pse ADOBE® PHOTOSHOP® ELEMENTS

Understanding file formats

When you save files from Elements, you need to pick a file format in the Format drop-down menu found in both the Save and Save As dialog boxes.

When you choose from the different format options, keep the following information in mind:

 File formats are especially important when you exchange files with other users. Each format has a purpose, and other programs can accept or reject files depending on the format you choose.

Whether you can select one format or another when you save a file depends on the color mode, the bit depth, and whether layers are present. If a format isn't present in the Format drop-down menu when you attempt to save a file, return to one of the edit modes and perform some kind of edit, such as changing a color mode or flattening layers, in order to save the file in your chosen format.

For a glimpse at all the file formats available to you, open a standard RGB color image in Standard Edit mode, choose File Save As, and click the down arrow to open the Format drop-down menu. As you can see in Figure 3-11, you have many options for choosing a format.

In the following sections, we explain most of the file formats supported by Elements and the purpose for each format.
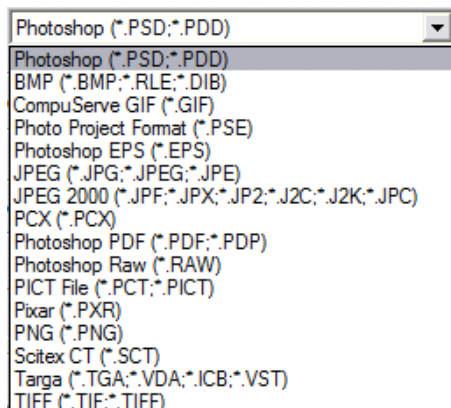

Figure 3-11: Open the Format drop-down
menu in either the Save or Save As dialog box,
and the formats supported by Elements appear.

Photoshop (*.PSD, *.PDD)

This format is the native file format for both Photoshop and Photoshop Elements. The format supports saving all color modes and bit depths, and you can preserve layers. Use this format when you want to save in a native format or exchange files with Photoshop users. Also use it for saving files that you need to return to for more editing. When you save layers, any text you add to layers can be edited when you return to the file. (See Chapter 13 for more information on adding text to an image.)

BMP (*.BMP, *.RLE, *.DIB)

The term bitmap can be a little confusing. You have both a file format type that's bitmap and a color mode that's also bitmap. Don't confuse the two. The bitmap format supports saving in all color modes and in all bit depths. The bitmap color mode, which we cover earlier in this chapter, is 1-bit black-and-white only.

Use the bitmap format when you want to add images to system resources, such as wallpaper for your desktop. Bitmap is also used with many different application programs. If you can't import images in other program documents, try to save them as BMP files.

CompuServe GIF (*.GIF)

Barb was a college coed, and Ted had a mustache and wore a green leisure suit when CompuServe was the host for our e-mail accounts. We exchanged files and mail on 300 baud modems. Later, in 1987, CompuServe developed GIF (Graphics Interchange Format) to exchange files between mainframe computers and the ever-growing number of users working on Osborne, Kaypro, Apple, and Radio Shack TRS-80 computers.

GIF is now a popular format for hosting Web graphics. GIF images can be indexed color or animated images and support the smallest file sizes. Use this format when you need fewer than 256 colors and when you want to create animation in your images.

Photo Project Format (*.PSE)

Use this option when you create a project and you want to save the file as a project. See Chapter 16 for more on creating projects in Elements.

Photoshop EPS (*.EPS)

Photoshop EPS (Encapsulated PostScript) files are sometimes used by graphic artists when they're designing jobs for commercial printing. The more popular format for creative professionals is TIFF, but Photoshop EPS has some advantages not found in other formats.

Depending on the color mode of your image, you have different options when you're using the Photoshop EPS file format. Select the format in the Save/Save As dialog box and click Save. If you're working on a bitmap image (1 bit), the EPS Options dialog box, as shown in Figure 3-12, opens. It offers an option to save transparency wherever white appears in your document.

Notice the Transparent Whites check box. You might have a circular logo for which you want the area around the circle to appear transparent. If you import the graphical image in another program, you can see the black in the image while all the white area is transparent and shows any background through what was white in the original bitmap image. If you save a file in a higher bit depth, the EPS Options dialog box doesn't provide an option for making whites transparent.
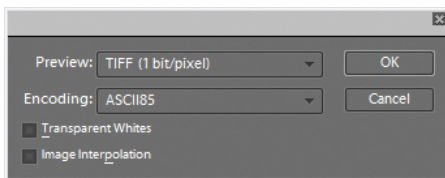

Figure 3-12: When you're working on 1-bit bitmap images, this dialog box offers an option to save transparency where white appears in the document.

JPEG (*.JPG, *.JPEG, *.JPE)
JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group) is perhaps the most common file format now in use. JPEG files are used with e-mail attachments and by many photo labs for printing files, and they can be viewed in JPEG viewers and directly in Web browsers. Just about every program capable of importing images supports the JPEG format. Creative professionals wouldn't dream of using the JPEG format in design layouts, but everyone else uses the format for all kinds of documents.

You need to exercise some caution when you're using the JPEG format. JPEG files are compressed to reduce file size. You can scrunch an image of several megabytes into a few hundred kilobytes. When you save a file with JPEG compression, you experience data loss. You might not see this on your monitor, or it might appear noticeably on photo prints if you're using low compression while preserving higher quality. However, when you save with maximum ¬compression, more pixels are tossed away, and you definitely notice image degradation.

When you save, open, and resave images in JPEG format, each new save degrades an image more. If you need to submit JPEG images to photo labs for printing your pictures, keep saving in Photoshop PSD file format until you're ready to save the final image. Save in JPEG format when you want to save the final file for printing and use a low compression with high quality.

When you select JPEG for the format and click Save, the JPEG Options dialog box opens, as shown in Figure 3-13. You choose the amount of compression by typing a value in the Quality text box or by moving the slider below the Quality text box. The acceptable ranges are from 0 to 12 — 0 is the lowest quality and results in the highest compression, and 12 is the highest quality that results in the lowest amount of compression.

Notice that you also have choices in the Format Options of the JPEG Options dialog box. The Progressive option creates a progressive JPEG file commonly used with Web browsers. This file type shows progressive quality while the file downloads from a Web site. The image first appears in a low-quality view and shows higher-resolution views until the image appears at full resolution when it's completely downloaded in your browser window.
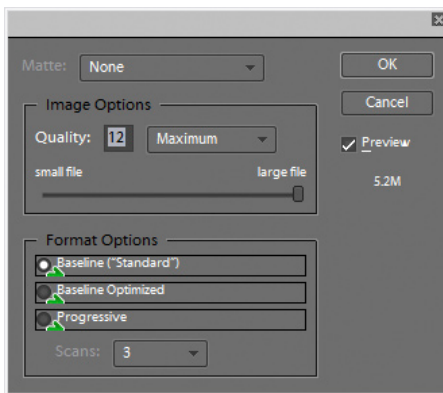

Figure 3-13: When saving in JPEG format, make a choice for the amount of compression to apply to the saved image.

JPEG 2000 (*.JPF, *.JPX, *.JP2, *. J2K, *.JPC)
JPEG 2000 is a newer JPEG file format. This format offers you the same mode quality as the JPEG format and an option to save the file with compression without tossing away pixels, in which case, you get lossless compression. The JPEG 2000 dialog box shows you, right in the dialog box and before you save the image, the results of the choices you make in terms of the resulting file size.

If you need to save images in JPEG format for your commercial photo lab, check with the technicians and ask whether they support JPEG 2000. If so, save your files in this format with a lossless compression. When files are compressed with lossless compression, you can expect to lose about two-thirds of the original file size. For example, a 6MB file can be reduced to about 2MB when it's saved as JPEG 2000 in a lossless-compression format. Note that if you save files in JPEG 2000 format for the Web, Web browsers need to have a plug-in to see the images.

PCX (*.PCX)

PCX is a native PC format first used with PC Paintbrush. Most programs now support newer file formats, and you're not likely to need to save in PCX format. If you have legacy files from years ago, you can open PCX files in Elements, edit them, and save them in a newer format.

Photoshop PDF (*.PDF, *.PDP)

Adobe PDF (Portable Document Format) is designed to maintain document integrity and exchange files between computers. PDF is one of the most popular formats and can be viewed in the free Adobe Reader program available for installation on your Elements CD installer or by downloading it from the Adobe Web site.

PDF is all over the place in Elements. When you jump into Organize mode and create slide presentations, cards, and calendars, for example, you can export your documents as PDF files. When you save in Photoshop PDF format, you can preserve layers and text. Text is recognizable in Adobe Reader (or other Acrobat viewers) and can be searched by using the Reader's Find and Search tools.

PDF files can be printed, hosted on Web sites, and exchanged with users of Windows, Macintosh, Unix, and Linux. All in all, this format is well suited for all the files you create in Elements that contain text, layers, and transparency, and for when you want to exchange files with users who don't have Elements or Photoshop.

Photoshop Raw (*.RAW)

This format is used to exchange files between Windows and Mac users and mainframe computers. Unless you prepare files to be viewed on mainframes, don't bother saving in this format.

PICT File (*.PCT, *.PICT)

PICT (Picture) format is Apple's answer to PCX on Windows. This format originated with the 1984 introduction of the Macintosh and the MacDraw program. PICT files are helpful for creating slides and video files on the Macintosh and for printing your images on film recorders that don't use PostScript. You might use the format when requested by a Mac user or when sending files that need to be printed as slides on a non-PostScript film recorder.

Pixar (*.PXR)

This format is used for exchanging files with Pixar workstations.

PNG (*.PNG)

PNG (Portable Network Graphics) is another format used with Web pages. PNG supports all color modes, 24-bit images, and transparency. Some browsers, however, may need a plug-in to see PNG files on Web pages. One disadvantage of using PNG is that color profiles can't be embedded in the images, as they can with JPEG.

Scitex CT (*.SCT)

The Scitex Continuous Tone (CT) format is used by Scitex workstations in commercial printing environments.

Targa (*.TGA, *.VDA, *.ICB, *.VST)

Targa is a format for describing bitmap images and is capable of representing bitmaps from black and white, indexed color, and RGB color. It's used for applications that can read Targa files, such as Truevision's hardware.

TIFF (*.TIF, *.TIFF)

TIFF (Tagged Image File Format) is the most common format used by graphic designers. TIFF is generally used for importing images in professional layout programs, like Adobe InDesign and Adobe PageMaker, and when commercial photo labs and print shops use equipment that supports downloading TIFF files directly to their devices. (Note: Direct downloads are used in lieu of opening a Print dialog box.)

In as much as creative professionals have used TIFF for so long, a better choice for designers using a program, like Adobe InDesign, is saving in the native Photoshop PSD file format. This requires a creative professional to save only one file in native format without bothering to save both native and TIFF formats.

TIFF, along with Photoshop PSD and Photoshop PDF, supports saving layered files and works in all color modes. When you save in TIFF format, you can also compress files in several different compression schemes, and compression with TIFF files doesn't lose data unless you choose a JPEG compression.

When you select TIFF for the format and click Save in the Save/Save As dialog box, the TIFF Options dialog box opens, as shown in Figure 3-14.
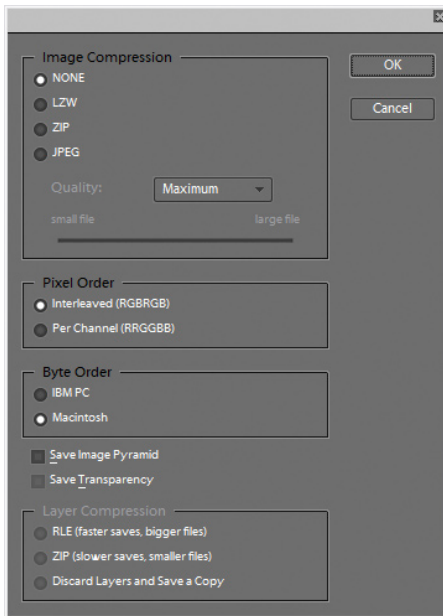
Figure 3-14: Choose TIFF from the Format drop-down menu and click Save to open the TIFF Options dialog box.

In the Image Compression area, you have these choices:

NONE: Selecting this option results in no compression. You use this option when sending files to creative professionals for creating layouts in programs like Adobe InDesign. None of the compression schemes below is recommended for printing files to commercial printing devices.

LZW: This lossless compression scheme results in much lower file sizes without destroying data.

ZIP: ZIP is also a lossless compression scheme. You can favor ZIP compression over LZW when you have large areas of the same color in an image.

JPEG: JPEG is lossy and results in the smallest file sizes. Use JPEG here the same as when you apply JPEG compression with files saved in the JPEG format.