Adobe Illustrator and Adobe Photoshop

Lock and Web-shift colors

Are you frustrated at seeing your logos and solid-color images displayed in the wrong color on the Web or looking splotchy because of browser dithering? Adobe® Illustrator® and Adobe® Photoshop® can help ensure the color integrity of your artwork. Follow along as we lock important colors and shift other colors to Web-safe equivalents to eliminate dithering.
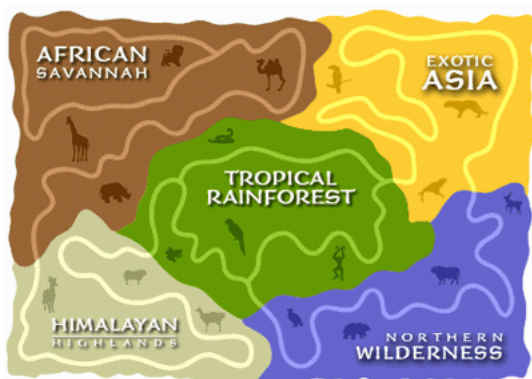
1. Preview your image.

In Illustrator or Photoshop, open a solid-color line art graphic you want to display on the Web. Choose File > Save for Web, and optimize the image by selecting GIF as the file format and Perceptual as the color reduction method. Compare the original and optimized images in the 2-Up panel of Save for Web, and note the file size of the optimized graphic at the bottom of the dialog box. Change the number of colors to 32 and then to 8. Note the new file size and the difference in some of the details in the image.

In our example, the animal silhouettes have changed colors and have disappeared completely in the blue area of the image because of the color reduction.

When you're finished experimenting, change the number of colors back to 256.

2. Lock the colors you don't want to shift.

Selectively lock colors to avoid unwanted color shifts when reducing colors for optimization. Select the eyedropper tool on the left side of the Save for Web dialog box, and click on a color that changes or drops out when the number of colors is reduced. The color is sampled and appears selected in the Color Table palette. Click the lock button at the bottom of the palette to lock the color. A small square appears in the lower right corner of the color, indicating that it is locked.

Lock any other important colors you want to protect.
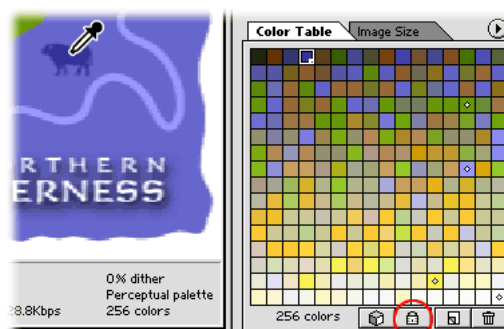
3. Check for colors that are not Web-safe.

To determine if your image contains colors that are not Web-safe, choose Select All Non-Web-Safe Colors from the Color Table pop-up menu. The non-Web-safe color areas will be dithered—they'll look mottled or splotchy, like the brown African Savannah background in our example. This occurs with colors that are not included in both Windows and Mac OS system palettes. You can replace these colors with Web-safe colors so that they'll display properly on either platform.

4. Web-shift colors to eliminate dithering.

Select the eyedropper tool, and click in an area that is dithered. The sampled color appears selected in the Color Table. Click the Web-shift button at the bottom of the Color Table.

Note that the swatch adjusts its position in the palette, and a small diamond appears in the center of the swatch. The diamond indicates that the color has been shifted to its nearest Web-palette equivalent.

Shift each color you don't want to dither in a Web browser.
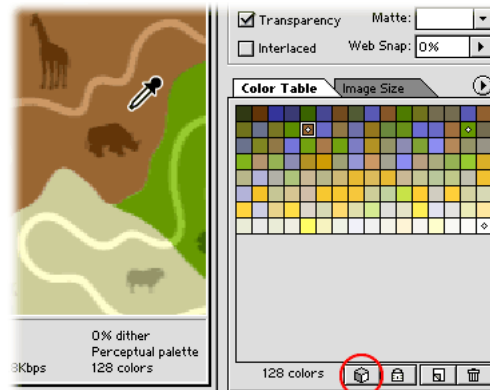
5. Optimize the image.

Once all the important colors have been locked or Web-shifted, save the image as an optimized GIF. Give the file a new name in the Save Optimized dialog box, and click Save. The saved image will display properly in a Web browser on a 256-color system running either Windows or Mac OS.