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Optimize Your Images for Email Using the Photoshop Save For Web... Command [For Photoshop Elements 4]

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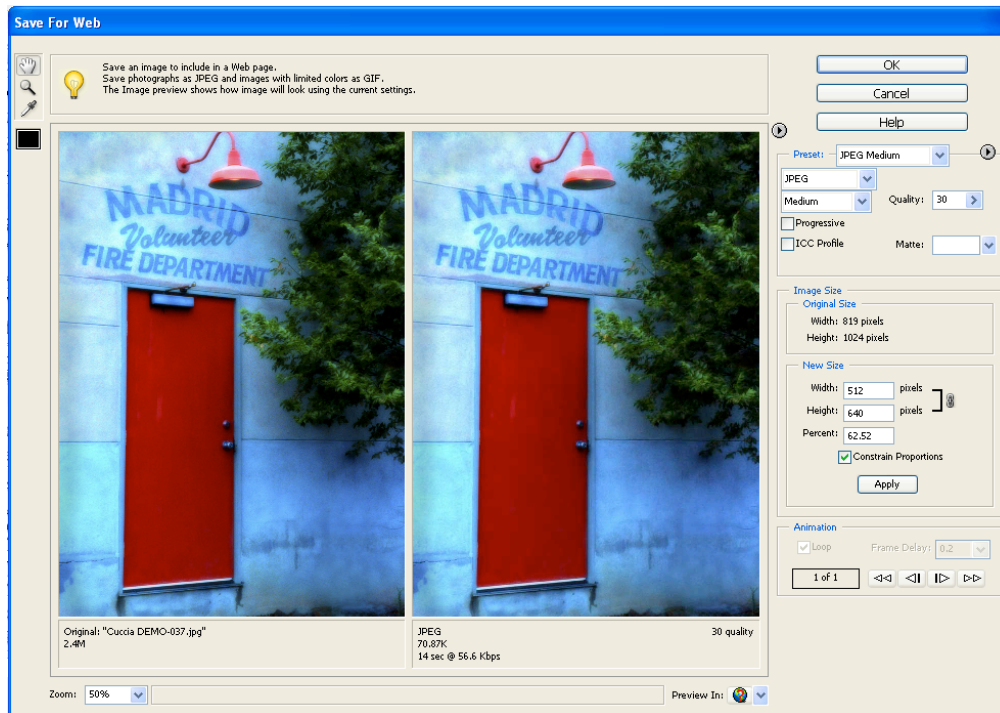
Are you looking for an easy way to convert and save your images directly to a size, resolution and format for uploading to the internet? Have you checked out the "Save for Web..." menu command in *Adobe Photoshop Elements*? This command gives you access to a number of options to help you finalize the processing of your digital image for repurposing it to something other than for printing – for example, low-resolution versions for email and for website content. To me, this command opens the Swiss Army Knife of "Save" dialog boxes.

When preparing an image for the purpose of uploading to the internet either for attaching to an email or for uploading to a website, you must optimize your image in order to avoid annoying your recipients. To "optimize" an image means to make it suitable for internet transfer. Surely you've received those email images that choke up your connection or those images so large on your screen that you need to scroll around to view them! Additionally, many ISPs (Internet Service Providers like Comcast, AOL, etc.) impose limits to email attachment file sizes. If you send images via internet for email or for web posting, it is your responsibility to optimize your images. The powerful "Save for Web..." command located under the FILE menu gives you the ability to do all your image optimization in one convenient place.

There are two important decisions to make at this point: 1. the image format and quality you want to save to (eg; JPEG High Quality), and 2. what image size you want (measured in pixel width and height dimensions). While you can change your image size using the Image Size menu command during your normal digital workflow, the *Save for Web* command allows you the option to do this at the end of your workflow as you are saving your file. Remember that image format/quality affects the file size due to file compression, while the Image Size affects the image size-on-screen.

The *Save for Web...* dialog box conveniently allows you to view side-by-side your original image and what it looks like once the optimization settings you choose will be applied to the image - the "before" and "after." This is truly a powerful feature, but be sure to set your views to 100% zoom level (lower left corner). On the right side you will find the controls where you choose your format (JPEG, GIF, etc.) and the quality (Lo, Medium, High, etc). While establishing your settings, look just below the right-hand "after" image. There, you will see vital image info such as the final file size of your image as well as an approximate download time at a pre-determined connection speed. This is a very handy tidbit of information, and you can change the reference speed by clicking on the little disclosure arrow at the very top-right corner of the right-hand image. For typical email applications, you do not need to select "Progressive" or "ICC Profile."

At the bottom right, the "Image Size" section allows you to change the all-important image pixel dimensions. Notice - in the image info section at the bottom - how your Image Size changes affect the file size and download time. For sending images via email and for most web postings I set my image's longest side to 800 pixels; the other side constrains proportionately as long as the "Constrain Proportions" checkbox is checked. Be sure to click on the "Apply" button when finished with the Image Size section.



Here's what my typical settings are for images that I save for email use. Your settings may vary, but give these a try for your initial tests: Format>JPEG; Quality>Medium; Image Size> set the longest side to 800 pixels and make sure "Constrain Proportions" is enabled.

You might be asking: What download speed should I be applying my changes against? To be on the safe side, I choose 56Kbps modem speed because there are still quite a few people using dial-up connections (about 40% of the U.S. population at last count). Once my image settings have been established, I can determine how long it will take for my recipient to download the image.

When you are satisfied with all of your settings, click the "Save" button. You are then prompted for file name and location as usual. Your original file remains untouched. By the way, the file is saved automatically at 72 ppi (pixels per inch), but that's strictly an arbitrary setting – remember, the important parameter when saving files for the internet is the IMAGE SIZE (dimensions) in pixels, not the resolution in ppi.

If you think you have made errors in your settings before SAVEing, you can either CANCEL to get out of this dialog box, or by pressing the ALT key (Windows) or OPTION key (Macintosh), the "Cancel" button changes to "Reset." Clicking this will reset all the values in the Save to Web dialog box, but not close it. And, the "Help" button changes to "Remember," a handy feature that remembers all of your settings for the next time you use Save to Web.