

Low Resolution

We send this info along when we have received a photo file whose size indicates the resolution is too low to produce a quality print in the size you have requested.

These tips will guide you in producing the best possible file for large format printing.

It is usually best to send us the original digital file produced by your camera for use in making large prints.

Be sure you are shooting and storing only the highest quality images your camera is capable of. This will be the largest file size. For many consumer cameras this is not the default setting. Be sure to check the documentation that came with your camera and check these settings every time the batteries are removed or the camera requires charging.

Never use "photo sharing" software to email your files to us. Often included with digital cameras and scanners, this software will deliberately and irreversibly shrink your file size to facilitate sending and receiving photo files over slow dial-up connections. The resulting files will appear quite normal on the low resolution requirements of a computer monitor but will very likely produce terrible large format prints.

Always use the lowest compression - "best quality" setting available for JPG/JPEG files. Another way to really mess up an otherwise great photo is to over-compress a JPG file. Some scanner software as well as digital camera settings and graphics programs offer smaller file sizes via increased JPG file compression to save camera memory or speed loading for website and email applications. JPG is a "lossy" compression format which discards information in the process. Also, repeatedly opening a JPG in an image editor will re-compress the file when it is saved, quickly destroying image quality.

Saving a bigger file size is always better for images you intend to print. It is always easier to make a smaller file later for email or web use than trying to enlarge a file that is too small for future printing.

Scanners

Use the right resolution when scanning photographs.

Keep in mind that photo prints on paper offer relatively low resolution to start with and are not very good candidates for creating huge enlargements. If a film negative or slide is available you will get much better results sending this to us for scanning on our dedicated high resolution film scanner.

Be sure to check the resolution setting in your scanner's software before scanning your photo. Most scanners have a default setting that is too low for photographic work. How you navigate to these settings differs from one manufacturer to another, read the documentation that came with your machine.

Be sure to inspect the glass and clean it as needed and be sure your photos are free from dust or other debris before scanning them.

We need from 150 - 300 dpi at full print size, which is unfortunately about all one can hope to get from a print on paper.

If the digital image is clean and sharp we should be able to enlarge the digital image a number of times it's original size using our software.

If the image is distorted or noisy however it will not get any better, only worse, during this kind of enlargement.

Also be aware that scanning at excessively high resolutions will bring out even the smallest surface imperfections in a photo print. This will result in a noisy, poor quality image.

Scanning satin or linen finished photos can present problems for the same reason, as the finish itself will create a pattern in your higher resolution scans.

You may need to experiment a bit to get the right settings for scanning a given photograph, but it will likely only be around 300 dpi.

This is the reason we recommend only scanning larger photos for images you intend to enlarge to poster size.

If you start with a wallet size photo and successfully scan it at 300 dpi, under the best of circumstances the largest print you can hope for will only be about 6"x9".

A high quality scan made from an 8"x10" however could possibly go as large as 24"x36" using our enlargement methods.

Setting output size

Most scanner software also offers the option of changing the output size of your image. You can set the dimensions to those of the print size you wish to order, but keep the aspect ratio locked to the original when using this method. (See cropping below). Then scan the image to provide a resolution of 150 - 300 dpi at output size. When using this method keep in mind (A) the resulting file size may be very large depending on the output size you select and (B) don't go overboard hoping we can fix a really rough looking image. If it doesn't look pleasing when viewed print size on your monitor, it probably won't look very good on paper either.

We can often get better results enlarging a smaller image ourselves if the dimensions you choose are going to be significantly larger than the original.

Saving your digital file

While you are in the settings area look for the "save as" file type setting. If available use "uncompressed TIFF" instead of JPG. If only JPG is available, be sure it is set to store your image in "best quality" (large file size).

About Cropping

Images will distort badly if both dimensions are not changed proportionately. Most software will prevent you from distorting the image by automatically changing the opposing dimension when you change either one. Never override this function.

If the width x height (aspect ratio) of your print will be different from the original image, set the output size so that it is large enough to fill both dimensions of your chosen print size. The oversized dimension will be manually cropped (trimmed) to fit when we set it up for printing. If the difference is significant you may wish to reconsider your choice of print size to better match the aspect your original image.

Graphics and Text

If your image file contains graphics or text it must be created at full print size. These elements may distort badly if enlarged in photo editing software unless the file can be stored in a scalable format.

If you wish to add these elements to a photographic image that has not been sized to output, it would be best to send them as separate files for us to add after we size your image (minimal editing charges will apply). If there is to be a number of these elements added, sending the smaller finished example also would be helpful.

Getting your big image files to us

If you are using a dial-up internet connection or your file is very large, burn the file(s) on an inexpensive CDR and mail it to us via USPS or express carrier.

If you have a broadband connection you can either upload your file on our website (up to 45 MB) or, if the file is less than 10 MB, send it as an email attachment to photofiles@postersize-it.com.

Either way, expect it to take a little while. Upstream speeds are much lower than downloads on even the fastest connections.

If you are using an older computer which may have processor or memory limitations which prevent you from carrying out any of the above, please carefully package and mail us the original photograph(s) to take advantage of our inexpensive photo scanning services. As always, if a 35mm slide or negative is available send this instead.

A quality large format print must begin with a quality image file.