

signitic

Mastering the art of GIF

Techniques and tools for perfect animations in your e-mail signatures



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Introduction

In a world where attention is measured in seconds, animated GIFs have become a formidable weapon for captivating and engaging your audience. However, mastering the art of GIFs isn't just a matter of creativity: technique, optimization and choosing the right tools are essential to guarantee smooth, light and impactful animations.

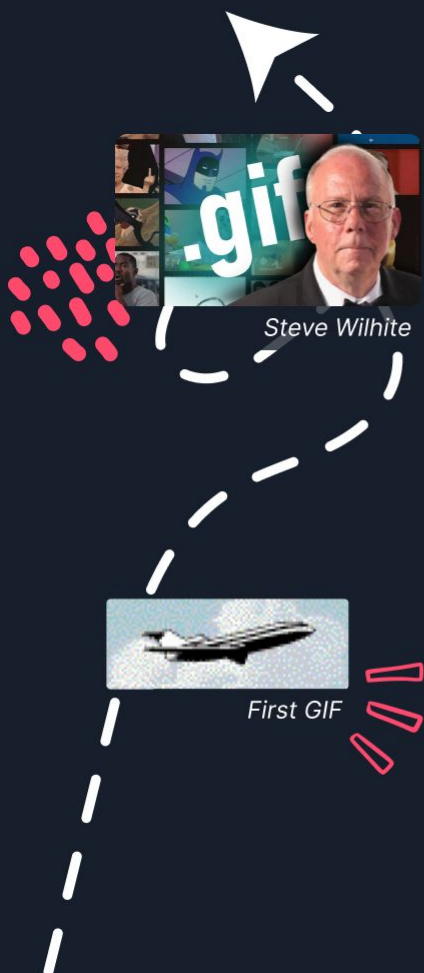
This guide aims to walk you through the best practices and essential tools for creating perfect GIFs. Whether you're a beginner, intermediate user or expert, you'll find all the keys you need to design effective animations with ease.



The history of the GIF

GIF, or Graphics Interchange Format, was created in 1987 by Steve Wilhite, an engineer at Compuserve, one of the first online service providers in the USA. The format was designed to enable lossless compression and universal image sharing. Initially, GIF did not support animation, but was intended to transmit high-resolution images in a world where technological limitations made this complex.

The first version of GIF, known as GIF87a, paved the way for GIF89a, introducing the ability to display multiple images in succession, giving rise to the animated GIF as we know it. The very first animated GIF uploaded to the Internet depicted a plane flying over a blue sky.



Steve Wilhite also ruled on pronunciation: it's "JIF" (like the peanut butter brand) and not "GUIF" with a hard g. Among the first famous GIFs is "Dancing Baby", which remains a cultural icon of the web.

GIFs enjoyed a resurgence with the emergence of social networks and smartphones, becoming a universal tool for digital expression. Its ease of use and technical limitations have stimulated creativity, transforming the format into a powerful means of visual communication. Today, billions of GIFs are exchanged daily, proving that this timeless format remains a major cultural force.

Understanding the weight of a GIF

Have you ever embedded a GIF in an email and noticed slowdowns?

This problem often stems from a misunderstanding of the two weights of a GIF: disk weight, which corresponds to the size of the file, and memory weight, which represents what it consumes in resources to display. These two notions have distinct impacts on the user experience, and understanding them is essential to creating quality GIFs that are both lightweight and high-performance.

The disk weight of a GIF

→ What you download

Disk weight corresponds to the space occupied by a GIF on a hard disk or server. It depends on several technical factors:

- Resolution: the larger the GIF (in pixels), the larger it will be. An 800×800 px GIF weighs much more than a 200×200 px GIF.
- Color palette: although limited to 256 colors, a complex image with many shades increases the size.
- Animation: each frame added to the animation makes the file heavier.
- Compression: GIFs use lossless compression, which is effective if your visual contains repetitive areas or flat colors.

A static GIF is therefore often much lighter than an animated GIF, due to the number of images it contains.

The memory weight of a GIF

→ What you display

Memory weight is the amount of RAM used to display or manipulate the GIF in a program or browser. It's often higher than the disk weight because :

- The GIF is decompressed into memory for display.
- Each moving image is converted into a bitmap, i.e. a complete matrix of pixels.
- The more images there are, the more RAM is used.

Example :

A 200×200 px GIF with 256 colors can weigh 50 Kb on disk. But once loaded, each image can occupy around 120 Kb in memory, which is multiplied by the number of images in the animation. If your GIF has 10 frames :

- Disk size: 50 Kb.
- Memory size: 1.2 MB.



But what weight should I take into account when integrating my GIF?

When you embed a GIF, especially in an email, it's the memory weight that absolutely must be considered. Why? Because it determines the resources needed to display the GIF smoothly on your recipients' devices. Too high a memory weight can lead to long loading times, or even prevent the GIF from being displayed correctly, especially on older devices or those with limited connections.

How to find out?

1. Take into account the resolution (width × height in pixels) and multiply it by the number of frames in the animation.
2. Add to this the conversion to bitmap (each pixel becomes data in memory).
3. Or, more simply, use a dedicated tool that automatically calculates memory weight.

Simplify your life with Signitic!

Knowing your memory weight can be complex, but with Signitic it's child's play. Upload your GIF directly into our campaign creation tool, and a gauge will tell you its memory weight in real time. You'll be able to adjust your settings for a high-performance GIF banner that's both high-quality and lightweight.



Are GIFs compatible with all mail clients?

Not all email clients handle GIFs in the same way. Gmail, Apple Mail and most modern services display animated GIFs without problem. However, some versions of Outlook only support the first image (or frame) of the GIF, which can affect the readability of your message.

Here are the details for each version:

COMPATIBLE OUTLOOK VERSIONS :

1. Outlook for Windows Version 2019 and Microsoft 365

- Supports animated GIFs from update 1901 onwards (released in January 2019).
- Animations play correctly, but it's always a good idea to test your GIFs.

2. Outlook for Mac

- Full support for animated GIFs, similar to Apple Mail.

3. Outlook Web (Outlook.com)

- Compatible with animated GIFs, displaying animations smoothly.

4. Outlook Mobile (iOS and Android)

- Supports smoothly animated GIFs.

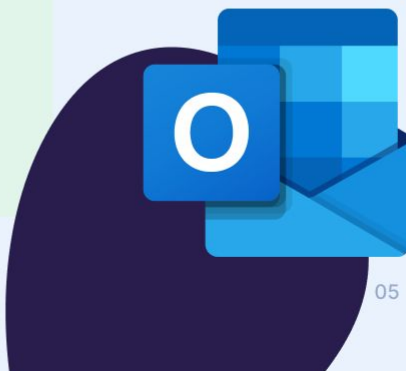
LIMITED OUTLOOK VERSIONS :

1. Outlook 2016 for Windows and earlier versions

- Animated GIFs are not supported. Only the first frame is displayed as a static image.

2. Outlook 2013 and Outlook 2010 for Windows

- Does not support GIF animations.



9 golden rules for creating a gif

Plan your message

Identify the purpose of your GIF. Whether it's to capture attention, illustrate a concept or reinforce your branding, keep it clear and concise.

Choose the right tool

Each tool has its own strengths, which we describe in greater detail below. Select the one that suits your level and needs.

Observe dimensions

Prefer a 600×200 px format for an email signature, to guarantee optimum compatibility on different media.

Minimalist design

Adopt a streamlined approach. Simple visuals and light animations improve readability and reduce file size.

Add a CTA

Encourage action with an engaging and explicit button like "Click here" or "Discover".

Limit frames

Your GIF must not exceed 10 frames to ensure smooth animation and avoid excessive weight.

Take care of the first frame

As we saw above, some mail clients, such as older versions of outlook, only display the first image.

Preview and test

Before distribution, check that your GIF works properly, that it is fluid and compatible with the targeted browsers and email clients.

Optimize final weight

Reduce your file size with tools like EZGIF or ImageOptim.



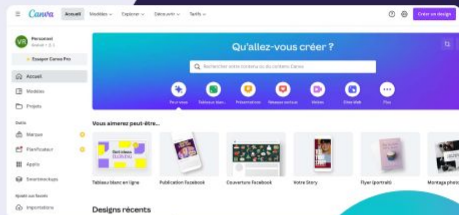
Our 3 favorite tools for easy GIF creation

Creating a quality GIF depends on choosing the right tool and using the right method. Here's our selection of the three best tools and a step-by-step guide to creating a 600×200 px GIF banner, ideal for your signatures.



Canva

The simplest, most accessible tool for beginners



Canva

Benefits : free in its basic version, simple and intuitive interface, numerous graphic resources available without having to upgrade to a paid plan.

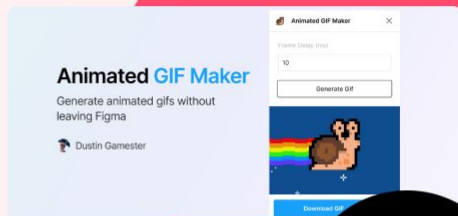
Disadvantages : advanced features require a paid subscription, limited animation options.

Create a GIF with Canva

- 01 Log in to your Canva account (or create one).
- 02 Click on "Create a design" and choose custom dimensions (600×200 pixels).
- 03 Add the graphics, text and images you need for your animation.
- 04 Apply simple animations to elements via the "Animate" tab.
- 05 Preview your animation to make sure everything runs smoothly.
- 06 Export by selecting "GIF" as the format in the "Share > Download" option.

Figma

The tool that unites creatives and developers alike



Benefits : integrated into a design workflow, excellent for users accustomed to Figma.

Disadvantages : less suitable for complex or dynamic animations.

Create a GIF with Figma

- 01 Install the “Animated GIF Maker” plugin from the Figma community.
- 02 Create a new layout by setting custom dimensions to 600×200 px.
- 03 Add graphic elements and create transitions or animations on your layers.
- 04 Launch the plugin to configure animation parameters (duration, speed, etc.).
- 05 Preview your GIF to check the rendering.
- 06 Export directly in GIF format via the plugin.

Adobe Photoshop

The essential reference tool for editing graphic elements



Benefits : precise frame control, advanced color and layer management, professional quality.

Disadvantages : requires training to master advanced functions.

Creating GIFs with Adobe Photoshop

- 01 Open Photoshop and create a new document with dimensions 600×200 pixels.
- 02 Import your images or video in separate layers.
- 03 Access the “Timeline” window via the “Window > Edit” menu.
- 04 Select “Create image animation” in the timeline.
- 05 Configure each frame by adjusting the duration and order of visible layers for each step.
- 06 Preview the animation by clicking on the play button.
- 07 Export your animation in GIF format via “File > Export > Save for Web”. Adjust color and compression settings, and check that the final file remains lightweight.
- 08 Test the GIF to make sure it displays correctly in an email.

Our secret weapon

If you've followed our 7 essential rules, at this stage you've already obtained a quality GIF of fairly decent weight. But that's not enough! We'd like to share with you our secret weapon for further reducing weight without losing quality: EZGIF.



Ezgif

The essential tool for optimizing your GIFs. Here's a list of what it can do for you:



01 Reduce the number of frames

- Why ?

Going from 20 to 10 FPS can halve the weight of a GIF!

- How to ?

- Go to EZGIF and upload your GIF file.
- Select "Optimize" or "Cut" to remove superfluous frames.
- Adjust the parameters to achieve a maximum of 50 frames while maintaining smooth animation.

02 Limit the length of the animation

- Why ?

Long animations increase weight and can lose the reader's attention.

- How to ?

- Load the file into EZGIF.
- Use the "Cut" tool to define the start and end points of the animation.
- Confirm to shorten duration and reduce file size.

03 Apply advanced compression

- **Why ?**

Optimized compression can reduce file size by up to 50%.

- **How to ?**

a. In the “Optimize” section, choose the “Lossy GIF” compression option.

b. Adjust the compression level to significantly reduce size while maintaining acceptable visual quality.

04 Reduce color palette

- **Why ?**

A smaller palette (64 or 128 colors) reduces weight without affecting perceived quality.

- **How to ?**

a. Still in “Optimize”, modify the color palette to use a reduced number of colors (for example, 64 or 128 colors).

b. This reduces the weight of the GIF while preserving its overall appearance.

OUR ADVICE FOR USE:

Always start with the “Optimize” option, which applies a condensed version of all optimizations. If after this treatment your gif is still too heavy for your taste, reload it in EZGIF and apply further modifications.



Bonus

Remove metadata to make your GIF even lighter. A final essential step in optimizing your GIF is to remove unnecessary metadata. This data, such as information on the author or the software used, weighs down the file without adding any value.

To do this, we recommend the Raw Pics **IO Metadata Remover** tool. This online tool lets you clean up your files in just a few clicks, guaranteeing reduced file weight without compromising visual quality.





Our Checklist

If you tick all the boxes, your GIF will be perfect!

- 01** Do not exceed 600 × 200 px ☐
- 02** Do not exceed 10 frames ☐
- 03** Create a simple visual ☐
- 04** Add a CTA with redirection ☐
- 05** Check GIF memory weight ☐
- 06** Optimize GIF weight ☐
- 07** Delete metadata ☐
- 08** Pre-release testing ☐
- 09** Using Signitic ☐



Your e-mail signatures on autopilot

It's time to ensure consistency in the electronic signatures of all your team members.

Personalization, respect for your corporate identity and integration of informative messages are now the cornerstones of your communication strategy. With our platform, **creating and managing campaigns becomes simple and intuitive.**

Our solution enables you to **target your audience effectively, organize your facility optimally, conduct A/B tests**, and much more!

You can now **automate and centralize** signatures within your organization. No more time wasted juggling HTML code for each team!

At last, your communications department can easily manage and exploit your company's electronic signatures thanks to an **intuitive platform**. Say goodbye to manual segmentation, out-of-sync directories and tedious deployment.

