



BY DAVE DONALD, *This Magazine*, Art Director

HOW TO SOURCE AND EDIT FREE IMAGES FOR YOUR WEBSITE

It's possible to source free images on the Web, especially if you are using them for your publication's website. It's much harder to find high-resolution images that you would be able to use in your printed magazine. For print, are stock photo agencies that provide high quality photos at very reasonable rates ([iStock](#), [Shutterstock](#) and [Fotolia](#)), so this tip sheet will concentrate on those lower-resolution website-friendly images.

For many of these images it's best to remember that if someone is going to let you use their image for free, then you can be expected to credit the creator as you likely do in your printed publication. Therefore, it would be good to start your search for free images by establishing a simple style for crediting images on your website.

Public Domain and Creative Commons

If a work has no known copyright holder, the copyright has expired (this is usually true for most images that are very old—before 1923 in the U.S.), or has been surrendered, then the work is said to be in the public domain and you're free to use and/or alter it.

Creative Commons (CC) is an organization that licenses images according to varying degrees of restriction. The thing you need to watch for is whether you're not allowed to use the image for commercial purposes (NC) and if you can't alter the image (ND). For almost all CC images you'll need to credit the creator.

To find your way through the various levels of CC use this [infographic](#).

[This page](#) also explains the different levels of CC further.

Free Image Sites

[Wikimedia Commons](#)

All of these are guaranteed CC images. There are millions of them, though many are not professional. It's great for historical images. If you find an image in Wikipedia, it will likely have a link to this site.

[Advanced Flickr Search](#)

The search engine allows you to restrict your search to CC images, or further for images that permit commercial use and modifications. Anyone can load images onto flickr so the quality is all over the place. You may have to spend some time to find the gems.

[Free Digital Photos](#)

Only the smallest resolution images are free, which should be fine for most website requirements. They do require a credit somewhere on the page.

[Stockvault](#)

The free images are placed between sponsor images above and below so you can see how much better the for-pay images are. The search engine also seems to work much better for the for-pay images than the free ones. There are some great free images, but you'll need time to wade through the rest.

[Pixabay](#)

Great search engine with CC images for commercial use. The top row of every search page has sponsor images (that you'll have to pay for), but the others are all free and some even come in large sizes.

 [DOWNLOAD MORE HOTSHEETS AT \[magazinescanada.ca/cultural/hotsheets\]\(http://magazinescanada.ca/cultural/hotsheets\)](#)

[Foter](#)

A good site where you can restrict image searches to commercial-use.

[Vector Portal](#)

It has a large selection of free vector images.

[Unrestricted Stock](#)

There are great vector icons and images, but a limited choice.

[Iconfinder](#)

This site has tons of icons, although they are very small (around 150 x150 pixels or smaller). There are royalty-free icons (for which you pay), but you can restrict your search to just the free ones. When you move the cursor over the image you can see the restrictions on usage.

[Openclipart](#)

Great site for icons and all images are public domain.

[The Graphics Fairy](#)

There are wonderful vintage images here but the site doesn't guarantee there aren't any outstanding copyrights on them. They are working on the principal that any image from before 1923 is in the public domain in the U.S.

[Ikeda-Barry Creative](#)

If you're the creative type then here are some great textures that you can use for free.

[everystockphoto](#)

This is a search engine that will show you images from a number of the above sites and others. Some sites require signing up but you can exclude these sites in the advanced search window, or you can sign up to those sites for a larger selection of free images.

This list is just a starting point. There are more free image websites emerging every day. Keep searching and you'll find your own new sources. Remember to credit the images!

Editing Images for Your Website

Images for the Web come in three varieties: GIF, PNG and JPEG.

GIFs: Best for logos and icons. They support transparency and are restricted to 256 colours. Limited animation is also possible.

PNGs: They also support transparency. They tend to be larger files than comparable JPEGs, but smaller than GIFs. Animation, however, isn't possible with PNGs.

JPEGs: Best for photos. They support a wider range of colours, depending on the degree of compression. They also tend to be smaller than comparable PNG files. They do not support transparency.

Once you decide which format works best for your website needs, open the original image in Photoshop. Go under the file menu to "Save for Web & Devices..." This will allow you to determine the image format (GIF, PNG or JPEG), as well as offer you different size and transparency options. The double preview window shows you how much image quality is sacrificed when reducing the file size. The smaller the image size the faster it loads in someone's browser and the more space it saves on your site's server. However, you do want to retain enough quality to have pleasing photos on your website. Like much else in life, it's about making compromises.