

Naming Files for Upload to Your Web Site

It is easy enough with computers today to name our files with any method we like. But when it comes to naming files for use on your Web site it is a little more important to follow some general guidelines.

No Spaces in File Names

Microsoft Windows operating systems do allow spaces and even seem to encourage you to use them, but UNIX and Macintosh operating systems have problems with them. It is best to create items so that they are always effective and usable on most any system. Spaces in file names just aren't worth the risk because they greatly increase the chance of errors:

- Site visitors get broken links with error messages instead of your content.
- You may inadvertently create broken links yourself when you try to change or correct your file names. Each time you change a file name you have to update the link on every page that links to the file you changed.
- Link popularity may suffer because external links pointing to the page won't work when you change the file name.

No Special Characters

As goes for spaces, certain operating systems may not recognize a special character and a visitor may get an error when trying to access your file. It is imperative that filenames be readable by all browsers and operating systems. Using an underscore as a special character is acceptable. Other symbols should be avoided.

Capitalization Counts!

Directory and file names are capital letter sensitive in UNIX and Macintosh systems. Those systems assume that these two Web addresses are completely different files:

www.byte-technology.com/About/OurStaff.pdf

www.byte-technology.com/about/ourstaff.pdf

A nice solution is called "camelCase". In this style of naming, each word after the first is given a capital letter.

Such as: myFileNamelsEasyToRead.pdf

With camelCase filenames are most always readable and accepted by all browsers and operating systems.

Find a Consistent Naming Convention

The length of your file name can be counterproductive also. It is a little more important to keep file names short and simple rather than long and explanative. Something like "cacation2008_MontereyCA.pdf is much more usable than "MY_vacation-toMonterey California_InAugust,2008.pdf". That second filename can be truncated or shortened by some operating systems thus creating a broken link as the name would have been changed. It is best to be curt whenever possible.

Find a Consistent Naming Convention

If you have several files that are always of the same nature, be consistent in naming them. If you have a monthly newsletter make an effort to name each document the same way every month.

When files are uploaded to the Internet they are stored in the same manner as they are on your computer. When it comes time to organize and find files on your Web site it is very helpful if they are properly organized and named accordingly. Consider naming monthly newsletter files as "NEWSLETTER_2008september.pdf" or meeting agendas and minutes as "AGENDA_2008september.pdf" and "MINUTES_2008september.pdf".

Editing programs like Adobe Contribute place all files into the same folder when uploaded. When the time comes to maintain your Web site and to create links to your documents they will all be neatly and alphabetically organized.

Image File Names

Follow the same process when placing images on your Web site. When you are uploading pictures from last week's picnic try naming them as "picnic080819softball.jpg" or similar. You'll find that it makes life much easier in the future when maintaining things. Images should always be uploaded at the same size they will be displayed on the Web site. Do not resize images with Contribute or with HTML when avoidable.

More on Consistency

The more you continue to follow a pattern in naming your files the easier things will become. Imagine what it is like when you pick up someone else's work to take it over. You have to search and learn their system and if nothing is organized it can be quite frustrating. The same goes for the organization of your Web files and content. Be proactive about your projects.

Byte Technology

At Byte Technology we are pleased to offer our continued support for you in maintaining your Web site. Feel free to contact our team at any time with questions or concerns.