Working with Multimedia Files

Not all computer files are the same. Every file is stored in a particular format. Different kinds of data usually use different formats. File *extensions* tell you what kind of format files use. When you download a file from the Web, you should pay attention to its format. All formats are good for some purposes but not for others.

Image Formats

- ***GIF*** (Graphics Interchange Format) is a good format for very simple graphics and graphics with transparent, or cut out, areas. GIF images are used for graphics that do not have many colors or much detail, such as logos and page banners. All modern web browsers display GIF files.

- ***JPG or JPEG*** (Joint Photographic Experts Group) provides adjustable quality images. JPG images can support many colors and are often used to show pictures in Web pages. This format enables you to compress images by removing data. All modern web browsers display JPG files. JPG is a good image format to use when both image quality and small file size are important.

- ***PNG*** (Portable Network Graphics) provides high quality images and supports transparent, or cut out, areas. It does not remove data during compression. Most web browsers can display PNG images. PNG is a good choice when image quality is important.

- ***TIF or TIFF*** (Tagged Image File Format) provides very high quality images. This format is a good choice for storing images and for print publications. Web browsers do not usually display TIF files.

Audio Formats

- ***AIFF*** (Audio Interchange File Format) is a very high quality audio format that was developed by Apple. It is not a common audio format on the Internet because files sizes are relatively large, but it is often used in recording sound because it can be easily converted to other formats.

- ***MP3*** (MPEG-1 Layer 3.) is probably the most popular audio format on the Internet. It is popular primarily because it can store CD-quality music in relatively small-sized files. MP3 is also multiplatform, which means it works easily on a Mac and Windows operating system.

- ***WAV*** (Waveform) was an early and very common audio format for the Windows operating system, but it can also be used on a Mac. It is not a common audio format on the Internet because uncompressed WAV files can be very large.

- ***WMA*** (Windows Media Audio) is a relatively new audio format developed by Microsoft for the Windows operating system. It can provide high quality sound in compressed file sizes, but is not as common as MP3.

Video Formats

- ***AVI*** (Audio Video Interleave) is a common video format for the Windows operating system. Like the WAV audio format, its relative large file sizes have made it less popular as the Internet has become the most common way to distribute multimedia.

- ***MOV or QT*** (QuickTime Movie) was created by Apple and included with every Mac. Apple also developed a player for QuickTime that runs on Windows. You can play a QuickTime movie on a Windows operating system, if the player has been downloaded and installed.

- ***MPG or MPEG*** (Motion Picture Experts Group) is a video format from the same organization that developed the MP3 audio format. The MPEG standard has different versions. MPEG-1 is a relatively common video format on the Internet because its compression produces small files. In fact, MP3 is the audio layer in MPEG-1.

- ***WMV*** (Windows Media Video) is a relatively new video format developed by Microsoft for the Windows operating system. Microsoft also developed a player for Windows Media for the Mac operating system. You can play a WMV file on a Mac, if the player has been downloaded and installed.