Tip Sheet: Photos in Flash

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Flash Journalism: How to Create Multimedia News Packages (Focal Press, 2005)

Rule No. 1:

If you bring the photo file into the Flash application (File menu > **Import**):
The photo should be uncompressed.
- BMP or PNG-24 files are fine.
- *Never* import a JPG file into Flash
- Importing BMP or PNG-24 files will make the FLA file very large. (That's okay.)

Rule No. 2:

When we load external photos, *those files must be* JPGs.
- The JPGs must NOT be "progressive"—they *will not load* if they are.
- ActionScript is used to load the external files. For example:
  `loader_mc.loadMovie("myphoto.jpg");`
- See "Handling JPGs for Flash" below.

Size Matters

In either case (import/BMP *or* load/JPG), the real **pixel** dimensions of the photo should be *no larger* than they need to be in the Flash package.
- In almost all cases, that means *the size you see* in the SWF should be the size of the actual photo file.
- If you reduce the size of a big photo *inside* Flash, the download time is longer than it needs to be. (Faster downloads are always better!)
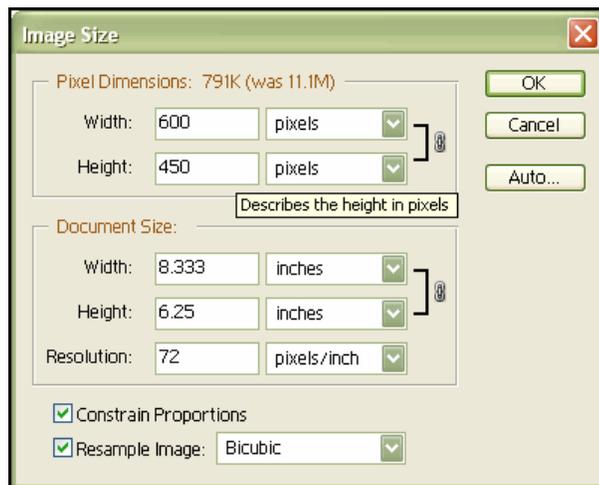
The *one exception* is for a photo that will be zoomed.
- If you will be *zooming in* (image gets bigger) in the Flash package, the pixel dimensions of the photo must be those of the final (zoomed) result.
- Otherwise, the image will be jagged and pixelated.

Let Flash Compress Your Photos

Under Rule No. 1 above, your final Flash package (a SWF file) will be too large *unless* you compress the pictures. There are two options for doing this.

You *must not use both* options in one SWF, because the one option cancels out the other.

Note that these instructions apply only to image files you have imported into the FLA file.

Option 1: Compress <u>all</u> photos in the Flash file in one step.
1. File menu > Publish Settings
2. Select the Flash tab.
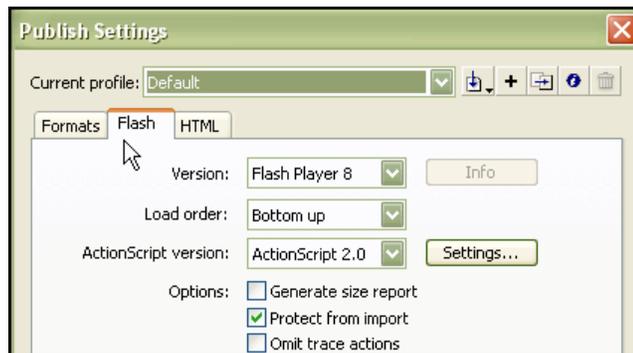
3. Adjust the compression level (start with 40 and see what that looks like).
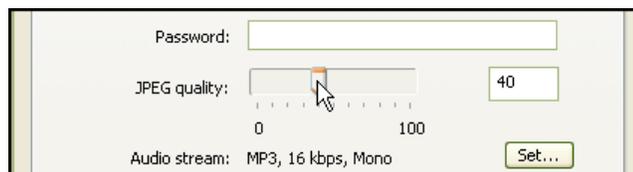
4. Click OK to close the dialog.
5. Save the file and output (Publish) your SWF.

Option 2: Compress each photo in the Flash file <u>individually</u>.
Obviously, this option is more labor intensive. But it may give you the best result if some photos are just background stuff, behind text (they could be compressed a lot, and save file size).

1. Select the photo file (BMP or PNG-24) in the Library panel
2. Right-click (Control-click/Mac) to open menu
3. Select "Properties" from the menu
4. In the Bitmap Properties dialog box, *uncheck* "Use document default quality."

6. Type in a compression quality. (You can click the Test button to see the results.)
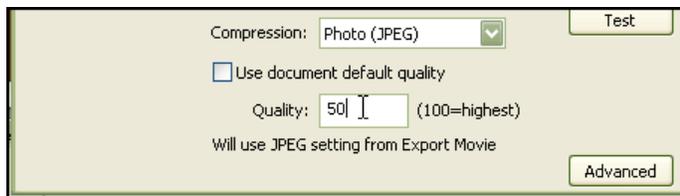
7. Click OK to close the dialog.
8. Save the file and output (Publish) your SWF.

Handling JPGs for Flash

This is really how we handle *all* JPGs for use on the Web. Because file size makes a big difference in how long a user is waiting to see your work (download time), it's important to strip out all unnecessary information from the JPG file.

1. Always use "Save for Web" in Photoshop. It really crunches the file size down, much better than the normal "Save."

2. Make sure the image is 72 ppi *before* you resize or crop it. A computer screen will not display a higher resolution than that. (Higher res is for printing only.)

Note: Using "Save for Web" will automatically convert your JPG to 72 ppi.