



## About PPCUG

### General Meetings

Second Monday of the month at the Lawrenceville Library.

Route 1 and Darrah Lane.

7:00-7:45 PM: Social Time / Tech Corner

7:45 PM: Meeting Comes to Order

8 PM: Featured Presentation

For information about upcoming meetings or joining PPCUG call 908-218-0778 to leave a message.

### Board Meetings

Third Monday of the Month

8 PM at Lawrenceville Library.

Board meetings are open to All.

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### Web Site

<http://www.ppcug-nj.org>

### Annual Dues Rates

Normal dues rate is \$30 per year.

New Members Only: after February, the rate is \$2.50 per month times the number of months remaining in the year.

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## Coming Events

### April 9, 2001 - SnagIt - TechSmith Corporation

A demo on

### May 5 & 6 - Trenton Computer Festival - TCF2001

PPCUG Parcel Pickup!

### May 14, 2001 - Streaming Video - Doug Dixon

Doug Dixon, of Sarnoff Corporation will talk about about major streaming media formats and the desktop tools for producing your own streaming media files.

### June 11, 2001 - Upgrading your PC (Canceled February Meeting)

Tom Canavan & Paul Kurivchack will show you the inner workings of your PC and how to do simple upgrades from memory to hard drives.

## Did you get the AnnaK worm yet? Here's a quick and easy way to trick the worm

### By: Rod Ream, Pasadena IBM Users Group

Visual Basic Scripts (VBS) are popular with virus writers. That's because they're easy to create and will launch if sent as an e-mail attachment. And the recipient double-clicks on them.

But there's an easy, free way for you to defeat Visual Basic Script viruses.

Every file type has a default action that takes place when we double click on a file. The default action for double clicking on a VBS (Visual Basic Script) file type is to open and execute the script file. That means double clicking on the attachment runs or launches the script. This default action is the mechanism that can result in system infection if a user unknowingly launches an infected attachment received in an email message.

You can easily change this action and stop the accidental launch and execution of a VBS file by making it do something else when double-clicked on.

Some users have disabled or removed the capability of the system to run a VBS file out of fear of potential viral exposure. However, there's a relatively easy fix for this that will still permit a web page or other application to run a VB script when such function is actually needed, but will block the double click action. The fix is to change the default action to Edit, which causes the file to open in Notepad rather than execute.

Here's the Step-by-Step

In Windows Explorer (not Internet Explorer), open Folder Options under the View pull-down menu (moved to Tools in Windows Me). Select the "File Types" tab and scroll to VBScript Encoded File. Click on the "Edit" button ("Advanced" in Windows Me).

What happens is another window will open showing the possible file actions, with the default action indicated in boldface type. The default action is likely "Open." Highlight instead the word "Edit" and click on the "Set Default" button. "Edit" should now appear in bold face.

In some older systems the Edit function may not be listed. In such instances, click the NEW button and enter "Edit" in the action field and "NOTEPAD.EXE" in the application field. When "Edit" has been added make it the default action as shown above.

While in the file type screen, also make sure the boxes for "always show extension" and enable quick view" are also checked. Click "OK" to close the open windows.

Windows usually has several example VBS files on the system, in a folder named "sample." Find one of them and double click on it. If the action caused Notepad to open and display the content of the file, you've done it correctly and are now safe from an accidental VBS infection.

Rod Ream is senior tech support for the Pasadena IBM Users Group and president of PC Consulting, 626/280-6850 RodReam@techie.com.

# DEMYSTIFYING GRAPHIC FILE FORMATS

By Ben Luna

Coastal Area Users Group, Corpus Christi, TX

The purpose of this article is to briefly describe some of the most common graphic file formats for image files, as well as how to determine which file format to use for Web graphics and print publications. When an image is saved to a specific file format, you are telling your applications how to write the image's information to disk. The specific file format you choose depends on the graphics software application you are using (e.g., Adobe Illustrator, Freehand, Adobe Photoshop) and how and where you will use your image (e.g., the Web or a print publication.)

Graphic file formats can be broadly categorized into bit-mapped formats and vector formats.

## Bit-mapped formats

This format is a representation, consisting of rows and columns of dots, of a graphics image in computer memory. This is sometimes called raster graphics. The value of each dot, whether it is filled or not, is stored in one or more bits of data. The density of the dots, known as the resolution, determines how sharply the image is represented. This is often expressed in dots per inch (dpi), or simply by the number of rows and columns, such as 640 by 480. To display a bit-mapped image on a monitor or to print in a printer, the computer translates the bit map into pixels for monitor screens, or ink dots for printer. Programs that manipulate bit-mapped images are called paint programs.

Following are descriptions of some commonly used bit-mapped file formats:

**BMP:** The Bitmap file format is used for bitmap graphics on the Windows platform only. Unlike other file formats, which store image data from top to bottom and pixels in red/green/blue order, the BMP format stores image data from bottom to top and pixels in blue/green/red order. This means that if memory is tight, BMP graphics will sometimes appear drawn from bottom to top. Compression of BMP files is not supported, so they are usually very large. When saving a file to the BMP format, add the ".bmp" file extension to the end of its file name.

**GIF:** The Graphics Interchange Format was originally developed by CompuServe in 1987. It is one of the most popular file formats for Web graphics and for exchanging graphics files between computers. It is most commonly used for bitmap images composed of line drawings or blocks of a few distinct colors. The GIF format supports 8 bits of color information or less. In addition, the GIF89 file format supports transparency, allowing you to make a color in your image transparent. (Please note: CompuServe GIF87 does not support transparency.) This feature makes GIF a particularly popular format for Web images. GIF is a "lossy" file format. It reduces an image's file size by removing bits of color information during the conversion process. The GIF format supports 256 colors or less. When creating images for the Web, be aware that only 216 colors are shared between Macintosh and Windows monitors. These colors, called the "Web palette," should be used when creating GIFs for the Web because colors that are not in this palette display different-

ly on Macintosh and Windows monitors. When saving an image to the GIF format, add the ".gif" file extension to the end of its file name.

**PCX:** Originally developed by ZSOFT for its PC Paintbrush program, PCX is a common graphics file format supported by many graphics programs, as well as most optical scanners and

fax modems. When saving an image to the PCX format, add the ".pcx" file extension to the end of its file name.

**TIFF:** Tagged Image File Format is a standard file format for storing images as bit maps. It is used especially for scanned images because it can support any size, resolution, and color depth. When saving an image to the TIFF format, add the ".tif" file extension to the end of its file name.

## Vector Graphics

The other method for representing images is known as vector graphics (or object-oriented graphics.) With vector graphics, images are represented as mathematical formulas that define all the shapes in the image. Vector graphics are more flexible than bit-mapped graphics because they look the same even when they are scaled to different sizes. In contrast, bit-mapped graphics become ragged when they are shrunk or enlarged. Programs that enable the user to create and manipulate vector graphics are called draw programs. Images stored as vectors look better on monitors and printers with higher resolution (bit-mapped images always appear the same regardless of a device's resolution.) Another advantage is that images in vector graphics often require less memory than bit-mapped images. Almost all sophisticated graphics systems, including CADD systems and animation software, use vector graphics.

Following are descriptions of some commonly used vector graphics file formats:

**EPS:** The Encapsulated PostScript file format is a metafile format; it can be used for vector images or bitmap images. The EPS file format can be used on a variety of platforms, including Macintosh and Windows. When you place an EPS image into a document, you can scale it up or down without information loss. This format contains PostScript information and should be used when printing to a PostScript output device. The PostScript language, which was developed by Adobe, is the industry standard for desktop publishing software and hardware. EPS files can be graphics or images of whole pages that include text, font, graphics, and page layout information.

**JPEG:** Like GIF, the Joint Photographic Experts Group format is one of the most popular formats for Web graphics. It supports 24 bits of color information, and is most commonly used for

photographs and similar continuous-tone bitmap images. The JPEG file format stores all of the color information in an RGB image, then reduces the file size by compressing it, or saving only the color information that is essential to the image. Most imaging applications and plug-ins let you determine the amount of compression used when saving a graphic in the JPEG format. Unlike GIF, JPEG does not support transparency. Use JPEG for scanned photographs and naturalistic artwork with highlights, shaded areas, and shadows. The more complex and subtly rendered the image is, the more likely it is that the image should be converted to JPEG. JPEG, like GIF, uses a "lossy" compression technique, which changes the original image by removing color information during the conversion process. The JPEG file format supports millions of colors. In theory, JPEG was designed so that changes made to the original image during conversion to JPEG would not be visible to the human eye. Most imaging applications let the user control the amount of lossy compression performed on an image, so you can trade off image quality for smaller file size and vice versa. Be aware that the chances of image degradation when converting to JPEG increase proportionally with the amount of compression you use. When saving a file in the JPEG format, add the ".jpg" file extension to the end of its file name. Use the JPEG file format for images with only a few distinct colors, such as illustrations, cartoons, and images with blocks of color, such as icons, buttons, and horizontal rules.

PICT: The Picture file format is for use primarily on the Macintosh platform; it is the default format for Macintosh image files. The PICT format is most commonly used for bitmap images, but can be used for vector images as well. Avoid using PICT images for print publishing. The PICT format is "lossless," meaning it does not remove information from the original image during the file format conversion process. Because the PICT format supports only limited compression on Macintoshes with QuickTime installed, PICT files are usually large. When saving an image as a PICT, add the file extension ".pct" to the end of its file name. Use the PICT format for images used in video editing, animation, desktop computer presentations, and multimedia authoring.

PNG: The Portable Network Graphics format will likely be the successor to the GIF file format. PNG is not yet widely supported by most Web browsers. Netscape versions 4.04 and later, and Internet Explorer version 4.01 and later, currently support this file format. However, PNG is expected to become a mainstream format for Web images and could replace GIF entirely. It is platform independent and should be used for single images only (not animation.) Compared with GIF, PNG offers greater color support and better compression, gamma correction for brightness control across platforms, better support for transparency, and a better method for displaying progressive images. When saving an image to the PNG format, add the file extension ".png" to the end of its file name.

CGM: The Computer Graphics Metafile is a format developed by several standards organizations. CGM is supported by many PC Software products. When saving an image to the CGM

format, add the file extension ".cgm" to the end of its file name.

DXF: The Data Exchange File is a format developed by Autodesk. Almost all PC-based CAD systems support DXF.

GEM: The graphics file format used by GEM-based applications. GEM is a graphical user interface (GUI) developed by Digital Research.

HPGL: Hewlett-Packard Graphics Language is one of the oldest file formats. Although it is not very sophisticated, it is supported by many PC-based graphics products.

IGES: Initial Graphics Exchange Specification is an ANSI Standard for three-dimensional wire frame models. IGES is supported by most PC-based CAD systems.

PIC This is a relatively simple file format developed by Lotus for representing graphs generated by Lotus 1-2-3. PIC is supported by a wide variety of PC applications.

PICT: Developed by Apple Computer in 1984 as the standard format for storing and exchanging graphics files. It is supported by all graphics programs that run on a Macintosh.

WMF: The Windows file format is used for exchanging graphics between Microsoft Windows applications. WMF files can also hold bit-mapped images.

The debate over which format is better still surfaces once in a while. My opinion is that each format has its place, just as the native format of the various paint-and-draw programs. One format may be better than others in terms of quality; at other times, another format may be better in terms of size. Best way is to take the time to view and store your images in different formats and select the one optimum for your needs, storage capability, and ease of use.

Ben Luna of the Coastal Area Users Group, Corpus Christi, TX experience includes writing manuals for computers and software. Email him: akosiben@netscape.net

This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an International organization to which this user group belongs.





# PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

<http://www.ppcug-nj.org>

## PPCUG Member E-mail Directory

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## Upgrading Programs ???

Dear Tech Support:

Last year I upgraded from Boyfriend 5.0 to Husband 1.0 and noticed that the new program began making unexpected changes to the accounting modules, limiting access to flower and jewelry applications that had operated flawlessly under Boyfriend 5.0.

In addition, Husband 1.0 uninstalled many other valuable programs, such as Romance 9.9 but installed undesirable programs such as NFL 5.0 and NBA 3.0. Conversation 8.0 no longer runs and HouseCleaning 2.6 simply crashes the system. I've tried running Nagging 5.3 to fix these problems, but to no avail.

Desperate

Dear Desperate,

Keep in mind, Boyfriend 5.0 is an entertainment package, while Husband 1.0 is an operating system. Try to enter the command: C:/I THOUGHT YOU LOVED ME and install Tears 6.2. Husband 1.0 should then automatically run the applications: Guilty 3.0 and Flowers 7.0. But remember, overuse can cause Husband 1.0 to default to GrumpySilence 2.5, Happyhour 7.0 or Beer 6.1. Beer 6.1 is a very bad program that will create "Snoring Loudly" wave files.

DO NOT install MotherInLaw 1.0 or reinstall another Boyfriend program. These are not supported applications and will crash Husband 1.0.

In summary, Husband 1.0 is a great program, but it does have limited memory and cannot learn new applications quickly. Consider buying additional software to improve performance. I personally recommend HotFood 3.0 and Lingerie 5.3.

Tech Support

## Directions To Our Meeting:

**The Lawrence Library is at the corner of Business Route 1 South and Darrah Lane.**

**From Princeton and North:** Take US Route 1 South, past the Quaker Bridge / Mercer Shopping Centers. Continue on approximately 1 3/4 mile past I295 to the Route 1 split, stay to the right to Business Route 1 (Brunswick Pike). First traffic light is Darrah Lane. Library is on right side. Park in lot towards Route 1 and to the rear. Enter Library at main entrance in front. Meeting rooms A & B are located through glass door on Route 1 side of building.

**From Trenton and South:** Take I295 North to US Route 1 South. Library is approximately 1 3/4 miles south of I295. Continue south to Business Route 1 (Brunswick Pike). First traffic light is Darrah Lane. Library is on right side. Park in lot towards Route 1 and to the rear. Enter Library at main entrance in front. Meeting rooms A & B are located through glass door on Route 1 side of building.

For additional information visit <http://www.ppcug-nj.org>



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