BEST PRACTICES GUIDE

to Using and Creating Images
Guide to Using and Creating Images

This guide will help you to create and select images for use on our website and on print materials. Please note that print materials that represent the TLC unit as a whole should be done through the Media Designer. The guide is divided into two main categories:

I. Using images
II. Creating your own
I Using Images

This section is about how to use pre-existing images. If you download images from the web, please keep copyright rules in mind. You can also get images from Adam via Flickr.

The best practices for using images is based on four major areas:
1. Size and dimension
2. Quality
3. Subject
4. Harmony

1. SIZE AND DIMENSIONS

Size refers to both the length and width measurements as well as the dots per inch (dpi), or resolution of the image. The higher the dpi is, the better quality your image will be (and the larger the file size will be). Image resolution should be 72dpi for web and 300dpi or higher for print.

How to find the dimensions of your image

On a MAC:
You can find out an image resolution by "right-clicking" on the image - a menu box should appear. Go to “More Info” and you’ll see the dimensions. The higher they, are, the better your resolution will be.

On a PC:
"Right-click" on the image so that a menu block appears. Select "Open with" and then select "Paint." Once open in paint, click on the "File" menu bar, then select "Properties. The window below will open and show you the image's pixel dimension and resolution.

In Photoshop
Open the image in Photoshop and go to the Image menu at the top and the scroll down to “Image Size.”

Enlarging and Shrinking
Never enlarge a photo size otherwise it will likely become pixelated. If you need to enlarge it, it’s not the right image. If you upload a photo to the web and it is pixelated, it is too small. If it’s more than 1000px wide, it’s likely too large and will slow down loading speed. However, all sites have different requirements for sizes. It’s best to upload and check how it looks before publishing.
Ex.

Image size: 25.2K
Resolution: 72 dpi
Width: 4cm

Image size: 1.56K
Resolution: 72 dpi
Width: 1 cm

ii. File Types

The amount of pixelization often depends on the file type you are using. Here’s a quick explanation of the most common types of image files used:

- **Jpeg**- compressed, good for web, and for images with colour depth, like photos or paintings
- **TIFF**- uncompressed, good for printing
- **GIF**- for images with flat colours
- **PNG**- similar to GIF
- **SVG**- scalable – usually for interactivity and animation
- **PDF**- universal file for sending and printing

**TLC WEB**

- Use jpegs
- Currently being used – 1000 pixels width for main photos – 700 x 350. 2x1 standard photo size is aspect ratio 2x1 proportions.
- 320 x320
- 1x1 proportion
- Staff portrait pics: do not add your own, as we receive formats from creative studios
- Adobe AEM allows you to crop photos with a locked aspect ratio. This means you can define what dimensions you want and crop with that exact dimension.
2. QUALITY

i. Colour

Skin tone is a good gauge for assessing the correctness of the colour of your photo. (Unless there is clearly a coloured light being shone, or a sunset, etc.) You can adjust the color in Photoshop using the Hue/Saturation tool under the Image>Adjustment menu. You can also do this in iPhoto by clicking “Edit” and adjusting the tint in the “Adjust” menu.

Make sure that your photo has the correct exposure—not too dark and not too light. You can adjust the exposure in Photoshop using the Levels or Exposure tools under the Image>Adjustment menu and again, in iPhoto by clicking on the “Adjust” menu and altering the exposure and contrast levels.

Ex. Using skin tone to correct an image.

![Image showing skin tone correction in Photoshop and iPhoto](image)

ii. Focus

Is at least one item in the photo image in focus? If not, there is not much you can do. Don’t use it. If it is a graphic, chart or icon it should all be in focus.

iii. Framing and composition

A focal point is needed. Use the rule of thirds to help determine this (below). Is it easy to understand what is going on in the image? You may need to crop it.

iv. Cropping

You can crop into an image to draw focus to a certain part, or to cut out undesirable parts. Do not crop too close to a person or other item in focus. Instead, leave a margin, or “breathing room.” Always save a copy of the original in case you need to go back! Both Photoshop and iPhoto have crop tools.
3. SUBJECT

The subject matter of your image is often the most important value. If it isn’t relevant, compositing, quality and dpi will not matter.

Some tips for subject matter at the TLC:
- Consider diversity—gender, age, race.
- Screenshots are useful for instructions. But these are quite low resolution, so make sure that you shrink them when uploading or printing so that they are not pixelated.
- Remember to use graphics like charts, and drawings to add visual diversity.
- Avoid clip art.
- Use SVG files if you need to enlarge an icon or other simple graphic.
- Combine usage of close ups with long shots.

TLC WEB
- The focus is on people. 80% of the time, try to use photographs of smiling people.
- Try to use photos that match the event being described.
- The other 20% of photos should be appropriate landscapes, classrooms and building shots, or graphics.

4. HARMONY

Harmony is about how your image looks on the page. Does it work with the other elements? Generally, you should have variety without too much contrast.

Adding variety:
- Use a variety of landscape and portrait formats.
- Contrast close-ups with long shots.
- Use appropriate graphics for a pop of colour.
- Experiment with large quotes or sidebars in coloured blocks as alternatives to photos.

Maintaining harmony:
- Use the same margins for every graphic. (The empty space between the graphic and other elements.)
- Imagine a grid lying on top of your page, and align every item to line on the grid. Similar to the rule of thirds, this is important for giving your page visual order.

Tips
- Remember your target audience and use the appropriate amount of graphics.
- Experiment with one large graphic and a few smaller ones.
II. Creating Images

This section refers to images that you create or take yourself. Some of the most obvious benefits are that there are no copyright considerations and that you can create the “perfect” image to suit your needs.

The best practices for creating images is based on a similar three major areas:

1. Size and File Type
2. Focus
   i) Subject focus
   ii) Actual focus
3. Composition and Framing

1. SIZE AND FILE TYPE

Size
Size, here, refers the actual file size of the image measured in megabytes. While many device cameras (iPhone, Android etc.) can take quite high-resolution photographs, stand-alone digital cameras (point and shoot) are often higher resolution, while DSLR (Digital Single-lens Reflex) cameras offer the largest file size and resolution. Remember to start large and end small (for web)

*For specifics on USAGE see the previous section

File Type
Most cameras, by default, record images as .jpg. This is a perfectly usable file type. However some higher performance cameras also shoot in RAW format. If that is an option this is even better because the RAW image has a much larger colour space and allows for much more manipulation in post-production.

2. FOCUS

The primary benefit of creating your own image is that you can create the image to perfectly suit your needs. But it’s no good if the image is either blurry or the subject in the image is unclear.

i. Subject Focus
   This is possibly the most important consideration when taking any photograph. What are you taking a picture of? That is the subject. Often we take photographs of things that interest us or catch our eye. If you are taking a photo with the specific intention of
using it for a specific purpose then consider how the subject you are photographing relates or reflects the content.

ii. **Actual Focus**
   For many people using a device camera or a small point-and-shoot eliminates many possibilities of error. These cameras automatically focus and expose. You just need to press the button. However, if you are inclined to use a camera with manual options like exposure and focus, it is IMPERATIVE that the image you take be in focus.

TIPS:
  a. Zoom in to focus. This is an old trick. Often it can be hard to be sure the image is actually in focus, especially if you are only seeing a tiny version through the viewfinder. So zoom all the way in on the subject, then adjust the focus and zoom back out.

  b. Other variables like the relationship between F-stop, shutter speed and ISO can all affect the image quality and even focus. Below is a chart (in German) that illustrates these three variables and how the relate to image quality.

3. **COMPOSITION AND FRAMING**

**Composition**
Composition, whether in photographs or film and video refers to the “way things appear in the frame.” When you look through the lens, a good photographer will consider not just the subject, but also what is in the background, the foreground and anything else that will distract or focus the viewer’s eye.

Related to this is **Framing**. This refers to the relationship between the subject and the “frame” of the photograph. Is the subject in the middle of the frame? Off to the side? Is their head cut off at the top? (This is a definite NO-NO).
**TIP: The Rule of 3rds**

a. The rule of thirds is one of the fundamental concepts used in photography. It relates to the way we compose our shots and the relationship between space and the object we are photographing.

In its simplest application, imagine an invisible grid in your frame, creating 9 equal sized regions. The principle here is that by placing objects or aspects of focus at intersections of, or along these lines, you will inherently create more interesting and better composed photographs than if you just plopped your subject in the middle of the frame.
Summary:
Whether taking photos with a smart phone or an expensive camera, the basic principles are the same.
1. Consider the subject.
2. Make sure it is in focus, exposed, not blurry.
3. Check your framing & composition – Rule of 3rds

Just taking a few seconds to consider these elements before you snap will help you develop as a photographer and serve you well, even when taking pictures just for fun.

- Allow white space, or “breathing room.” This is a very important and underutilized element. Allow more white space around large headings. Remember to add white space around images. Allow for less white space around grouped items.
- Don’t repeat information necessarily- if you’ve depicted it with an image, you don’t have to write it down- try to just list numbers, or a caption.