

# An author's mini guide to using images

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## Introduction

First impressions have a habit of sticking. As a writer, words are your medium – not images. But when images appear alongside your writing, they can shape how readers perceive your work.

Think of poor image quality as the equivalent of a manuscript full of typos; a blurry image or badly cropped photograph sends a similar message, even if unintentional.

This guide equips you with the basics of why quality matters and how simple changes can make your work look more professional. And you don't need to be a graphic designer or a photographer to achieve this – I'm not.



## Common file types and their uses

### JPEG (.jpg)

Best for: Photographs

Pros: Small file sizes, widely supported

Cons: Loses quality each time it's resaved

### PNG (.png)

Best for: Screenshots, graphics, illustrations with flat colours

Pros: Retains sharp lines; supports transparency

Cons: Larger file sizes

### TIFF (.tif)

Best for: High-quality print images

Pros: Doesn't lose quality; preferred by many publishers

Cons: Very large files

### SVG (.svg)

Best for: Logos, icons, diagrams (vector graphics)

Pros: Scales infinitely without loss of quality

Cons: Not suitable for photos



## Resolutions: DPI and pixel dimensions

Use this table to estimate how wide an image can be printed at **300 dpi**. Height works the same way—divide pixel height by 300.

Pixel Width	Maximum Print Width at 300 dpi	Suitable Usage
600 px	2 inches	Small icons, thumbnails
900 px	3 inches	Quarter-page graphics
1200 px	4 inches	Small illustrations
1500 px	5 inches	Half-page (small books)
1800 px	6 inches	Half-page (standard books)
2400 px	8 inches	Full-page in trade books
3000 px	10 inches	Full-page with bleed
3600 px	12 inches	Oversized layouts

### Quick Formula for Calculating DPI

If you know the **pixel dimensions** of your image and the **size (in inches)** at which it will appear in the book, you can calculate DPI using:

**DPI = pixel dimension (width or height) ÷ print size (in inches)**

Use the *smaller* of the width DPI and height DPI to judge quality.

#### Example:

Image size: 1800 × 1200 px

Intended print size: 6 × 4 inches

DPI =  $1800 \div 6 = 300$  dpi (width) DPI =  $1200 \div 4 = 300$  dpi (height)

**Result: 300 dpi (suitable for print)**

If you *don't know* the intended size, assume **a minimum of 300 dpi** at the size you expect the image to appear (e.g., full-page or half-page)

**What is DPI?** *DPI (dots per inch)* is a print-quality measurement.

**300 dpi:** Standard for print books

**600 dpi:** Preferred for line art or detailed diagrams

**72–96 dpi:** Screen resolution only; too low for print

### Pixel Dimensions for Common Print Sizes

(At 300 dpi)

**A5 (148 × 210 mm):** 1748 × 2480 px

**A4 (210 × 297 mm):** 2480 × 3508 px

**Full-page 6×9" book image:** 1800 × 2700 px

**Half-page:** 900 × 1350 px

If your image is significantly smaller than these dimensions, it will likely look blurry when printed.



## Quick checks

Before sending to your agent, editor or publisher, ask the following:

- Is the image **clear** (not pixelated or fuzzy)?
- Is it at least **300 dpi**?
- Is it in a **print-appropriate format** (TIFF, PNG, or high-res JPEG)?
- Does it look good at **the size it will appear** in the book?
- Is text within the image **legible**?
- Are you using the **original file**, not one saved from a website?
- Do you have permission/rights to use it?



## Image evaluation grid

Image	File Type	Pixel Dimensions	DPI	Intended Print Size	Pass/Fail Criteria	Notes
1	JPEG	2400 × 3600 px	300	Full-page (6×9")	PASS	Meets print standard; sharp photo
2	PNG	1200 × 800 px	300	Half-page	PASS	Good for tables/graphics
3	JPEG	600 × 400 px	72	Quarter-page	FAIL	Too low-res; pixelation visible
4	TIFF	3500 × 3500 px	600	Full-page	PASS	Excellent for diagrams
5	PNG	900 × 900 px	300	Half-page	BORDERLINE	Text slightly small; may need redraw

### Pass/Fail Criteria Guide

- PASS** if:
  - DPI  $\geq$  300
  - Pixel dimensions meet or exceed required size
  - Image appears sharp when zoomed to 100%
  - Text (if any) is readable
- FAIL** if:
  - DPI  $<$  200
  - Pixel dimensions are too small for intended size
  - Visible pixelation or blurriness
  - Compression artefacts (blocky areas) are present



## Common problems and how to fix them

**Problem: Low resolution (too few pixels)**

**Fix:** Find the original source image; request a higher-resolution file; recreate graphics as vector images.

**Problem: Blurry or pixelated image**

**Fix:** Replace with original; avoid images copied from the web or screenshots of screenshots.

**Problem: Too-dark or too-light images**

**Fix:** Adjust brightness/contrast before submitting.

**Problem: Unnecessary backgrounds or clutter**

**Fix:** Crop images cleanly to the relevant content.



## Final tips

- ☑ Send images as **separate files**, not embedded in Word.
- ☑ Name files clearly: *Figure01\_Graph.png*, *AuthorPhoto.tif*, etc.
- ☑ Keep a folder called *Images* and include the quality evaluation grid.
- ☑ Provide captions and source information in a separate document.

