



litmus

Foundations of Email Design

LESSON 2

Imagery

Layouts

Imagery

Fonts & Typography

Calls-to-Action

At Litmus, we live and breathe email design. Get a strong, foundational understanding of email design principles, straight from our own email team.

We'll walk you through examples, important considerations, and our recommendations—equipping you with the tools you need to design with confidence.

Use this as a compass to help you navigate what lies ahead of your email design journey.



Images are the backbone of many high-performing emails. But, there's a lot to consider with file types, sizes, and load time.

We've got you covered on all things imagery, complete with our picks for file types, guidelines on compression, a breakdown on iconography, and some of our favorite resources.

- 2.1 File types**
- 2.2 Compression**
- 2.3 Iconography**
- 2.4 Resources**

2.1 File types

What is the best image format for email? There's a number to choose from, but here are our favorites for static imagery:

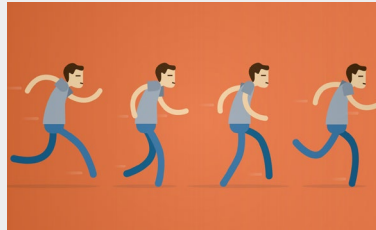


The best file types for static imagery are **JPG** and **PNG**.



JPGs

Best for photographic imagery



PNGs

Best for illustrative imagery and imagery with transparency

LEVEL UP

Animated Imagery

Want to kick things up a notch? Though animation can add a layer of complexity to your email production, it can bring considerable value—engaging readers by drawing the eye and elevating brand personality.

For animation, we recommend using **GIFs** and **APNGs**.

Recommended reading

For a deeper dive, check out our [Guide to Animated GIFs](#) and our blog post on using [APNGs in email](#).

2.2 Compression

Part of a great subscriber experience is ensuring your emails load quickly. One of the factors that impacts load time is image file size. Including just one, heavy image may drastically increase the time it takes for your email to load. That's why ensuring images are compressed appropriately is key.



Aim to keep the overall weight of imagery as low as possible. The combined weight of the imagery in your email shouldn't exceed 2 MB.

There are a number of ways to compress imagery. Design tools like Adobe Photoshop allow you to compress on output, or you can opt for free downloadable compression apps and online tools:

Software and applications

[Adobe Photoshop](#)

[ImageOptim](#) (for Mac)

Online

[TinyPNG](#)

[TinyJPG](#)



A tip from Litmus's own email designer, Lily Worth

"Sometimes I save imagery as both JPG and PNG to see which comes out smaller and best quality after compression."



Optional headline

Proin facilisis est elit, eget dictum felis feugiat non.



Optional headline

Proin facilisis est elit, eget dictum felis feugiat non.



Optional headline

Proin facilisis est elit, eget dictum felis feugiat non.

Call to action



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Call to action

2.3 Iconography

Icons are a great way to apply visual content to email. They can illustrate list items, create visual anchors, and support content hierarchy.

Functions of iconography:

- Supporting and organizing written content
- Illustrating instructions, steps, or even products
- Offering recognizable anchors (e.g., social media icons or contact information)

2.4 Resources

Looking for image resources? Here are some stock photo and illustration libraries:

Free

[Pexels](#)

[Unsplash](#)

Paid

[iStock](#)

[Adobe Stock](#)

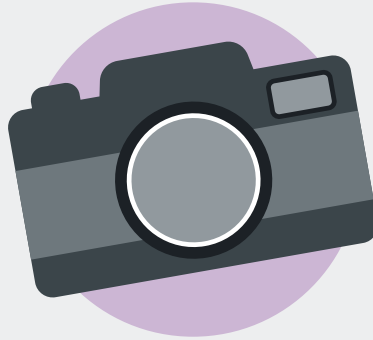
[Shutterstock](#)



Something to keep in mind is copyright and licensing: Depending on the resource, you may need to obtain a license or other permission before using their imagery in your emails.



A tip from Litmus's own email designer, Lily Worth
*“Bookmark this [handy tool from Blush](#). It’s the
lorem ipsum of placeholder imagery!”*



Lesson recap

- ❑ The best file types for static images are **JPG** and **PNG**.
- ❑ The combined weight of the images in your email **shouldn't exceed 2 MB**.
- ❑ Some free imagery resources are [Pexels](#) and [Unsplash](#).
- ❑ Some paid imagery resources include [iStock](#), [Adobe Stock](#), and [Shutterstock](#).