

iPlayer Image Style Guide

September 2008

A guide to sourcing, shooting and cropping images to illustrate TV and radio content on the BBC iPlayer

All images appearing on iPlayer are displayed in landscape orientation and use an aspect ratio of 16:9.

A single image of 1024 x 576 pixels will be uploaded into the Programme Information Tool (the content management system used by the FM & T Picture Editors) to illustrate an episode, series or brand; this source file is then used to generate different sizes of the same image, such as the thumbnails appearing on schedule pages and the images displayed in the highlights carousels. Images must therefore be shot landscape and supplied at a minimum width of 1024 pixels (with a resolution of 200 dpi — preferably higher — in order to allow some headroom for cropping/manipulation).

It is imperative that all images meet these minimum specifications.



16:9 aspect ratio

Although images do not have to be supplied at 16:9, they will need to be cropped or manipulated to adhere to this aspect ratio — portrait shots, therefore, should be avoided.

Please note: the quality of **web** screen grabs is too low to be used on iPlayer.

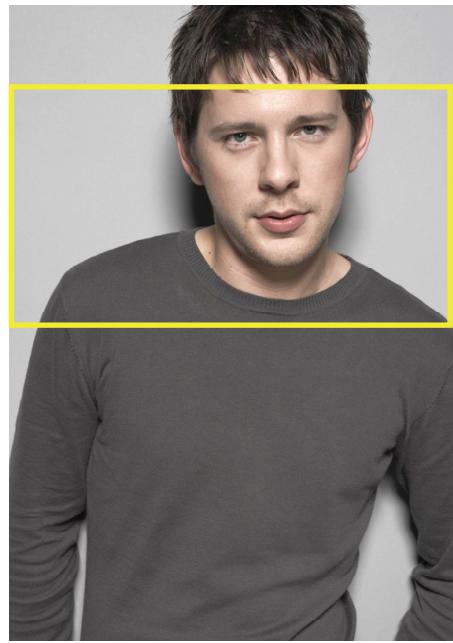
Examples of portrait cropping issues



This image will not work in 16:9 format as the subject's face fills too much of the frame. Additionally, the image has previously been manipulated in Photoshop making it soft and blurry (images should always be sent in their original state). Because the image has been taken from a website, it is very low resolution and will appear pixelated in iPlayer.



This is a great image, but also won't work in the 16:9 format because cropping chops off part of the subject's chin. Plenty of space should be left around the person/object to allow for cropping.



This image may be portrait orientation, but because plenty of space has been left around the head and shoulders it can still be cropped at 16:9.

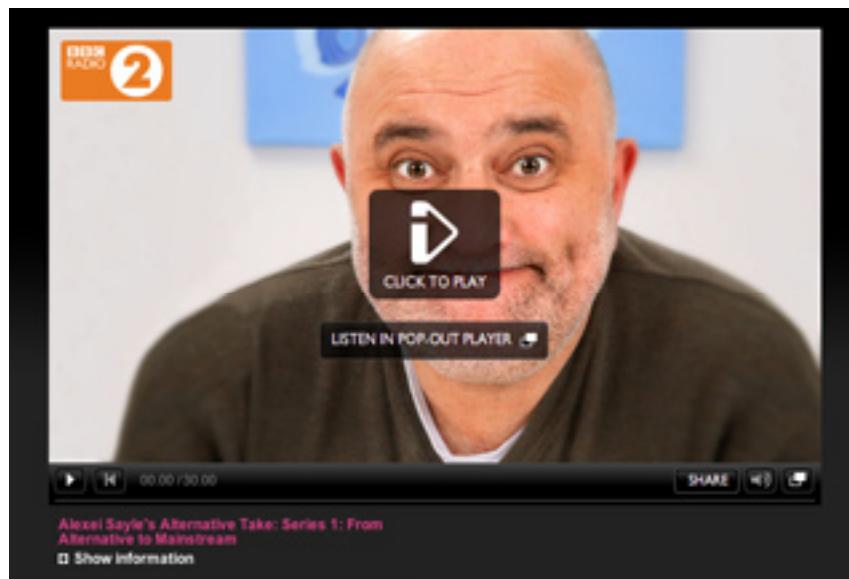
Please envisage how images will appear when decorated with iPlayer 'furniture'.

iPlayer highlights display with a black (for TV) or white (for radio) title bar at the bottom of each thumbnail, while images appearing on episodic pages are overlaid with the 'Click to Play' icon in the middle of the image and a channel logo in the top left corner. Additionally, programmes containing adult themes, such as sex, drugs or violence, will feature a red guidance strip across the bottom of the episodic page image.

As the same picture will be used across all areas of iPlayer, each of these strips and icons MUST be taken into consideration.

To avoid iPlayer furniture obstructing elements of the composition, follow these tips:

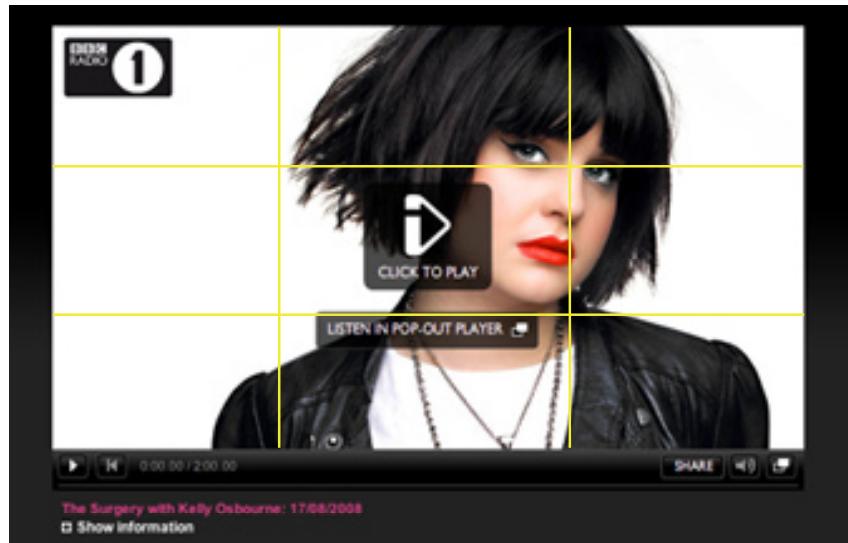
- 1) NEVER shoot a subject right to the chin. Save plenty of room below the chin for cropping. Nothing is worse than the title bar cutting into the subject's face or rendering them 'chinless'.
- 2) ALWAYS follow the rule of thirds (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rule_of_thirds). This is a trick that every photographer knows and will always use to create dynamic images. Remember, your image should NEVER be centred in the middle. If you follow the rule of thirds, the 'Click to Play' icon won't end up on your subject's nose!
- 3) Look at empty space as a GOOD thing — don't be afraid of it.



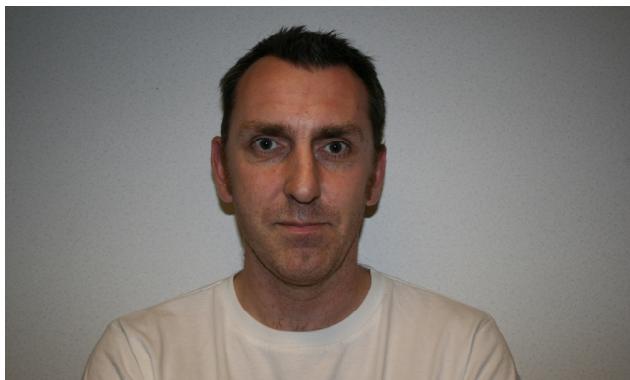
Not only is this image so central that the Click to Play icon lands smack on his nose, but the painting in the background makes it look as if something is growing out of his head.

This front-facing, square-shouldered, centered portrait doesn't follow the rule of thirds; the composition is a little lacklustre to say the least.

This image follows the rule of thirds perfectly (note the guidelines), which automatically prevents the Click to Play icon from appearing in an awkward place. The use of empty space creates tension, which makes for a dynamic photograph.



Presenter shots should include the head and shoulders only. Full-body shots do not fit the format of iPlayer and will end up being cropped to leave just the head and shoulders (which will jeopardise image quality). Head and shoulder pictures should NEVER be shot from straight on. In portrait shots, shoulders should be positioned at a 45-degree angle, with the head turned toward the camera. Straight-on shots will give the subject a boxy, flat appearance.



This shot is too frontal, too central and too boxy. The use of direct flash with the subject standing close to the wall creates bad shadows. The picture basically looks like a passport photo.

Please avoid hats that cast shadows on the face unless shot with professionally arranged lighting. Hats can create shadows that are extremely difficult to fix in Photoshop.



This image follows the rule of thirds, his shoulders are tilted in the opposite direction to his head (creating diagonals, which makes for a dynamic image), and the photographer has placed the flash perfectly so there are no shadows under his hat.



This portrait is shot from too far away for it to work well when cropped. Pixelation will occur when a close crop of the two men is made; additionally, the church, which is an important element of the shot, will be unrecognisable when the image is cropped horizontally.

If limbs are going out of the picture, frame so as to cut them BETWEEN the joints — cutting on the joints (knees, ankles, elbows, etc.) can give limbs the appearance of being 'amputated'.



The composition of this image means it is impossible to make a close crop of the subject without her limbs going out of frame in such a way as to appear 'amputated'.

Images need to be shot with proper lighting.

Note how different lighting conditions will affect a shot's colour: a heavy flash or fluorescent lighting will make the image appear green; tungsten lighting (ie. light bulbs) will make the image yellow. Back lighting (ie. the subject shot in front of a window), heavy sunlight (causing the image to be overexposed, or for the subject to squint) and overhead lighting (which produces shadows under the eyes) are all unsuitable conditions for shoots.



This has been shot with overhead tungsten lighting making the image very red/yellow and giving the subject dark circles under his eyes.



This image has been shot with the light behind the subjects giving them dark (underexposed) faces.

The image is also very cluttered (note how the man in the background looks like he is sitting on the subject's shoulder).

When in doubt, shoot outside in the shade...

This has been shot outside with an even light. The subject is squinting slightly which gives the indication of direct sunlight, but the overall lighting is even and attractive.



Images **MUST** be sharp.

Please pay attention to the depth of field (the area in focus) when shooting presenters. When shooting two or more presenters, if one is behind the other and you have a wide depth of field then one of the presenters will be out of focus.

Watch for this and try to keep your depth of field narrow. (If using point-and-shoot cameras, try to keep both presenters as close together as possible.) All that said, a wide depth of field for single-presenter and non-presenter shots can reduce background clutter and create a nice artistic shot.



There are many things wrong with this image. The male subject is too far in front of his colleague, making his head look large and out of focus. The background is very cluttered and the overhead lighting has created dark circles under the woman's eyes and a large shadow under her hat.



You can see what the photographer was aiming to achieve: the subject in focus and the background slightly blurred. Unfortunately the result is that the whole image is out of focus.



This shot is good. The presenters are standing side by side and therefore both are in focus. As a general rule, please avoid words and letters in the background as they create clutter and take the focus away from the subject — but otherwise this shot is great.

Backgrounds and non-presenter images should be as clean and clear as possible.

The 'busy' nature of the iPlayer interface means that cluttered images make pages look messy and unprofessional. And remember, all images will appear as thumbnails — at small sizes, cluttered images just look like blobs of colour. Simple images work best at all sizes. Large group shots (more than four or five people) should also be avoided, as they do not work well at small sizes.

Examples of poor images



This shot is too cluttered and too busy. The lack of focal point makes the viewer confused as to the subject of this image. This image will not work as a coherent thumbnail in iPlayer.

Some channels have specific branding requirements (Radio 1 uses a white background, for example, while 1Xtra uses brown), to which you should adhere. This does not apply to studio shots or live events, however, but please ensure that backgrounds for live events and studio shots remain uncluttered. Please note, while every effort is made to absorb specific branding requirements from across the BBC, compromises may be necessary to maintain graphical consistency of iPlayer's own identity.



The background to this shot is too busy. When an image is too busy, the eye becomes distracted and wanders, failing to focus on what is important (the presenters, in this case).

In this example the male subject has a lamp growing out of his head and a plug socket attached to his ear.

Examples of good images



This picture has been shot at a distance, but it is a simple composition and has a very distinct focal point (making the subject matter obvious). The simplicity of this image will ensure it works both as a thumbnail and a large image.



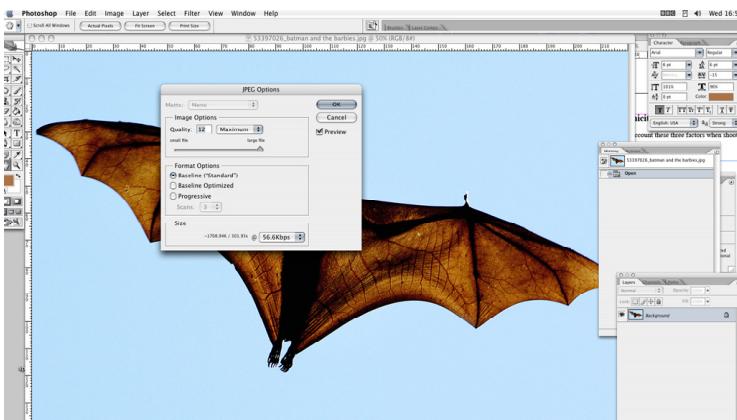
This image could have had a cluttered background, but the photographer has used a shallow depth of field to make the busy background blurry and the presenter sharp. This smooths the clutter into simple shapes and colours, and keeps the eye from straying from the subject.

Unless photos are being manipulated by a skilled Photoshop user in order to meet the requirements of a specific brief (ie. creating a Photoshop montage using appropriate branding), please do not manipulate images before sending them to the FM & T Picture Editors.

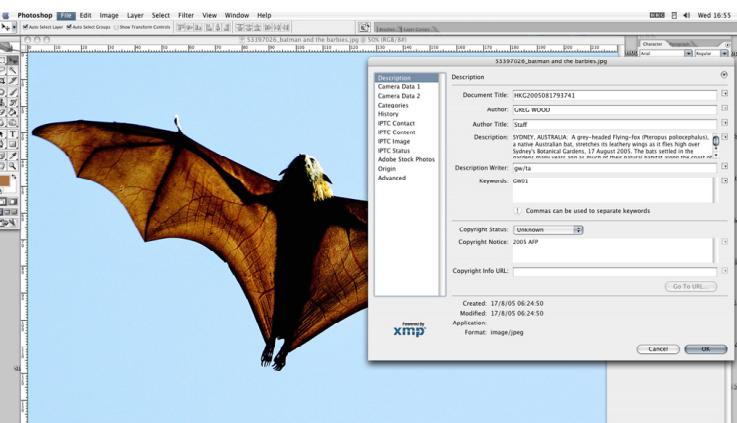
Please do not sharpen details, do not increase levels, and do not attempt to correct colours — just send the raw files. Once an image has been processed, the processes cannot easily be undone.



This image has been manipulated in Photoshop making the subjects appear strangely blurred. It is impossible to reverse work done in Photoshop, so it is important that images are supplied in their original state. It is usually possible to correct problematic images when supplied with the original files, but working images that have been already worked on can risk over-processing.



If supplying JPEG files rather than TIFF format, please save images at maximum quality.



It would be very helpful if you can put a brief description of the image contents (names of people, the location, programme/episode title, etc.) in the File Info section — this can be found under the File tab in Photoshop's menu. Failing this, please use a file-naming convention that contains basic information regarding image content.