THE VISUAL WEB

How you can use photos and videos to make your website or online profiles more visually appealing to visitors

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Contents

Introduction

This guide covers how you can use photos and videos to make your website or online profiles, such as Facebook and Twitter, more visually appealing to visitors. It also details the various copyright issues associated with using other peoples content on your website.

Skill Level

Basic   **Inter**   The majority of the topics in this guide are suitable for anyone who has basic PC knowledge. Towards the end of the guide there are a few more advanced topics that are more suitable for intermediate users.

Terminology

You will come across the following terminology in this guide which you need to be familiar with:

Term	Explanation
Embed	Displaying content from another site on yours without actually downloading this content and copying it over. For example, displaying a video from YouTube on your website without copying the video to your site.
Flickr	Flickr is a photo sharing site. There are millions of pictures on Flickr that can be used on your own website subject to copyright restrictions.
Copyright	Restrictions in place for using other people's content.
Linking	A way of referencing other content or other websites without actually displaying the content within your own site.
JPEG, PNG, GIF	These are the different formats that pictures can be in.
Pixel	A picture is displayed as a series of very small images which are known as pixels. The more pixels per inch the higher the quality of an image.
Megapixel	If you are buying a camera they will generally advertise the number of Megapixels the camera supports. A megapixel is 1 million pixels. Generally for small pictures you don't need the megapixel size to be that big (e.g. 3 megapixels would be fine) but when you start enlarging images you need to have a much higher megapixel range.
Resolution	Resolution is the number of columns of pixels by the number of rows. If you multiply the two of them together and divide by a million you get the number of megapixels.

Video Tutorials

Indicates a video tutorial. Click on the icon to watch the video. These videos demonstrate how to carry out a particular task. In order to watch the video tutorials in this guide, you will need to have Adobe Flash Player v9.0.28 or above installed on your computer.

Note: *When you go to watch the video, a check is done to make sure you have the correct software installed. If you do not have the correct version installed you will be provided with a prompt to download and install the correct version.*

Introduction to the Visual Web

When we are talking about the visual web we are talking about what visitors see online that captures their attention. 80% of users skim content online and don't read it. Web users are typically impatient with limited time.

When a web user arrives to your website they scan the page for items of interest. A picture, video or animation or an interesting heading is typically going to capture their attention more than a lot of text. If your website, Facebook page, or mobile site is full of text the chances are nobody is ever going to read it all. So you need to ask yourself what text is important and if potential customers are not going to spend the time reading it then what's the point in having it there?

So a very important part of any online presence is to consider how to make your site more visually appealing. You need to have a design that looks fresh and interesting. You need to have videos and pictures that show off you or your business in a very positive way. And you need to structure all your information such that is it easy to consume and read and is easy to find for the visitor who is short on time.

This guide will help you understand how to take advantage of each of these areas.

Your Questions Answered

What is copyright?

Copyright is a right to copy and/or reproduce material. There are a lot of restrictions in place regarding the use of videos, images and logos that you do not own. Copyright is designed to protect the owner of such content.

Can I freely use images/videos that I have found on the web on my site?

No you cannot. You must ensure you have the correct permission to use any material and you also need to make sure that the person/company agreeing to allow you to use the material also has the correct permissions.

Is including videos on my website useful?

Time is precious, by providing videos people are much more likely to view the video and generally they will watch it until the end. Videos are more interesting and engaging and therefore you are more likely to capture the viewer's attention. It also gives you a chance to bring your words to life and show some of the emotion, atmosphere, and friendliness that you can bring.

What equipment do I need?

This guide includes information regarding what type of camera you could use for pictures and what video camera you could use for videos. Digital cameras/camcorders are not that expensive anymore and you can get a really good quality one for under €100.

Using Pictures

As they say a picture is worth a thousand words. When people arrive to your website or other online presence there are certain things that will capture their attention and one of them is pictures.   As a web user you will form an opinion of the website in less than one second and with good imagery that could be a very positive opinion.

Imagery to use

It's very important to have pictures on your website that capture people's attention and help with the overall visual look of your site. Pictures could be of:

- You and your team

- Events, Activities

- Your business premises, services you offer, food your serve, etc.

- Activities, local attractions, places in the surrounding area

You and your team

People like to see the real people behind your establishment. As a tourist destination you want to project an image of friendliness so having nice pictures of smiling staff help! Why not have a picture of each member of the team with some text giving a bit of background about who the team are.

Events, Activities

If you had previous events or activities you ran it's very useful to show these. For example, if I ran an adventure centre I would include a lot of pictures of previous events that I ran.

Pictures of business premises and services

If I'm interested in booking into your hotel, restaurant, or activity centre, I'd like to see pictures of your premises and the services that you provide. For example, if you had a restaurant it's important to show how wonderful the food is that you serve.

Sourcing Pictures

When you are looking for pictures to include on your website or on one of your social media profiles, you can either use pictures you have taken yourself or get pictures from other sources such as:

- Professional photographer

- Purchase through an online site

- Acquired for free online

Professional Photographer

The advantage of the professional photographer is that you will get high quality images that are personal and unique to you. Make sure that the images still capture the essence of what your place is about, for example, the personality of the owners. Also make sure that you own the pictures after you purchased them and are free to use them whenever you want and the photographer does not have any rights to them. Please also ensure that this is in writing.

Purchasing Online

Images you buy online will not be of your business or services but may still be useful to brighten up your website. For example, if you have a blog (writing articles online through your website) it's useful to include an interesting image with your article and you may not always have one to hand.

There are many websites where you can go and buy pictures that you are then free to use on your website. For example, iStockPhoto (www.istockphoto.com) allows you to buy credits and then use these credits to purchase photos, icons, images and so on. The typical pricing for a picture is between €1 and €5 for a small picture and this goes up in price depending on the size of the image. For example, the smallest image for this picture costs 5 credits which is approx €5.

There are millions of pictures on these sites so it's worth doing a search. Typically the pictures are high quality and can be very useful for your website.

Failte Ireland
National Tourism Development Authority

Acquiring for Free Online

With the age of the digital camera there are many non professional photographers taking high quality professional type images and there are many online websites that allow amateur photographers to share out their pictures so that other people can use them.

Typically they allow people to use them subject to you giving them a little mention showing where you got the picture from. For example, Flickr (www.flickr.com) is a one of the biggest photo sharing websites and contains lots of high quality images.

To find out what images are free to use what you need to do is do a search within Flickr. So go to www.Flickr.com and click on the **Search** button in the top right hand corner of the screen. This takes you to the Search screen.

Then click on the **Advanced Search** option:
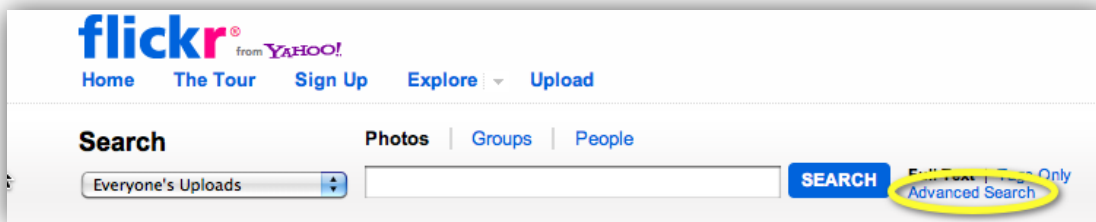
Now, scroll down until you get to a section on 'Creative Commons Licensing'
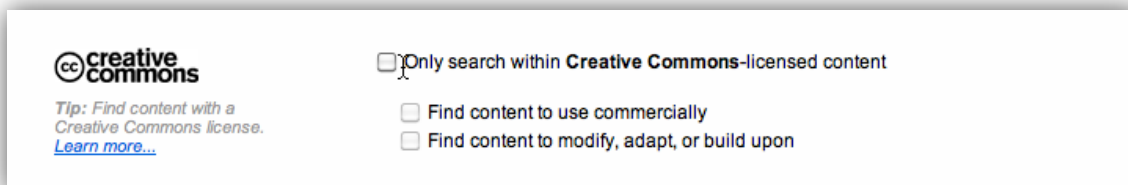
In this section you can specify that you only want to search on content that has a creative commons licensing agreement in place. This just means that you have access to use pictures on your site subject to whatever requirements that are mentioned on the picture. The possible licensing options on the pictures are as follows:

Image	Explanation	Details
	Attribution	You can use the pictures as long as you mention where they came from (e.g. provide a link to the photographer under the picture)
	Non commercial	Pictures can be used but only for non-commercial purposes.

	No derivative works	You can use the picture but can't make any changes to it.
	Share alike	You can use the picture, change the picture and share it out once it keeps within the terms of the licensing agreement already in place.

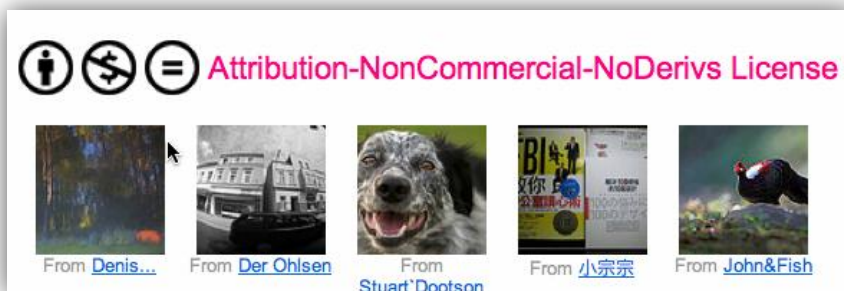**VIDEO: Finding Content You Can Use on Flickr**

This video shows you how to source free to use content on Flickr that can be used on your website, Facebook business page, and so on.

When you are ready, click the PLAY icon to start the video.

The following gives an example of what you may see when you do a search:

There are over 51 million pictures in this category. The images above tell us that you can use these images in a non-commercial capacity (i.e. you can't sell them or use them for any purpose that makes money) but you must not change how they look and when you use them you must reference the photographer.

There are plenty of free pictures available so it's worth doing a search to find the relevant ones.

TIP: *Take lots of pictures of your premises, surrounding areas, and attractions in the area and upload them all to Flickr and set up licensing for attribution. So when people use these pictures they will have to reference your business in the pictures which may result in a link back to your website.*

The Technical Stuff

When you are uploading pictures, there are various formats that you can upload, and in various sizes. There is a balance to be found between the quality of a picture and its size. For example, while larger images are better quality images you don't want to have too many very large images on your website as this will mean it will take a longer time for your pages to be loaded and displayed to visitors. So you need to try and use the smallest sized images without compromising on the quality.

The three most common image types used on a website are as follows:

Image Type	Advantages	Disadvantages	When to use them
GIF	Can be used for animation. Good at compressing similar colours so it means the file size is kept small. Supports 256 colours. Good for graphics.	Not great quality for photos	Logos, icons, charts.
PNG	Similar to GIF but with great depth of colour and better transparency.	Not great quality for photos	Same as GIF – Logos, icons, charts.
JPEG or JPG	Great for photographic images and supports 16.7 million colours.	Better quality images means a larger file size	Use for photographs

Your Equipment

If you are going to take pictures yourself you need to buy a good quality digital camera. Generally for a good quality digital camera you will spend around €100. Of course you can spend a lot more but if you're not an expert at using a camera you may end up with a lot of features you don't need.

There are many different options to consider when buying a digital camera; the following sections cover some of the basics you need to be aware of.

Pixels supported

Pictures are made up of tiny tile-like images which are known as pixels. The more pixels the picture has the higher the resolution (i.e. the better the quality). When buying a camera you need to decide what size images you are looking for.

If you are producing pictures for the web then size is not really going to be too much of an issue so just make sure you get a camera with at least 5 megapixels.

The following table gives you an idea of the megapixel requirements in a camera based on the size of the picture. The bigger the picture the more megapixels that are required.

Max Print Size	Minimum Megapixels	Resolution
4 x 6"	2 megapixels	1600 x 1200
5 x 7"	3 megapixels	2048 x 1536
8 x 10"	5 megapixels	2560 x 1920
11 x 14"	6 megapixels	2816 x 2112
16 x 20"	8+	3264 x 2468

Note: *Resolution is the number of columns of pixels by the number of rows. If you multiply the two of them together and divide by a million you get the number of megapixels.*

The following shows an example of the improvement of image quality as the number of pixels increase:
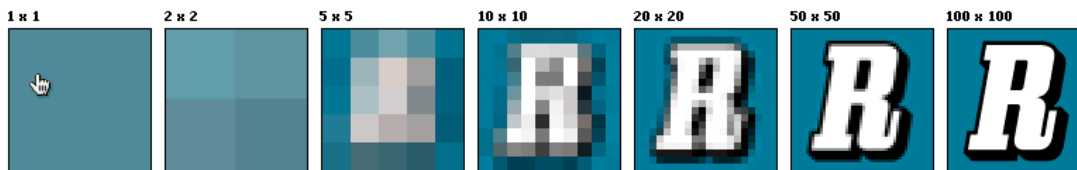
Zoom Lens

If you are going to be taking pictures at a distance it's very useful to have a zoom lens on the camera. There are 2 types of zoom – Optical and Digital.

- Digital is not really a zoom, all it does is it enlarges a portion of the image thus you get the appearance of a zoom.

- Optical zoom uses the lens of the camera to bring a subject closer.

So when you are buying a camera ignore digital zoom and look at optical zoom. If it supports optical zoom you will see measurements such as 3X, 5X, etc. A larger number demonstrates a higher magnification.

Image Stabilisation

Most cameras include some image stabilisation which reduces your chances of taking blurry shots. So make sure to ask for this.

ISO Speed

ISO speed is a measurement of a film's sensitivity to light and it is also supported with digital cameras (although there is no film). You can get cameras that automatically set the ISO speed, let you manually set the ISO speed and some that do both. It is good to get a camera that supports both options.

Generally the settings for ISO speed for a digital camera ranges from 64 to 1600. Ideally you want to take your picture at the lowest ISO speed possible which would be 64. However, if you are shooting a picture with poor lighting you may have to increase the ISO speed to let more light in. This will allow you to take the shot but the picture will be grainier.

Memory

When you take a picture on a digital camera it is stored on a memory device on your camera. The more memory you have the more pictures you can store. Make sure to have at least 1 Gigabyte (GB) of storage.

The number of pictures you can store also depends on the quality you take the pictures at. For example, a high quality image will take up more space than a lower quality one. If you set your camera to take the highest quality pictures possible you will still be able to fit a couple of hundred pictures with 1 GB of memory.

Using Video

Video is a huge growth area on the web because web users typically enjoy video more than text. Within the next couple of years over half of all online advertisements will be in the form of videos because it is more engaging, users interact with videos more and thus you'll end up with higher conversion.

If you arrive on a website and see a video with very little else the temptation is always to click on the video.   But a video should not be long. A video should really be less than 3 minutes in length but even better, 90 seconds. You want people to watch everything until the end of the video so keep it short.

Sourcing Videos

To put videos on your website you have a choice of creating them yourself, hiring someone to create the video for you or using a video that is already created and available online.

Creating a Video Yourself

If you are creating a video yourself you will need a good quality digital camcorder, one that can capture in Digital8, MiniDV, HDV or any of the DVD formats. A lot of the newer (more expensive) camcorders support High Definition (HD) which will give much sharper images. HD is particularly useful if you have fast moving objects in the picture.

The digital camera should have the option of connecting to your computer using a Firewire or USB connection. These are types of ports that are on your PC and you just connect a cable from your camcorder to the PC (or laptop) using these connections.

Typically when you take a video you will connect your camcorder to your PC and then copy the video onto your local machine. You will then go to YouTube and upload the video to your channel on YouTube. See the guide on "Using YouTube" which is part of this series of guides.

It is better to upload it to YouTube and then you can embed it on your website. Embedding it on your website means that it looks like it is stored on your website; however, it is still on YouTube. The reason you do this is because YouTube is a very heavily used site so your video could also be found there and this may bring people back to your website.

TIP: When you upload a video on YouTube ensure you allow people to embed it (assuming you have full copyright for all material). By doing this your video may get included on other websites which will create traffic back to your YouTube channel and consequently on to your website.

If you want to edit the video before you upload it to YouTube you can use a wide range of video editing software. For example, YouTube has its own video editor (http://www.youtube.com/editor) and Microsoft Movie Maker is provided free with Microsoft Windows and is an excellent piece of software. You can easily cut bits out, add bits in, add in images, introduction slides, and so on.

> **TIP:** *When you are uploading a video make sure that you specify a good title, description and tags that describe what the video is about. This will help with your search engine optimisation for the video.*

If you record videos yourself you need to make sure that you have the correct copyright in place for any material you record. For example:

- Audio – If you have music in the video make sure you have received permission to play this music unless it is a unique piece of music created by yourself.

- Actors – It is always safe to get people in the video to expressly give you permission to include them in the video (i.e. written permission).

- Imagery – If you are using any imagery in the picture make sure you get written permission to use this also.

> **Embedding a YouTube Video**
>
> *When you are uploading your video if you leave the 'embed' option on this means you are giving permission for other people to place this video on their site. The following is how an embedded video looks on a website. You will see 'YouTube' in the bottom right hand corner. This shows me that the video is not really on the website it is just 'embedded' from YouTube. The big advantage to this is that you don't need any space to store the video and also you are using YouTube's big servers when playing the video.*

Hiring someone to create your video

If you hire someone to create a video for you make sure you own the copyright on any material that they create. Also, make sure the permissions are in place for any imagery or sound that they are using in the video.

Videos you Use from Someone Else

If you see a good video from someone else and want to use this video make sure you have the relevant permission and make sure they have the relevant permission for music and pictures within the video.

Unless you opt out, by default on YouTube all videos can be embedded on other sites without specifically requesting the permission from the owner.   This does not guarantee that the person on YouTube that uploaded this content has permissions to use or share this content so please always check this before using any video.

The Technical Stuff

The following are recommended formats from YouTube for any videos uploaded:

- Format: H.264, MPEG-2 or MPEG-4

- Aspect Ratio – Native aspect radio without letter boxing (e.g. 4:3, 16:9)

- Resolution: 640x360 (16:9) or 480x360 (4:3) recommended

- Audio format: MP3 or AAC preferred

- Frames per second: 30

- Maximum length: 10 minutes (2 to 3 recommended)

- Max size: 1 GB

Displaying Multiple Videos

If you want to display multiple videos on your website you can display them in different pages on your website, display them on a certain page in a row or you can use some tools to help you manage them better.

One good way of doing this is to store all videos in one area within YouTube and then display the whole channel (as opposed to a particular video) within your website.

To embed your YouTube channel all you need to do is take the following code, replace 'YourChannelName' with the name of your channel and then copy it to your website.

<script

src="http://www.gmodules.com/ig/ifr?url=http://www.google.com/ig/modules/youtube.xml&up_channel

= YourChannelName

&synd=open&w=320&h=390&title=&border=%23ffffff%7C3px%2C1px+solid+%2399999 99&output=js"></script>

The Importance of Branding & Design

Pictures and videos will add significantly to the look and feel of your online presence. Having a lot of text on your website is not that appealing or engaging to anybody so you really need to consider other areas.   However, the other vital areas to also consider for your website are the branding and design of it.

Branding

Branding is really about what people think about when your company, product or service is discussed. Some of the items that contribute to your branding are your company logo, and the imagery and colour scheme that you use. Serious thought needs to be put into this and your branding follows through with every piece of online or offline piece of marketing material (e.g. website, brochure, business cards, etc) that you use. So it's important to get this right.

Design

With your branding in place it's much easier to develop a professional looking design as you have the colours, imagery and logo and you can keep a certain level of consistency across each of the pages of your website.

Social Media Channels

There is generally an element of branding on different social media channels and you should ensure that your look and feel is the same across all channels. For example, on Facebook you can display your logo, images, and videos. So it's important that you have a consistent look and feel wherever you have a presence on line.

It's also important to use the videos, images in the relevant channels. For example, if you have a video on YouTube there is no reason why you wouldn't make this available through your website and through Facebook.

Summary

Internet users are quite impatient and when they arrive on a website, Facebook page, etc, they don't spend very long on the site so whatever time you do have with them make sure you capture their attention.

One of the first things they will notice and form an opinion of is the design of the website. Make sure you have a good branded site with good colours, a professional logo and an overall professional look and feel.   Include good high quality images on your website that shows your premises, business and location in good light.

If you can, then also add video to your site. It's more important you get the true personality of you and the business across rather than spending a lot of money with very professional but not that interesting video footage. Include details of what there is to do in the area, the attractions, and so on.

Keep your video short, ideally it should be less than 90 seconds. With a video of 90 seconds you have a much better chance of them watching the video right to the end. At the end have a very clear call to action to call you!

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