Saving a photoshop document as a .pdf results in blurry / pixelated images

Asked 15 years, 10 months ago   Modified 13 years ago

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I am using Photoshop CS2 to design a leaflet which is intended for distribution by email as a .pdf. My document is 72 dpi, which i believe is a suitable default for non-printing use.

There is one image in the document, a logo, and this is always appearing pixelated in Acrobat reader when i save the doc as .pdf. It looks fine in Photoshop. I have tried just about every option and combination of "Save As" options, nothing makes any difference.

I have tried both tiff and jpg versions of the image, to no avail. I also notice that if i choose no compression when Saving As, the resulting file size is gigantic - 10+ megs, even though the image is only 10k! And the image STILL is pixelated.

Any suggestions?

Thanks Richard.

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asked Feb 23, 2009 at 16:34

Richard100

I do not have an answer for this issue, unfortunately. I have encountered this problem myself, where certain things are stick and won't render properly. This has to be an Adobe problem to solve, and it can be frustrating. – pearcewg Feb 23, 2009 at 18:18

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1   I don't see the programming question here. Consider asking in a Photoshop user forum. – Rob Kennedy Feb 23, 2009 at 18:47

Unfortunately while SO refuses (stackoverflow.uservoice.com/pages/general/suggestions/…) to expand the site to general technical questions they will keep cropping up in here... – danio Feb 24, 2009 at 15:02

6 Answers

Sorted by: Highest score (default) ⇕

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I realize this question is a few years old but thought I'd offer a possible solution for anyone else having this issue. It isn't perfect but it produced much better results than anything else I've tried so far.

Note: this is assuming you're working off of a 72ppi Photoshop document (I'm using CS5).

1. First ensure you have a PDF printer installed.

2. Then in Photoshop go to *File > Print* and select the aforementioned printer.

3. Click *"Print Settings..."* and select *"High Quality Print"* from the default settings box. (Or click *"Edit"* to the right and make sure your image quality is set to max).

4. Still in the print settings dialog, go down to *"Adobe PDF Page Size:"* and click *"Add.."*

5. Name your new paper size "doc" (or whatever you want really).

6. Then for the size divide your document width by 109 (ppi) and your height by 109 (again ppi) and enter the resulting values in their respective locations (making sure inches is selected).

7. Click *"Add/modify"* to close the dialog. Make sure your new paper size is selected from the *"Adobe PDF Page Size"* dropdown and hit *"OK."*

8. In the *"Scaled Print Size"* box area change the scale to 66% (which should make the print resolution read 109 PPI).

9. Click *"Print"*, save your document and hopefully your PDF looks much better!

As a side note, you could try using 110ppi instead, calculating your size and changing the scale to 65% to match. But from my experience, for whatever reason, 109 worked better.

If you're wondering how this helps, Adobe Reader/Acrobat tend to display PDF's at 110ppi by default, so by creating the PDF to reflect this (yes, it's 1ppi off) it looks 100% at 100%.

Again, this is what worked for me, hopefully you have the same luck.

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answered Dec 20, 2011 at 18:23

Revamped
31 ● 1

If it's a logo, you should embed a vector version of it instead so it scales properly regardless. This is simply not a Photoshop job, nor is creating a PDF leaflet a Photoshop job.

2

But as a rule of thumb, regardless of the intended media, use atleast twice the dpi needed for it - especially if you use non-scalable graphics elements. Also, the 72 dpi idea as you noticed simply isn't true - searching for 72 dpi myths or facts might give some useful result atleast trying to explain the wierdness of it...

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edited Feb 23, 2009 at 20:50

answered Feb 23, 2009 at 20:37

Oskar Duveborn
2,239 ● 17 ● 20

Photoshop really isn't the best choice for publishing tasks such as design of leaflets and posters. Sticking within the Adobe family if you have deep enough pockets, you could look at InDesign for page layout and Illustrator for vector artwork for figures and logos.

On the free and open source side of the divide, consider [Inkscape](#) for line drawings and [Scribus](#) for page layout.

Scribus is in many ways a better producer of high-quality PDF documents than any of the Adobe tools. It is a large and complicated tool that is really intended for high end publishing, but it will get the job done.

Your problem with things looking pixilated is almost certainly the result of the settings used for image compression when Photoshop transformed your page image into the bitmap image layer of a PDF page. I have never been happy with that approach, myself, because of the kinds of problems you are having.

When producing a PDF for print, you need to have all of your graphic elements sized so that layed out on paper, at least as many pixels are available in the image as on that much paper. At 300 dpi, a 2x3 inch photo must be at least 600x900 pixels. Depending on lots of other factors, it may be important that the image be sized to an *integer multiple* of the actual print resolution for best results. Depending on your print provider, you might also need to make sure that your illustrations use only in-gamut colors for the intended print process...

When producing a PDF for screen use, it is conventional to assume that screens are 72 or 96 dpi. Neither is precisely correct, but both are close enough to true for the average user. Note, also, that documents for use on screen should almost certainly be prepared in the SRGB color space, which is based on the colors available on an average uncalibrated RGB monitor. Avoid the temptation to use niche color spaces such as AdobeRGB, because they will only look right to the vanishingly small percentage of users that know about color workflow and have calibrated monitors. Incidentally, you have calibrated your monitor, right?

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answered Feb 24, 2009 at 11:10

Scribus is a good tool but I'm not sure that it is "in many ways a better producer of high-quality PDF documents than any of the Adobe tools." Indesign and Illustrator are very strong applications and scribus is still immature, e.g. v1.3.3 doesn't support overprinting. Coming in 1.4 apparently... – danio Feb 24, 2009 at 14:38

You're right that Scribus probably can't compete (yet?) head to head against indesign. It does have a very active developer community, and is giving Framemaker a run for its money. However, for the kinds of tasks described, it is immensely better than trying to get Photoshop to do the whole job. – RBerteig Feb 25, 2009 at 11:09

A normal Windows display is considered by Windows to be 96 DPI, regardless of your actual monitor size or resolution. I don't know what it is for a Mac.

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In Word 2010 (should work in 2007) Right click on the picture/image and select "edit picture", a pop up window will state: "this is an imported picture, not a group. Do you want to convert it to a Microsoft Office drawing object?" click YES. Then Right click on the image again, and this time choose: format picture. Click on the preset drop down, and choose the clearest/sharpest image.

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OK, I have fixed this - sort of.

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The image looked pixelated when displayed in Acrobat Reader at a display zoom of 100%. I assumed that 100% would simply mean that if doc was say 1,000 pixels wide, it would render at 1,000 pixels on the screen. However this is not the case. I don't understand what 100% means exactly, however at 100% it is being rendered at a

somewhat larger size, say 1,300 pixels. Hence the image is pixelated as it is being stretched. If I reduce zoom to ~70%, then it renders fine.

I'm guessing that Acrobat is attempting to render the doc in terms of "inches" and not pixels. My doc is A4 = 8.5 inches wide, I think Acrobat is rendering an 8.5 inch doc at my screen resolution, which per careful measurements with a ruler is 110 dpi.

Anyway, the solution is therefore a) de-zoom to 70%, or, as I imagine most people will assume 100% is the optimal zoom, b) to re-do the doc at 110 dpi, or a little higher, to accomodate whatever typical resolutions are these days.

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answered Feb 23, 2009 at 20:04

Richard100

Acrobat does indeed consider 100% in terms of real world units and not pixels. 100% means 1 inch on the document will be displayed as 1 inch on screen. What 1 inch on screen means depends on what resolution you have acrobat/windows set at. If you set windows to default (96dpi) and acrobat to – danio Feb 24, 2009 at 14:56

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use system setting, then an inch on your document will be 96 pixels on screen. Of course this may not be an inch on your screen depending on how large your monitor is. If you want your raster graphics to be displayed at 100% use a raster format (html with images) not a vector format such as PDF. – danio Feb 24, 2009 at 14:58