Getting high quality photographs and images for printing

Alex Dreyfuss - 2020-04-16 - Project Management

If your brand is calling for big, bold and beautiful imagery, it is important that we start the design process with photos that are are crisp and vivid at full intended print size.

There are two important factors that can help you determine if your image is appropriate: **pixel count and DPI**.

What is DPI?

DPI stands for dots per inch. The number of dots in a printed inch. The more dot's the higher the quality of the print (more sharpness and detail).

We recommend **300 DPI for all images** but in some cases, *as low as* 150 dpi can work. The best clarity will come at 300 dpi.

What is pixel count?

If your image is 300 DPI, that means each inch contains 300 dots printed per inch.

For a 8.5" by 11" photograph, the **minimum needed** would be 2550 pixels wide (300 pixels/inch * 8.5 inches) by 3300 (300 pixels/inch * 11 inches).

> ***Here's the simplified formula:***
>
> IMAGE SIZE * DPI = RESOLUTION
>
> ***Note:*** *For full bleed images add .125" (1/8 inch) to each side.*

But what if I want to crop a photo, does that change things?

The short answer, *it depends*. Best practice is to use common sense here, if you are cropping out half of the photo, the resolution should be twice the size so that it maintains clarity when it is resized.

How to check your resolution

Checking resolution on PC

1) To check a photo's resolution on a Windows PC, select the file you want to use. Right-click on the image and then select "Properties."
2) A window will appear with the image's details. Go to the "Details" tab to see the image's dimensions and resolution.

Checking resolution on Mac

1) Select the image you want to use and "**Right-click**" on it. Click on "**Get Info**"
2) The image information window will open. You can find the image dimension and resolution under the "**More Info**" tab.

A real world example

Let's say we have a print piece that is (H)5.5 by (W)8.5.

1) Accommodate for bleed

We would add .125" to each side for bleed.
5.75" by 8.75"

2) Consider DPI

We would then multiply these dimensions by 300 (for DPI)

1687.5 by 2587.5 px *rounds up to*
1688 x 2588 px

This would be our minimum resolution needed.

3) Adjust for design and layout

We decide to crop out the right half of the image so we double the needed pixels on the width:
2587.5 * 2 = 5175 px

Our new minimum resolution for this cropped photo is: 1688 x 5175 px

A list of common sizes, coming soon.