

# Photo Rules and Guidelines



## On This Page

- [Where to find photos for your websites](#)
- [Ethics Guidelines for taking photographs](#)
- [Important Rules about Image Usage](#)
  - [Adding Text To Images: Don't Do It](#)
  - [How To Reducing Image File Size, and Why It's Important](#)
- [Free Photo Editors](#)

High-quality photos make a HUGE difference in the overall effectiveness of your website. This article will cover the details of how to find good photos legally and humanely, best practices for using them on the web and in email, and some suggestions of what editors are available for you to do it.

## Where to find photos for your websites

### [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)

Images found on [audubon.org](http://audubon.org) have been specifically licensed for use on our website and are not to be "lifted" to use anywhere else. However, often permission has been granted for use across the wider Audubon network.

If you see a photo that you're interested in using, please [send an email to our photography team](#) and they can confirm if the image can be used for your Communications needs: [photography@audubon.org](mailto:photography@audubon.org).

### The Audubon DAM

For instructions on how to access the Digital Asset Management System (Audubon's online photo library), see: [How to find photos in the digital asset management system \(DAM\)](#)

### Wikipedia

For Wikimedia photos, please be aware that some images are loaded into Wikimedia via bots, so always check the fine print to make sure that the photo is indeed in the public domain or under a creative commons license. [commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page)

### Flickr

Search for photos under the creative commons license. [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)

### US Fish & Wildlife photo library

[digitalmedia.fws.gov](http://digitalmedia.fws.gov)

### Birds of America

Don't forget that **all** of the John James Audubon 'Birds of America' prints are in the public domain and available in high-res for free on the Audubon website. Find all the prints here: [audubon.org/birds-of-america](http://audubon.org/birds-of-america)

## Ethics Guidelines for taking photographs

- Please follow our ethics in wildlife photography guidelines: [audubon.org/news/the-ethical-bird-photographer](http://audubon.org/news/the-ethical-bird-photographer).
- The North American Nature Photography Association's Ethical Field Practices guide offers additional practical tips: <https://www.nanpa.org/docs/NANPA-Ethical-Practices.pdf>

## Important Rules about Image Usage

## Adding Text To Images: Don't Do It

Images you use on the web and for emails should NEVER have text "superimposed" over them. There are several reasons why.

- **You can't control text size.** Images get smaller on smaller screens. And that's good, we want images to be flexible, size-wise. But text you put on an image will shrink too, making it unreadable.
- **Lots of folks don't load images in emails,** and if that happens, it means any important information you added to an image will be missed by them.
- **It's non-inclusive.** Visually impaired people can't use screen readers to 'scan' the text if it's part of your image. What's more, it isn't translate-able, so whoever doesn't speak the language in which it's written is out of luck.
- **It tends to clash, design-wise.** Matching the fonts, colors, and sizes of text you have in the rest of the email is nearly impossible, so any text on your image will clash with the existing visual hierarchy.

So if you want to associate words with images in digital media, put them on the page or in the body of the email. Don't ever add them to images.

## How To Reducing Image File Size, and Why It's Important

Big images mean potentially slow loading times. When it comes to phones, sometimes VERY slow — and that's how most of your readers are accessing your content these days.

The solution is called "**compression**" or "**optimization**" which reduces the file size of your image without changing the dimensions. Here's how you do it in several programs.

**Photoshop:** The "Save For Web" option. "JPEG High 60" is a good balance between image quality and file size.

**BeFunky:** From "Save" in the middle of the top bar, choose "Computer". Here again you'll have a slider for quality, and right-of-middle is good.

**Preview:** Use File > Export, make sure it's set to JPEG. Same deal as the other two: slider for quality, go right-of-middle.

**IMPORTANT NOTE: Don't try to resize an image to make it bigger.** If your image isn't large enough to meet image size requirements, you'll unfortunately need to use a different photo.

## Free Photo Editors

If you don't have access to Photoshop or any similar desktop photo editing software, there are several free ones you can use for very basic cropping and resizing. Try these:

### BeFunky

A free web-based photo editor. If you use a PC and haven't purchased any photo editing software like Photoshop or Sketch, this is probably your best bet.  
<https://www.befunky.com/create/>

### Preview

If you have access to a Macintosh computer, Preview — the same thing you use to view images and PDFs and such — is just fine for cropping, resizing, and compressing images. It also has some decent level-adjusting and annotation tools. And of course it comes standard with MacOS.

### Whatever you want

There are dozens of free photo editors. Don't believe me? [Ask the Google!](#)