

## IT111 Week 4 Podcast

Hello and welcome to the Week 4 Podcast for IT 111. In this podcast I'll make a few announcements and also go over some important topics from Chapter 4. The video in the show notes offers tips for finding the dimensions and file sizes of images using Firefox.

First, the announcements. On Sunday, May 3, you'll be submitting Part 1 of the Final Project. I've asked students to send me their topic ideas by Wednesday, April 29, since I need to approve your topic before you begin working on your project. To clarify a frequently asked question, you can work on a web site for a business. If it's a real business, please don't use the business' real name - make one up for this assignment.

The final project I just referred to is a web site with at least four interlinked pages on a topic of your choice - though, as I just said, it has to be approved by me first. This assignment is designed to demonstrate how much you've learned about XHTML, CSS, and web design during the quarter. It will become 25% of your final grade and I know you'll create a better project if you start working on it sooner rather than later. That's why I want your project idea now and also why I'm asking you to start your planning right away.

Chapter 4 introduces you to visual elements and graphics for web pages. Graphics can be both the best and the worst thing about the web. If the graphics on a web page haven't been properly edited, they can either look crummy or take forever to download or both. This isn't a web graphics class, but I do want to help students get a handle on editing graphics so they will look good and download quickly. This is called "**optimizing**" and most image editing programs these days have tools to help you optimize your images.

In the Chapter 4 Assignment, I'm asking you to optimize a couple photos - some will need to be resized and/or cropped and all will need to be saved to a smaller file size which is called compression. When used on the web, none of the photos should be more than 30 KB in size.

Sometimes students try to resize the photos using made up values for the width and height attributes in the image tag. Please don't do this. For one thing, it doesn't reduce the file size. For another, the photos often end up looking distorted - yet another way for them to look crummy on the web.

Photographs should almost always be saved as jpegs and you can apply quite a bit of compression to them, as well, because computer monitors can't display all the rich detail found in high resolution photos. If you have Photoshop or Photoshop Elements, you'll probably notice a File > Save for the Web option. If you select this option, you can see your original photo along with two or three versions with different compression. It's very helpful.

If you don't have Photoshop or Photoshop Elements, don't despair. You can use Picasa which is a free download from Google. There's a tutorial on using Picasa and also some written instructions in the course ePacket. Included in these instructions are some general guidelines on editing photos - like the rule of thirds - which is discussed on pages 23 and 24. Picasa has versions for Windows, Macs, and Linux-based computers.

When you're looking at the properties of an image, remember the width is always the first value given and the height is the second. Windows-based computer will usually show you the properties if you hover your mouse over the image file icon or name. Students using a Mac can "Get Info" (Apple + i) to find similar information.

In the past, some students have wondered why it's necessary to include the width and height attributes in the image tag. It is extra coding but in theory, web browsers will be able to download the page more quickly if all the images include the width and height. It is a "best practice" and I want all my students to adopt it.

I've also been asked about including the alt attribute in image tags and this is a "best practice" as well. When those who are visually impaired surf the web, they use a screen reader that literally reads what is on the page. When the reader encounters an image with an alt attribute, it reads the value of the attribute. Without the alt attribute, there is nothing to help the user understand an image. I'm including a link to a screen reader simulation which I hope you'll listen to. It provides dramatic evidence for adding the alt attribute to your image tags.

At this point, I'm planning to demonstrate Picasa in our "real time" virtual meeting this Wednesday, April 29. I'll answer your questions, too.

Well, I guess that's it for this podcast. Thanks for listening and tune in next week for another IT 111 podcast.