that is the same as the background of the web page to fill the transparent areas. Jpegs cannot have transparency.

GIF
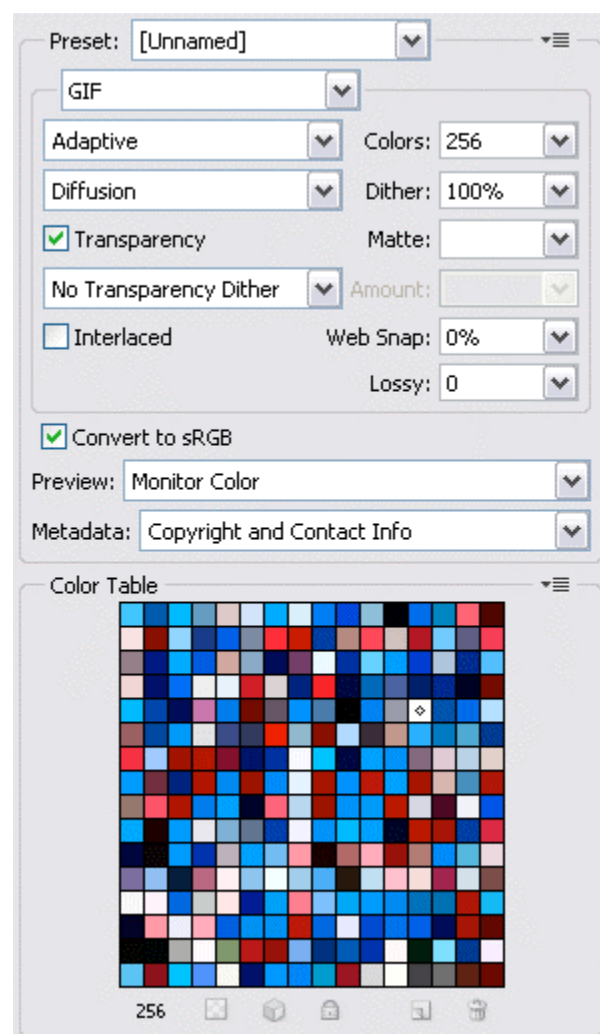
GIF palette: GIF optimisation is based on a colour palette. The main types for web images are Perceptive, Selective and Adaptive. Any one of these would

be suitable to use. They work by scanning the image to devise a palette of up to 256 colours. The other main colour palette is Restrictive. This is based on the 'web safe' colour palette. This will map the colours in the image to a specific range of colours. This is not so relevant with modern technology. In the past, computer screens were limited to the number of colours they displayed, so this can now be largely ignored.

Colours: To reduce the file size of a gif image, reduce the number of colours in the palette.

Diffusion: Use this if the image has gradations of colour or tone. Diffusion helps to smooth these.

Dither: Sets the amount of diffusion.

Transparency: Preserves transparent areas.

Matte: Sets the colour in semi transparent pixels adjoining a transparent area to reduce the effect of fringing.

Transparency Dither: Attempts to smooth the pixels adjoining a transparent area.
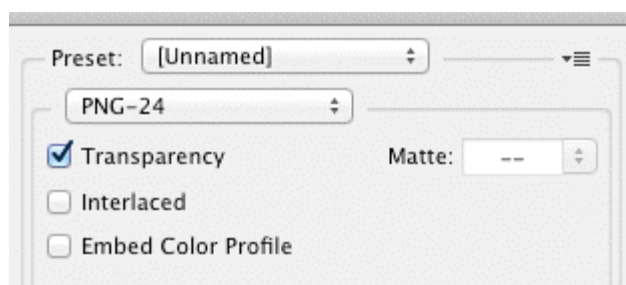
PNG
The PNG method works in the same way as the GIF method except that there are two kinds of PNG file:

- 8 bit
- 24 bit

8 bit PNG is suitable for most purposes. 24 bit PNG is suitable for graphics containing transparent areas.

The 8 bit PNG optimisation panel works like the one for GIF.

The 24 bit PNG panel is much simpler. Select Transparency when using this option.

Saving the optimised version
Select the window with the preferred optimised version and click *Save*.

In the *Save Optimised As* window:
- Enter a file name
- *Save as type*, choose images only
- *Settings*, choose custom

Click *Save* to save the optimised image to your *images* folder in the root folder or other destination.