

How To Prepare Images For the Web

By Diane Miller

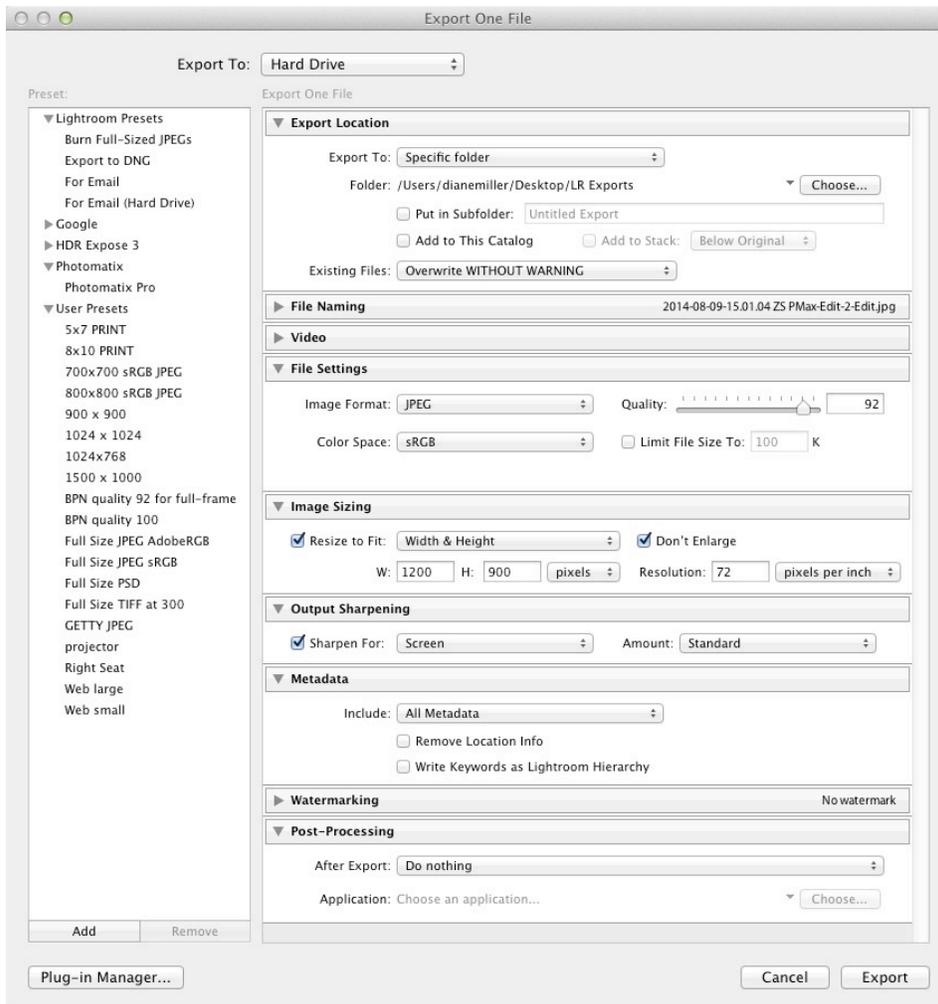
An image is best presented on BPN at the maximum size allowed so details will show best. Sizing for web use is simply by pixel dimensions; resolution doesn't play a role, although you will find it in some dialogs. An image posted to the web for any general audience should be a JPEG, converted to sRGB color space and needs to have the color space profile embedded in order for the colors to be seen as accurately as possible by the widest audience.

Here are several ways to create images for posting.

From Lightroom:

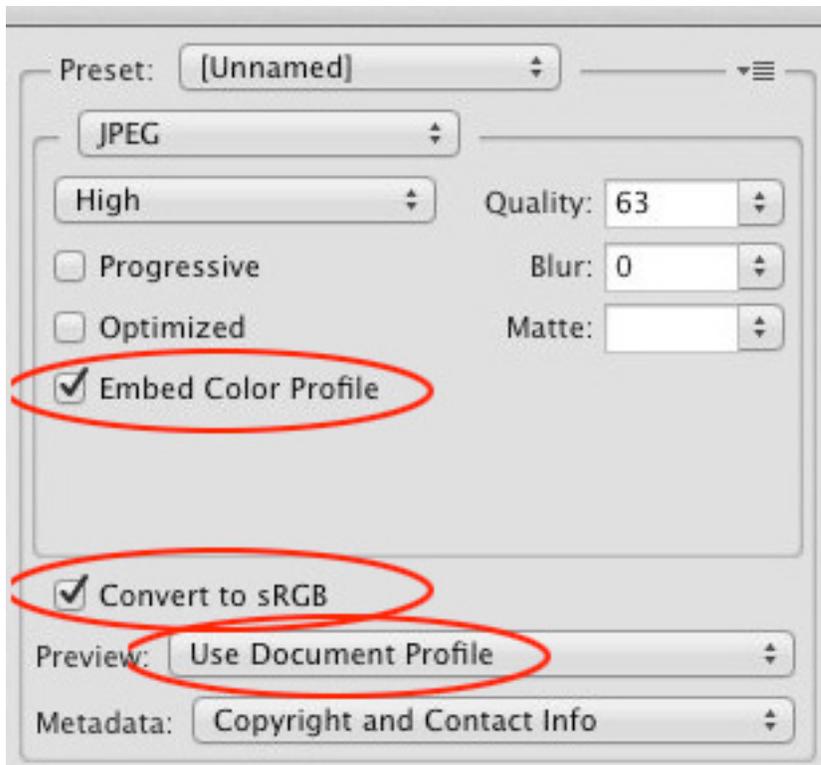
The easiest way is by exporting from Lightroom. You can choose any image, from a raw file to a complex layered Photoshop document, and simply use the Export button (lower left of the screen in the Library module). Specify the Export Location; a folder on your desktop for just that purpose is convenient. There is no need to rename a file except for your own organization. The File Settings are very important. You need to specify JPEG and Color Space sRGB. The Quality will affect the file size, along with the pixel dimensions. But you won't get a preview of the file size; you'll have to check it in your export folder. If it is too big you can reduce the Quality quite a bit without a significant impact on appearance. It's almost always better to reduce the quality and leave the pixel dimensions at the maximum. Enter appropriate values in Image Sizing. If your image is smaller than that and you allow it to be enlarged, it will be of lowered quality. You should export from a full-sized master file. You can also specify Output Sharpening, which will be done with a high quality algorithm. Increasing sharpening will also make the file size bigger.

You can save a preset for BPN images, and when you choose it you can change settings on the fly, such as for Quality. Lightroom will do all the necessary steps for you.



From Photoshop or similar image editors:

You can also create a JPEG for the web from Photoshop. Use File > Save for Web and specify the necessary parameters and it will do all the work for you. Choose JPEG and a reasonably high Quality. It is important to check Embed Color Profile and to check Convert to sRGB. You don't need to worry about the Preview, but Monitor Color should make it look accurate to you. (If it doesn't, don't worry. The colors that are actually in the image will be converted to the sRGB gamut, despite what may show in the preview.) It can help viewers evaluate your images if you include all the Metadata you are comfortable with. Ignore the Color Table; it's for web design. Specify the Image Size and choose a sharpening algorithm in the other Quality dropdown, to the right of the size. Bicubic is generally good. The size of the output file is shown in the lower left and if it is too large you can reduce the top Quality number. That is preferable to reducing the pixel dimensions, up to a fairly large degree. The various Sharpening algorithms will also affect file size, with more sharpening giving a bigger file.



The step-by-step way:

There should be an equivalent to Save for Web in most other image editors, but if not you can do the steps yourself. (I'm using the Photoshop menu steps here.) If you are working with layers and in 16-bit mode, the order given in this first step is important: first flatten the image (Layer > Flatten Image), then convert to 8 bits (Image > Mode > 8 Bits/channel). Then resize (Image > Image Size) and convert to sRGB (Edit > Convert to Profile.) Do not use Assign Profile. Then do File > Save As and be sure you specify JPEG. (Don't overwrite your master file with this smaller, flat, 8 bit file!) Check Embed Color Profile. If your original is not a JPEG, you can leave the name the same; different formats can have the same filename and you will not overwrite an original .psd or .tif master file.

After saving the JPEG, close the image. If you get a rather puzzling question asking if you want to save the changes to the image, answer no. (You should have saved any work on the master file before you saved the derivative JPEG.)

There is more detailed information in another tutorial here titled "Seeing Colors Correctly on the Web."