



BIG MEDIUM 2

THE COMPLETE GUIDE

JOSH CLARK

Image Management

A picture may be worth a thousand words, but for lots of us, resizing that picture is worth a thousand headaches. Most civilians have never touched Photoshop and don't know the first thing about using an image-editing program to crop or resize their photos. Frankly, they shouldn't have to.

Big Medium handles image sizing for you and juggles the various versions of an image to make sure that the correct size goes in the right place. The site's HTML preferences give designers precise control over which image size is used in all of the various image contexts: links, body text, gallery images, slideshows, etc. Writers and editors don't have to think about pixel sizes or design requirements; they just load the original image, and Big Medium takes care of the rest. It just works.

Chapter 3: Editing Webpages discussed [the process of adding an image to a page](#) and, as a result, to the image library. This chapter expands on that discussion and aims to help designers configure their settings to get the image results that you want.

The Library Concept

When you add a new image to a page, Big Medium automatically adds it to the image library. This means that it can be reused from any page, in any context and in any size. The “any size” part is where the magic happens.

When you first add an image to the library, Big Medium automatically generates several additional versions of the image. Your photo of Aunt Sadie's prize poodle is squished and stretched¹ into a variety of different sizes: a thumbnail image for links, a slightly larger image for the gallery preview, a big image for slideshows, etc.

When you browse the image library, though, you still see just one entry for the image “Aunt Sadie's prize poodle.” Although this one image fronts for several different files and versions,

¹No poodles were harmed in the making of this book.

Big Medium keeps those details behind the curtain and out of sight. You just select the image and say, “I want Sadie’s poodle to be shown with spotlight links and next to the fourth paragraph of my page.” Big Medium handles the rest, selecting the appropriate image sizes based on your site’s preferences for spotlight images and detail page images.

This is handy for those of us huddled among the Photoshop-illiterate masses. All we have to worry about is, “I want the poodle.” No need to think about sizing images or which image size goes where. The site’s preferences handle those details.

Image Control for Designers

If you’re a designer, of course, these details are very important. The size and handling of images affect the aesthetic of the page as well as practical details of HTML layout. Every image has to fit the space allocated for it.

Big Medium’s approach to image management gives designers the confidence to allow civilians to add images with a guarantee that image sizes will always be correct and won’t break the overall layout.

As a designer, you can even stock the image library with a set of images for writers and editors to use later. They can browse the library to add these stock images to pages, and Big Medium will automatically use the correct image size based on where and how the editor wants it to appear. Once in the library, an image can be used from any page and in any context; you might have originally added an image to be used in the body text of one page, but you can use it again in the gallery of another, etc.

If the site’s design changes down the road and you need to change the image size for, say, link images, you just change a preference and—*voilà!*—all of the images are immediately updated to use the new size.

Accounts with webmaster and administrator privileges can change these settings in the “Images” and “Links” HTML preferences for the site; the “HTML Preferences” screen is available in the “Settings” menu. For link images, every type of link widget can be customized to display its own image size. And, as with most HTML preferences, you can also customize these image settings for individual sections from the [“Section Properties”](#) screen in the “Settings” menu.

Adding Custom Image Sizes

By default, Big Medium manages images in the following sizes:

- Original (the original image, untouched)
- Thumbnail (60x60 pixels)
- X-small (100x100 pixels)
- Small (200x200 pixels)

- Medium (400x400 pixels)
- Large (600x600 pixels)
- X-Large (800x800 pixels)

If these default image sizes don't include the exact size that your page design requires, accounts with webmaster or administrator privileges can add custom image sizes in the "Site Image Formats" screen in the "Settings" menu.

The "Site Image Formats" screen displays the scaling methods for the default image sizes (more on that in a second), followed by the list of custom formats, if any, and finally the "Add New Image Format" link.

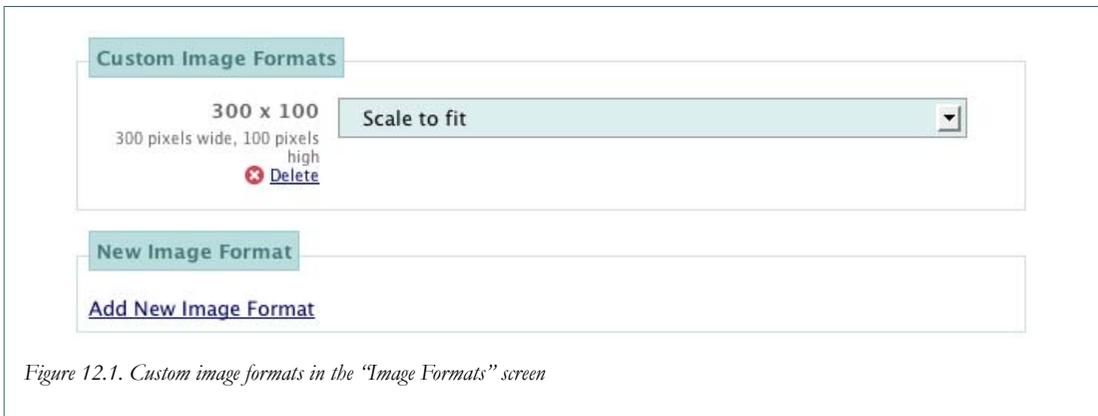


Figure 12.1. Custom image formats in the "Image Formats" screen

Click the "Add New Image Format" link to display a form with two fields for the width and height of your custom image format. Big Medium does not, by default, enforce the *exact* dimensions that you enter here. We'll get into this a bit more in the "[Scaling Methods](#)" section, but for now, you just need to know that these dimensions represent the *maximum* height and width of the image, the *bounding box* in which the image must be contained.

Big Medium's default scaling method is "scale to fit" which squeezes the image into the bounding box without changing its original proportions. For example, let's say that you have a 300x300 custom image size, and you load a 400x800 image, a picture that's twice as tall as it is wide. Big Medium will shrink the image so that its height (its longest side) fits inside our 300-pixel maximum height. Keeping the original proportions of height being twice the width, the width of our scaled image becomes 150 pixels. So, while the image format is 300x300, the result is an image that is 150x300.

If you need to size images to exact pixel dimensions, you can do that, too, as we discuss below with the "crop to fit" and "scale and crop" scaling methods. For now, just keep in mind that the dimensions that you set here are *maximum dimensions* that trace out only the outer boundary into which your images must fit.

After you enter the dimensions of your new format, click "Save." Big Medium adds the new image size to the "Custom Image Formats" panel. This panel allows you to change the scaling method for your custom image(s) or delete custom formats.

After adding an image format, the custom format becomes available as an option in the various image-size settings in the site’s HTML preferences. To make link images start using your new format, for example, go to the “Links” HTML preferences and select your new size in the “Link Image Size” preference for the appropriate widgets.

Note that current library images are not updated when you add or delete image formats. These settings affect only images that are added going forward. You’ll need to edit and replace the existing image to make Big Medium generate the new size.



Can I specify just the width? I don’t care how tall an image is, but I do want a consistent width.

Say that you want images in a certain format to be consistently 150 pixels wide, and the specific height is unimportant. A custom image format with a width of 150 and a very large height, like 1000, will give you what you need. When the scaling method is set to “scale to fit,” the image will be reduced to fit into the 150x1000 box. Unless its proportions are outlandishly tall, the image will be exactly 150 pixels wide, and its height will be set proportionally.

To get exact dimensions for both height and width, use the “crop to fit” or “scale and crop” method for your custom image format.

Scaling Methods

Every image format has a scaling method which tells Big Medium exactly how it should alter the image in order to make it fit into the specified dimensions. The “Image Formats” screen lets you change the scaling methods for all image sizes, both default and custom formats.

There are three scaling methods:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Scale to fit | The image is reduced to the largest size that fits into the format’s bounding box while still keeping its original proportions. As described in the previous section, this means that the final dimensions of scaled images can vary from image to image, depending on the image’s aspect ratio, but they are guaranteed to fit within the maximum height/width of the format’s dimensions. This is the default method for all of Big Medium’s built-in sizes, except for thumbnail and x-small. |
| Crop to fit | The image is cropped to fit the exact size of the format’s height and width dimensions, with little or no size reduction. The effect is like looking through a window at the original image; any portion of the image outside of the height and width of this window is lopped off. |
| Scale and crop | The image is reduced to the smallest size that completely fills the format’s height and width dimensions, and any overflow is cropped. As with “crop to fit,” the resulting image matches the exact pixel |

dimensions defined by the format size, but the image is reduced to display as much of the original image as possible within these dimensions. This is the default method for the built-in thumbnail and x-small formats.

To change a format's scaling method, select a new method in its selection menu, and click "Save" at the bottom of the page. Note that current library images are not updated when you change a scaling method. Changes apply only to new images that are added going forward. You'll need to edit and replace the existing image to make Big Medium generate the new size.

Scale to fit	Crop to fit	Scale and crop
Reduce image to fit into the bounding dimensions, keeping the original proportions.	Crop image to fit into the bounding dimensions, with little or no size reduction.	Reduce the image to the smallest size that still fills the bounding dimensions, cropping any overflow.
		
↓	↓	↓
		

Scaling Methods for Built-In Sizes	
Thumbnail 60x60 pixels	Scale and crop
X-Small 100x100 pixels	Scale and crop
Small 200x200 pixels	Scale to fit

Figure 12.2. Scaling methods in the "Image Formats" screen