

# File Formats

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The following is a listing of commonly used (and seen) file formats and what their main uses and characteristics are.

## File Extension Description

tif, tiff	Format used for the widespread exchange of raster files between programs and platforms. They are generally uncompressed, or use lossless LZW compression. Though there are multiple types of tiffs.
psd	File format native to Adobe PhotoShop. It is proprietary, and supports multiple layers.
gif	1 or 8 bit bitmap, grayscale or indexed color images that have been developed for use with Macs and PCs. They are popularly used for web development because they are compressed and therefore small and allow for fast downloads, and support animations, interlacing, and transparent colors. They are also used frequently with presentation software. Because of their color depth, they are best used for clip art/cartoon style graphics.
jpg, jpeg	24 bit color compressed images. Like gifs, they are popular with web and presentation graphics. As RGB color images, they produce good image quality at small file sizes, and are good for photographic type images, but their lossy compression can result in poor image quality if compressed too much.
tga, targa	Older format used with Truevision video boards and supporting MSDOS graphics.
pcx	1, 2, 4, 8 or 24 bit color images that are uncompressed. Originally a proprietary format for Paintbrush, now their use is fairly common. Supports custom color palettes.
bmp	1 to 24 bit color formats, with 4 and 8 bit color using lossless RLE compression. Developed as a Windows based PC bitmap format.
eps	Encapsulated Post Script, used for illustration and page layout programs, and can result in improved image quality when outputted to Post Script printers. Allows for tif style previews, and uses three types of encoding for output: ASCII (generic use for windows, results in largest files), Binary (smaller file though not supported by all output devices), and JPEG (smallest, with lossy compression and used for L2 Post Script printers).
png	Developed as an alternative to gifs, allowing for 24 bit color with lossless compression, and interlacing downloads. Uses dithering to create wider color range.

pdf Developed by Adobe, is a format used for the electronic distribution of documents. Based on L2 Post Script, it can support both vector and bitmap images, contain links, and can be used for document distribution, electronic publishing, and web based presentations.

pict Proprietary to MACs, format similar to tiffs, allowing for file transfer between multiple programs. They are compressed, and are best used for images with large fields of a solid color to prevent haloing. They support 16 to 32 bit color, and can be used for vector and bitmap images.

PhotoCD PhotoCD's are a proprietary format developed by Kodak. They are mainly used for image archiving.