



Reducing the size of your course and content files

Step-by-step guide for designers

For Blackboard Vista 4.x

Contents

Introduction	1
Unused files	1
Zip files.....	2
Images.....	2
PowerPoint.....	5
PDF (portable document format)	5
Multimedia files (video, audio, Impatica, MP3 etc.)	6



Introduction

To ensure that all students have equitable access to your online course it's important to consider file size. Very large files can be slow or impossible to access if students are logging on to your course from home using slow connections. This guide suggests some simple ways for you to reduce your course file sizes.

Unused files


Remove any files in your online course that are not currently being used.

View your files

1. Open your course in **MyLO**.
2. Click on **File Manager** to open the *File Manager* window.
3. Click on *ActionLinks*  icon next to any folder and select **Open Folder** from the drop-down menu that appears. This will display all files in the folder.
4. Click on the *ActionLinks*  icon next to the title of any 'suspected' file and select **Preview** from the drop-down menu to view the file. (The file will open in a new window).

If you find a file that is not being used but may be used in the future, download the file and store it on your computer, then delete the file from **MyLO**.


Download files

1. In the **File Manager**, locate the file, click on its *ActionLinks*  icon and select **Download** from the drop-down menu that appears.
2. You will be given the option to open or save, choose **Save**.
3. Select where you want to save the file to and click on **Save**.

Reducing the size of your course and content files


4. You can now delete this file from **MyLO**.

Delete files

1. In the **File Manager**, locate the file, click on its *ActionLinks*  icon and select **Delete** from the drop-down menu that appears.
2. Click **OK** to confirm.

Zip files

If you zip a number of files to upload into your course, once the files have been unzipped, you can delete the zip file from **MyLO**.

1. In the **File Manager**, locate the zip file, click on its *ActionLinks*  icon and select **Delete** from the drop-down menu that appears.
2. Click **OK** to confirm.

Images

When preparing images to be used with an html file, a PowerPoint presentation or a Word document, you need to consider three things if you want to minimise file size—if part of the image can be removed (cropped), the physical size of the image file, and the file type.

Photo editing software such as *Photoshop*, *Fireworks* or *Paintshop Pro* are ideal for editing image files; however simple software such as *Microsoft Paint* or *Microsoft Office Picture Manager* can also be used. The instructions below are for use with *Paint*.


Cropping

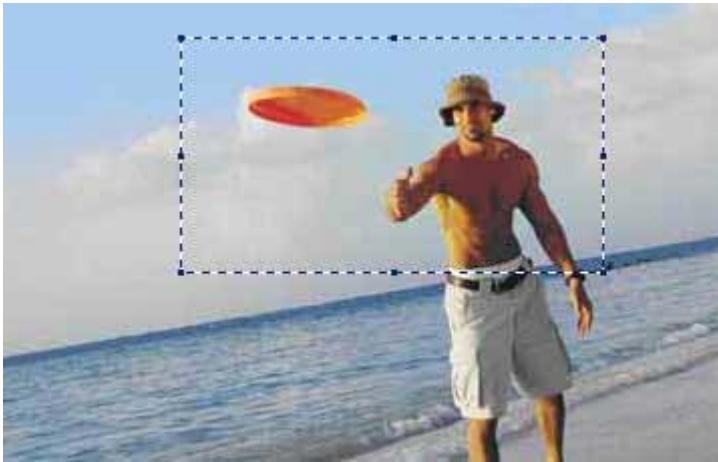
Image file sizes can be made much smaller by cropping the image to display only the area you need.

1. Open your image file in *Paint*.



Reducing the size of your course and content files

- Using the Select tool,  click and drag a box over the area of the image that you want to display.



- On the toolbar, click on **Edit >> Cut**.
- On the toolbar, click on **Image >> Attributes**. Type in 1 for width and height.
- On the toolbar, click on **Edit >> Paste**.



You are now left with just the area of the image that you want to display.

- On the toolbar, click on **File >> Save As**. Give your file a name, and under the option **Save as type:** choose **JPEG** if your file is a photo or **GIF** if your file is a diagram (see more information below about file types).

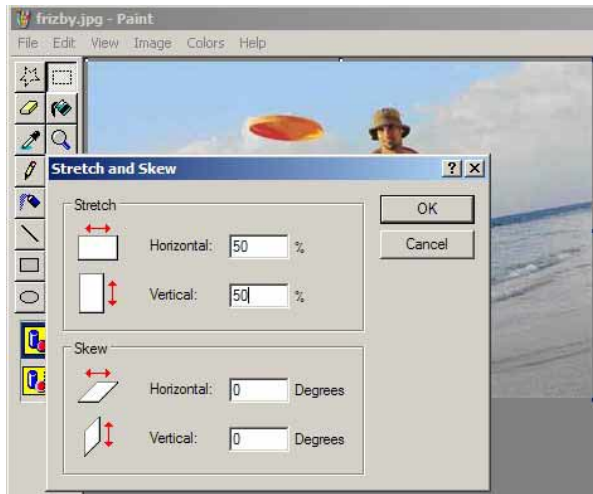
Physical size

Ensure that the physical size of the image file is no bigger than you need. For example, if you want to display an image that is 5 cm x 5 cm, don't insert the image at 10cm x 10cm then resize it. Instead, resize the file first then insert it.

- Open your image file in *Paint*.
- On the toolbar, click on **Image >> Stretch/Skew**.

Reducing the size of your course and content files

- Under **Stretch**, type in a percentage of the image size, e.g. 50% or 200%. Make sure you type in the same number for horizontal and vertical.



- Click on **OK** to resize the image.



- On the toolbar, click on **File, Save As**. Give your file a new name, and under the option 'Save as type:', choose **JPEG** if your file is a photo or **GIF** if your file is a diagram (see more info below about file types).

Note: The more sophisticated image editing software programs provide many more options for resizing, cropping and optimising images.

File type

Images that are to be accessed online should generally be saved as either JPEG or GIF files. JPEG and GIF are compressed file formats, so your file size is reduced. To get the best quality compressed image, you must save as the correct file type for that particular image.

JPEG/JPG

JPEG is the compressed file format recommended for colour photographs. JPEG files display colours well that blend and fade.

Reducing the size of your course and content files

GIF

GIF is the compressed file format recommended for illustrations or images using blocks of colour.



PowerPoint

Large colour photos, backgrounds and audio can all significantly increase file sizes. Here are some tips to reduce the size of your PowerPoint files that will allow students to download them more quickly.

- Use the instructions above to reduce the size of image files before you add them to PowerPoint.
- Don't use images as backgrounds as they add to the file size. If an image is required on all slides of a PowerPoint presentation, add the image to the 'slide master', rather than inserting on each page.
- If you are using audio with your PowerPoint file, consider using *Impatica* to compress the file size. Information about *Impatica* can be found on the E-media Services media website: <http://www.its.utas.edu.au/emedial>.
- Provide the PowerPoint presentation for students as a PDF file with 3 slides per page. This makes a smaller file which is easier and cheaper for students to download and print. A guide for converting PowerPoint to PDF is available on the Teaching and Learning online website.

PDF (portable document format)

When preparing PDF files to be added to an online course, be aware of the file size. Here are some ways to keep your PDF file size to a minimum.

Image files in PDFs

If you insert images into your PDF file, follow the instructions above to ensure the image files are cropped or resized *before* you insert into your document.

Use 'Save As'

1. Open the PDF file in Adobe Acrobat (based on Adobe Acrobat 8).
2. From the menu choose **Edit >> Preferences**.
3. Click on **Documents** in the left panel of the **Preferences** dialog box.
4. Check the box next to **Save As optimizes for Fast Web View**, and then click **OK**.
5. Choose **File, Save As**, then name the file, specify a location, and click **Save**.
If you make changes to your PDF file, when the changes are complete use **Save As** rather than **Save**. This will ensure that the file is optimized.

PDF Optimizer

1. Open the PDF file in Adobe Acrobat.
2. From the menu choose Advanced, PDF Optimizer.
3. Click on Audit space usage. This will show which parts of the document are taking up the most space.
4. Use the options available to reduce the file size of your PDF.

More information is available on the Acrobat website at: www.adobe.com/acrobat/.

Multimedia files (video, audio, Impatica, MP3 etc.)

Multimedia files are usually very large. To ensure that these large files are accessible and do not overload the system they are managed differently from document files.

Multimedia files should *not* be uploaded to your online course – instead they should be managed through *Lectopia*. Links are then provided in your course to give students seamless access to the multimedia files. For more information and the Procedure for uploading and linking multimedia files see the *Lectopia* website at <http://www.utas.edu.au/itr/lectopia/index.html>.

References:

Designer and Instructor Reference: Application Pack 2 for Blackboard Learning System – Vista Enterprise License (Release 4) 2006 Blackboard Inc

Vista 4.2 Online Help (Blackboard Inc.)

Blackboard Vista and other product names are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Blackboard Inc