

Creating a graphic visual Slicing elements for insertion into a web page

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This handout covers the basic techniques for:

- Creating a graphic visual of a web page in Photoshop (PS).
- Defining areas of the layout that will become graphic elements in the web page by using *slices*.

Creating a graphic visual of how you intend a finished web page to look is essential to successful web design. This will enable you to resolve issues of space, positioning, size and visibility. A graphic visual is important for showing clients or other interested parties how the final product is intended to look.

Often, web sites have a consistent style between pages. Therefore it is not necessary to create a visual for all pages, just for a typical page. Visuals can be created for any pages that are exceptions to the norm.

Creating a graphic visual

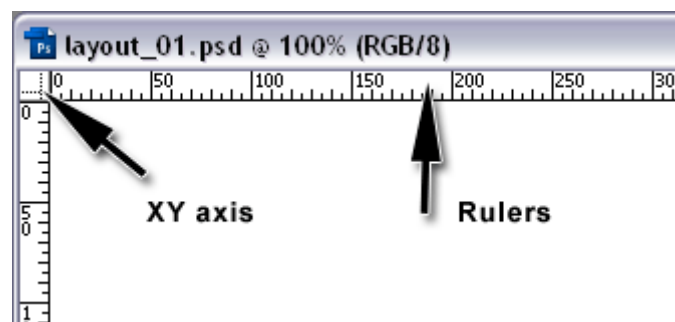
This example presumes that the web page will be fixed in width and centred within the browser window.

Go to File > New. Create a document, the size of which will approximate the area one would see in a browser window. For instance, 950w X 750h px @ 72/96 d.p.i.

Next, define the area that your web page will occupy. This is done by pulling out guides from the Rulers – View > Rulers. Right click on the rulers to ensure the measurements are in pixels.

Using Guides:

- With any tool, click on the ruler and drag out a guide.
- The position of a guide is indicated on the rulers.
- Guides can only be repositioned with the Move Tool.
- Use the Info panel for perfect XY positioning – Window > Info.

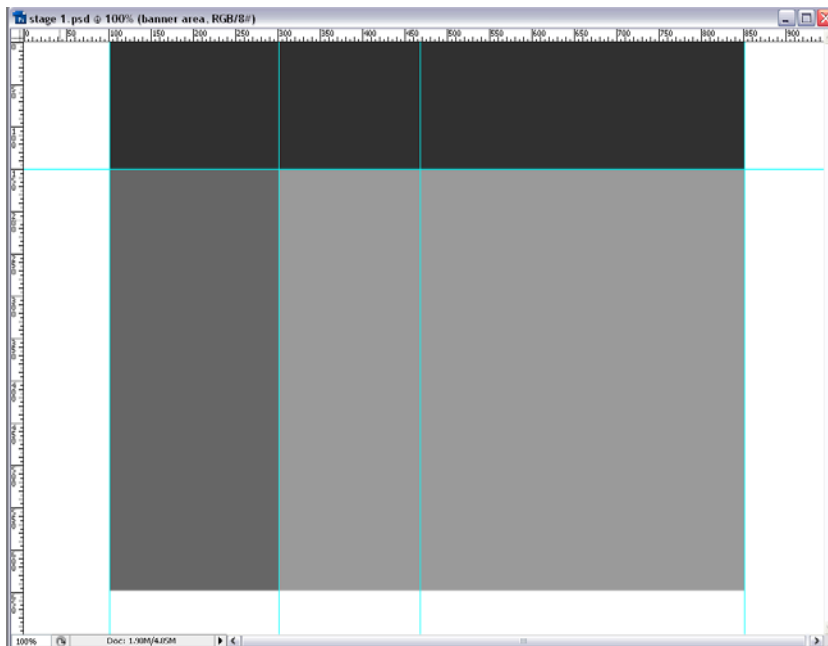


Presuming that you want a design that is 750 px wide and is centred on the page, the first guide will need to define the vertical middle of the document.

To centre a guide on the page pull out a guide from the vertical ruler. Move the guide across the document. As the guide is gets near to the middle of the document the guide will 'snap' to absolute middle. The 'snap' has the characteristic of magnetism.

Two more guides can define the outer edges, 375 px either side of the centre guide. A bottom edge can be defined if required. To measure from the centre the XY axis needs to be placed on the centre guide. Zero in the X & Y axis can be placed anywhere on the page by pulling out the XY axis from the top left of the Rulers. To reset a new XY axis on the page, pull the axis from the Rulers again. Zero is reset to the top left of the document by double clicking on the XY at the top left of the Rulers.

Define significant areas within your layout with more guides, for instance, an area for a banner, menu, columns, text and so on. These areas will begin to indicate how you can relate the visual to a layout in HTML. These guides will also help when it comes to define areas with 'slices'.



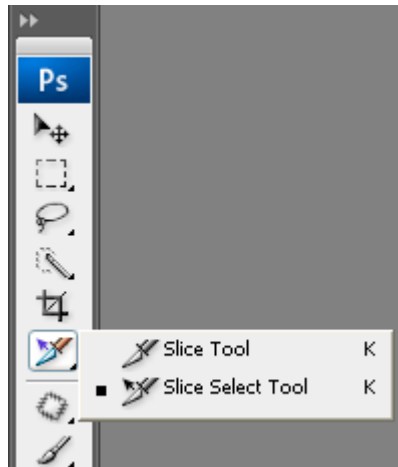
The shaded blocks illustrate how the final page may be structured

Populate your visual with graphic and other elements as you will expect to see in the final web page.



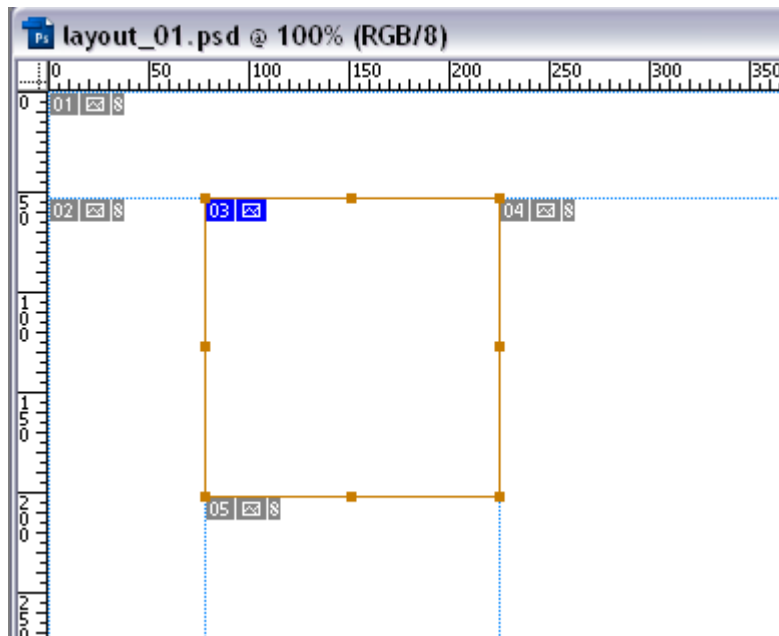
Slicing

Slicing is a convenient feature that allows you to extract areas from an image and save them as separate image files. This can be done as part of one single optimisation process.



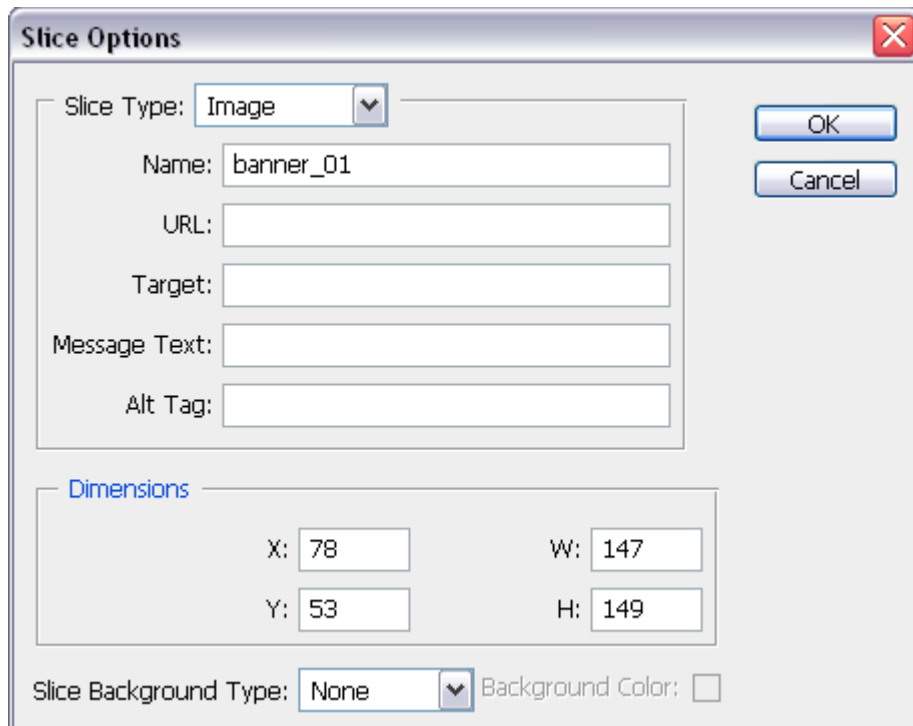
Decide which areas are to be graphics. Also, how these can be divided so that they will fit into the final layout in HTML, whether you use tables or box/divs for layout. The final result can be rather like a jigsaw.

Use the Slice tool to draw slices around graphic areas, aligning the slice edges to guides. The slice edges will snap to the guides.



A drawn slice showing resize handles

Slices can be resized by the resize handles or repositioned by dragging with the Slice tool. After drawing the slice, double click on it to name it.



This opens the Slice Options box. The only option necessary here is to give the slice a name. This will become the file name when the slices are optimised. Use typical file naming syntax.

As you go around the visual drawing slices, PS will create a framework of default slices as well. These slices can be ignored. All user defined slices have blue markers, whereas default slices have grey markers.

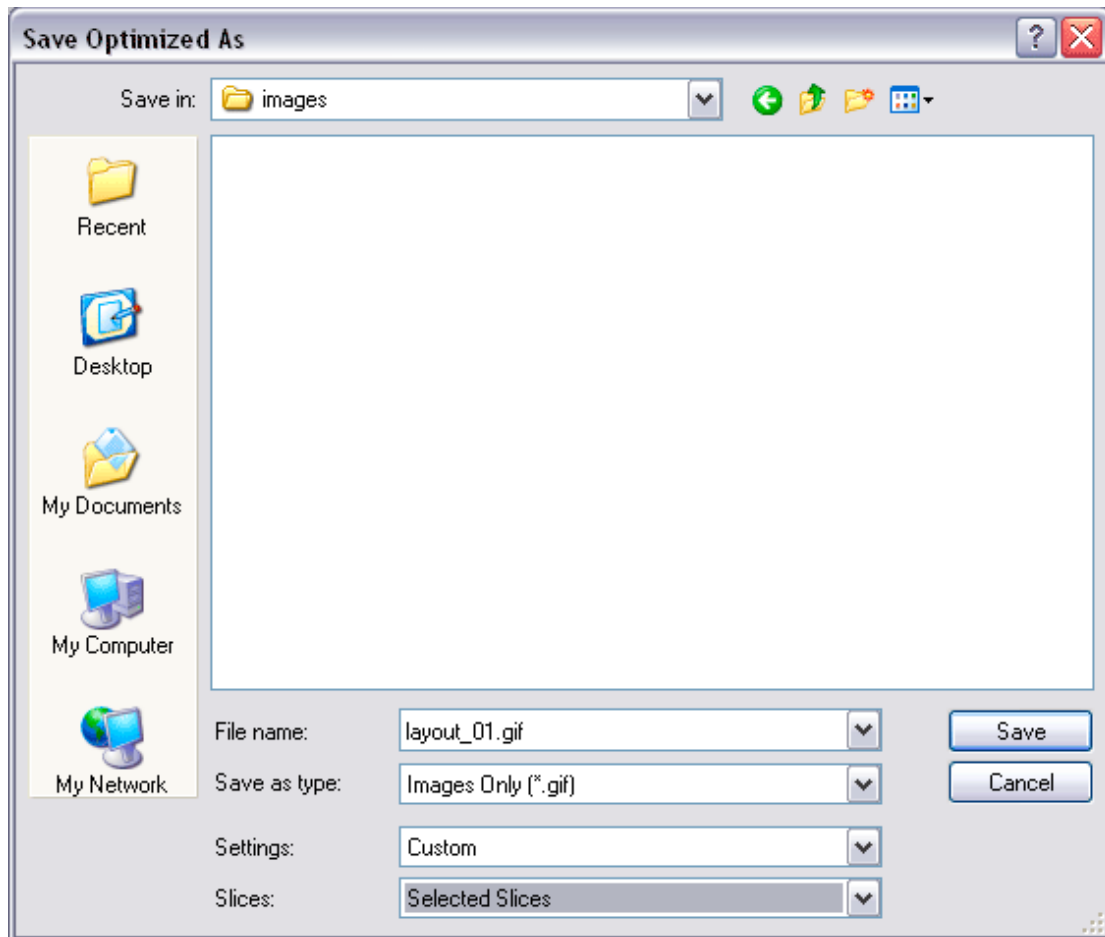
Optimising

After completing the slicing process go to File > Save for Web & Devices. In the optimisation window, click on the Optimized tab at the top to see all of your visual. You are now required to set optimisation settings for each slice. This is done by clicking on a slice. The other slices are slightly greyed. The optimisation settings can now be set for the selected slice.

When optimising:

- Different optimisation settings can be applied to different slices
- Shift click on slices to select more than one and apply the same settings to all.

Once settings have been applied, shift click on all slices to be saved and click Save.



Saving

- In the Save Optimised As window, browse for the location that the files are to be saved to i.e. the images folder in the root folder of your web site.
- Ignore File Name
- Set Save as Type to Images Only

Output Settings dialogue:

- Settings: Select Other. In the Output Settings dialogue choose the category Saving Files and in the File Naming section choose only the options 'file name' and '.ext'. *This will ensure that the slice names and not default names will be used when saving.*
- In the Optimized Files section, uncheck the Put Images in Folder option. This will prevent PS from creating a folder for the images.
- Click OK and the settings made in the Output Settings dialogue become the Custom set.
- Finally, in the Save Optimised As window under Slices, choose Selected Slices.

Click Save and your images are ready to use.