

Introduction to Backgrounds

The background is the area outside of the container of your web site that the viewer will see when the screen is larger than the page size. The background is considered part of your site and deserving of design considerations. The background can be a solid color, texture, pattern, gradient, repeating image, or a full image. Although the repetition of the image can be coded in the HTML, most often today the repetition is handled in the CSS code.



CSS Background Repeat Property

Enter the following code for repeating a background graphic:

Image repeats both vertically and horizontally

```
body
{
background-image:url('paper.gif');
background-repeat:repeat;
}
```

Image repeats only vertically

```
body
{
background-image:url('paper.gif');
background-repeat:repeat-y;
}
```

Image repeats only horizontally

```
body
{
background-image:url('paper.gif');
background-repeat:repeat-x;
}
```

Image will not repeat

```
body
{
background-image:url('paper.gif');
background-repeat:no-repeat;
}
```

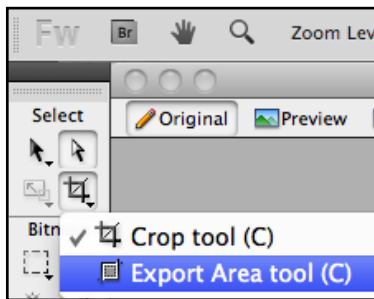
Gradients



Gradient Backgrounds

Gradients are an excellent way to create a soft and inviting background. Backgrounds are usually narrow gradients created in either Photoshop or Fireworks and repeated horizontally.

The image to the right is the background image that repeats horizontally in the DMACC web site. Note that the image is long but very narrow - usually about 30 pixels x 720 (or the height of your page).



Exporting from Fireworks

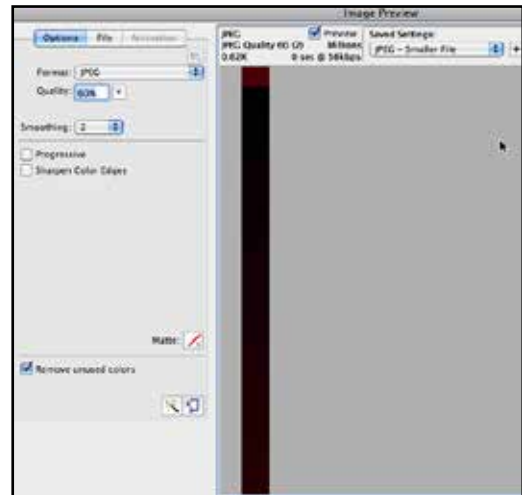
If you have created a site page prototype in Fireworks, you can create a small graphic image by using the Export Area tool.

With the Export Area tool, create a narrow and long selection that will be the background graphic.

Exporting Options for Gradients.

Because gradients contain more colors than flat graphics, you may need to experiment with other file formats and larger color gamuts than Gif. In this example we use the jpeg 60% smaller file with smoothing.

SAVE as Images Only.



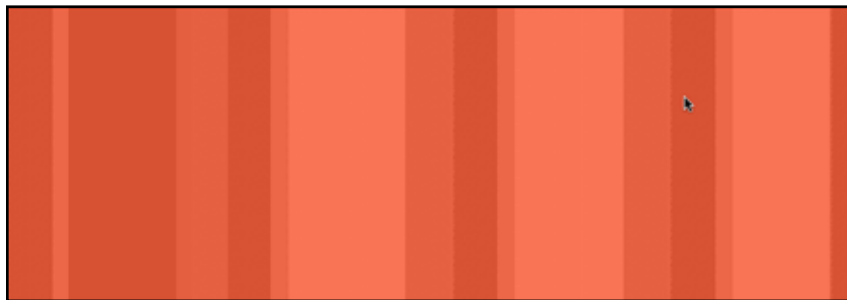
Preview.

Fireworks does not have the background preview like Photoshop. However you can open any Fireworks generated image in Photoshop and preview.

SAVE as Images Only.

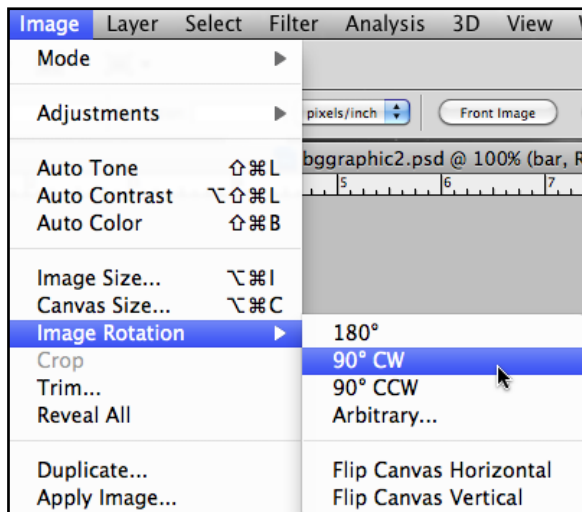
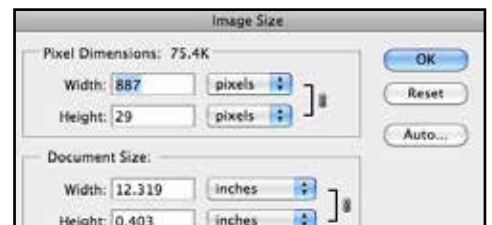


Vertical & Horizontal Patterns



Horizontal Bar Patterns

Vertical bars can be created and repeated the same way as any graphic image. The trick here is to create a very narrow image. In this example, the vertical bar is only 29 pixels high, then repeated vertically in CSS.

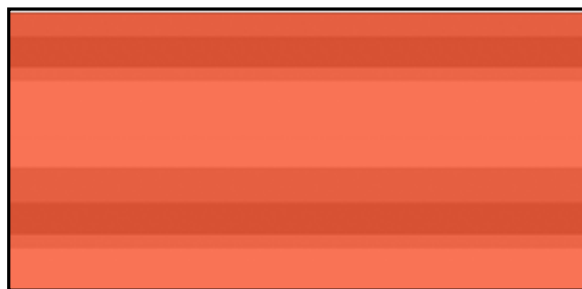


Vertical Bar Patterns

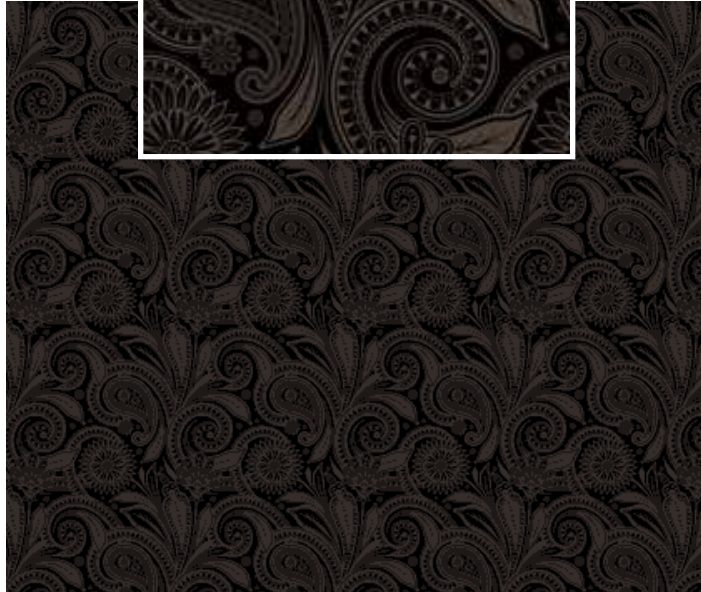
To see how the same image can appear as a vertical pattern, rotate the image by 90°. (Image>Image Rotation> 90°)

Optimize and preview in Save for Web & Devices .

Remember to **refresh** your browser.



Seamless Patterns



Seamless patterns are graphic images that, when repeated, appear to be a single pattern element similar to fabrics and wallpaper.

To achieve the seamless pattern effect, it is important that all sides of the graphic image match up to the opposing side.

Sample seamless graphics can be found online. In this example, a comp was downloaded from www.istockphoto.com.

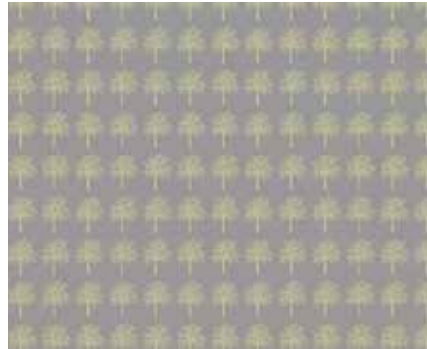


You can obtain numerous FREE tileable pattern PNG files from Tileables website. Download Packs containing numerous grayscale PNG files in different patterns and textures. The example shown here is one image from Pack 5 - Wood. Images can then be colorized in either Photoshop or Fireworks.

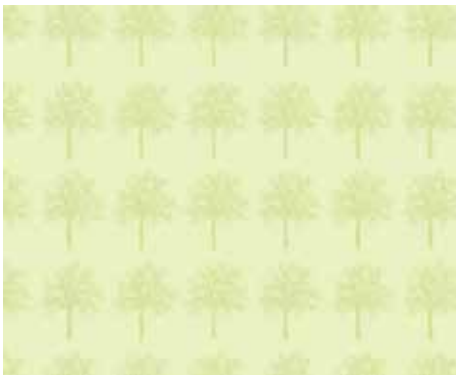
<http://tileabl.es>



Background Design Considerations



SIZE: *the size of the image repeating can greatly affect the visual appearance.*



CONTRAST *also can greatly affect the visual appearance of the background.*

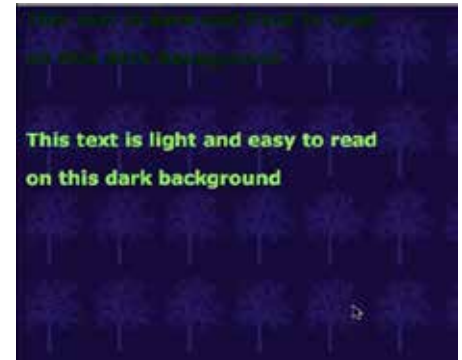
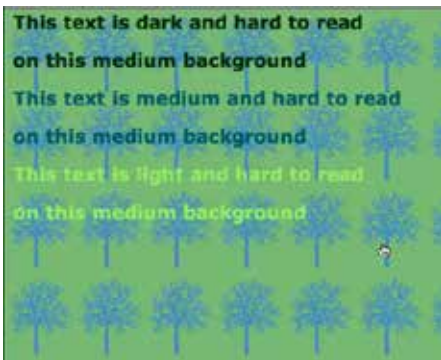
DO keep contrast to a minimum. Make the image and background color of similar hue, value, or saturation.



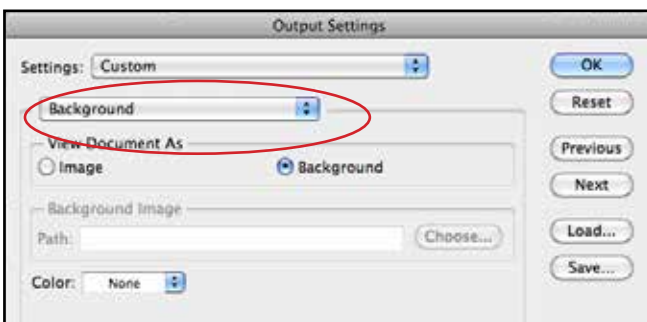
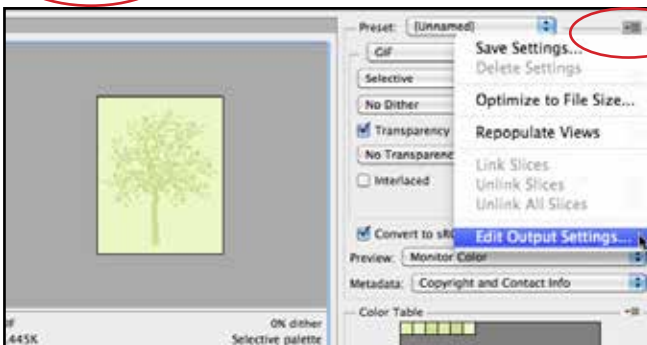
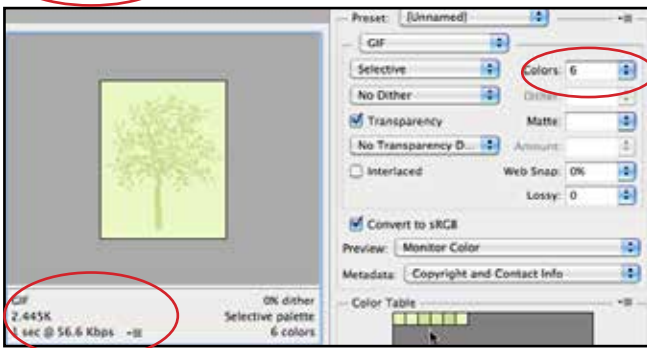
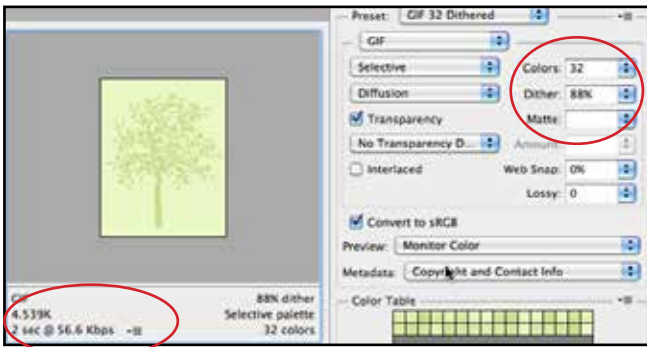
DON'T *make your image and background color contrasting. This creates visual vibration and distracts the viewer from the content of your site.*

DO pay attention to type that is placed over a background. Be sure that the type adequately contrasts the background for better readability.

DON'T *place contrasting type over a contrast repeating image. This makes the type very hard to read.*



Previewing a Background Graphic in Photoshop



You can create repeated backgrounds in either Fireworks OR Photoshop. However, only in Adobe Photoshop can you preview the repeating graphic image how it would appear on your html site. If you created your background graphic in Fireworks - simply save it and open it in Photoshop.

Establish Optimization Settings

With your graphic image open in Photoshop, go to File>Save for Web & Devices. View the second setting (not original) and review the Optimization settings. The goal here is to get the image to the lowest possible file size without compromising visual quality. Typically flat graphics with minimal colors are used for repeating backgrounds.

In this example we reduced the colors down to 6 and removed the dither. This cut the file size (and download time) in half.

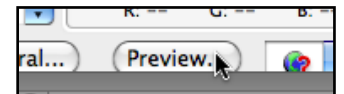
Preview your background

In Photoshop you can preview how the graphic image will look as a repeating image. In Save for Web & Devices, click on the panel settings in the upper right corner of the palette.

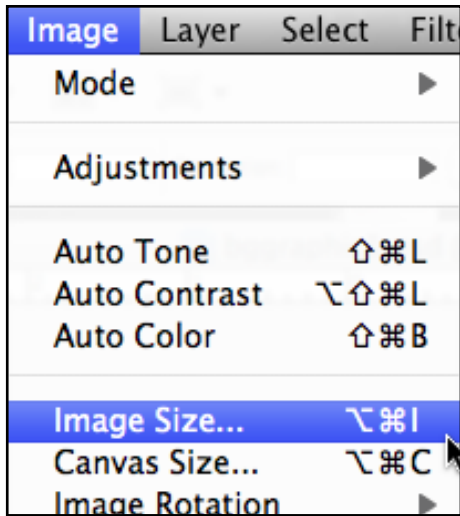
Choose **Edit Output Settings...**

Choose Background in the settings pull-down menu, then in "View Document As" choose the radio button Background. Then click OK.

Back in the Save for Web & Devices, click on the Preview button in the lower left.



The background with the repeating graphic image will be displayed in your default browser along with a box displaying the graphic information and HTML code. Because Photoshop generates HTML for this display, you will only see the image repeat both horizontally and vertically. This is only a preview, so you can change this in the CSS code once you apply the graphic image to the background.

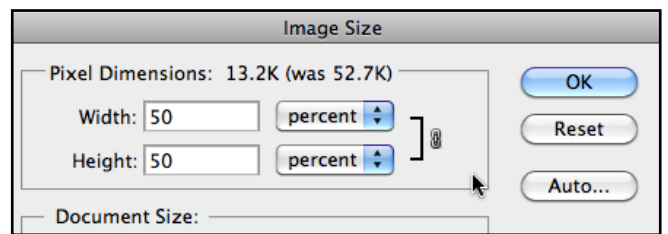
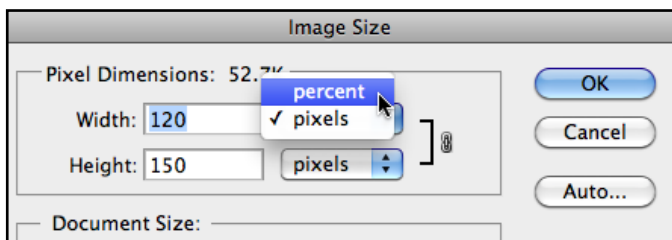


Graphic Image Too Large? Here is how to change the size...

If you are still in Save for Web & Devices, click the DONE button on the lower right corner.

In the Photoshop menu, choose Image>Image Size.

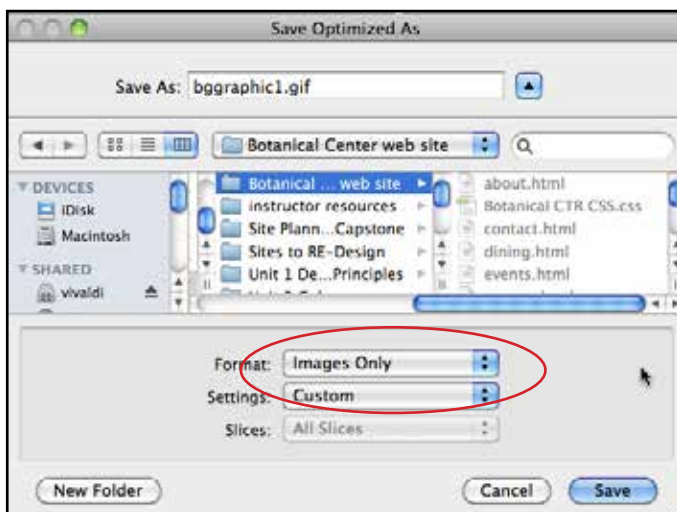
Under Pixel Dimensions, change the settings to percent, then choose 50 to reduce the size of the graphic image in half.



Again, choose File>Save for Web & Devices.

Preview your graphic as the repeating background.

Be sure to refresh your browser to display the repeating graphic in the new size.



Save the File

Go to File>Save As. Name the image and choose Images Only for the format.