



COMMON FILE TYPES

This is a list of the most common file types you are likely to come across in your photography. Its not a fully exhaustive list as there are just so many obscure file types in existence.

RAW: Taking photos in RAW format is usually recommended if you want to use the full processing facilities of the various software packages later. If you want a smaller file that can be sent directly to social media from the camera or card without processing, then JPEG is normally used.

RAW is usually used by Landscape, Wildlife, Street and Portrait photographers, who will usually carry out some post processing on the images as it allows for the most adjustment.

RAW is an uncompressed format and is like the digital equivalent of a film negative. Unlike TIFF, a RAW file first needs to be processed or developed using Image Data Converter or other compatible software. The benefit of this format is that you can adjust various attributes such as contrast, saturation, sharpness, white balance, and others without degrading the image. Afterwards, it can be saved in appropriate software such as LRC or PS to another image format like TIFF or JPEG.

JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group): JPEG format was created in 1992 so is getting quite old now and uses a lossy compression algorithm, which means the image is compressed using a mathematical formula that results in some data being lost.

JPEG is often used by sports photographers as they want faster throughput within the camera for fast sports action and then a smaller file to email directly to their editor, so the action makes the papers or social media very quickly. They may also shoot RAW to one card and JPEG to another, both as a backup and the ability to edit some photos later as most top end cameras will have two card slots.

JPEG files are compressed and therefore lose detail and sometime have banding artifacts, if exporting in this format from software such as Photoshop or Lightroom Classic, where a RAW file was initially imported. They can also have colour issues as the gamut (Colour range) is usually reduced from that of a RAW file.

HEIF (High Efficiency Image Format): The HEIF file format was developed in the 2010's and was pushed as a replacement for JPEG but so far has only gained moderate traction. Apple support it and it's used in the iPhone. Android devices containing the appropriate hardware encoders received support for HEIF files from Ver. 10 (2019) onwards.

Although HEIF files are gaining in popularity there are issues with compatibility, and it may be some time before this format takes over from JPEG, although cameras are starting to offer this format, with a higher colour depth, often higher than 8-bit colour.

TIFF: TIFF is a common file type used to export a processed image from software such as Photoshop, as it retains more detail than the other compressed formats.

TIFF is uncompressed. Since TIFF does not use any compression algorithms like JPEG or GIF formats, the file contains more data and results in a more detailed picture. However, because TIFF files contain more data, the files are large and take up a lot of storage space. Thus, the number of images that can be taken and saved on recording media is more limited.

DNG (Digital Negative File): DNG is an Adobe file type that is a RAW image format file that stores uncompressed image data, developed on the TIFF 6.0 format.

The idea behind DNG was that given the number of different camera manufacturers and all the slightly different RAW formats, which that created, Adobe wanted a universal file format that could be shared around easily without hitting any compatibility barriers.

You can convert your RAW file on loading in LCR but this does slow down the loading process quite a bit and I haven't found it necessary with my Sony RAW files, but I cant say how others will be affected.

PSD file format: PSD is a Photoshop file type / document and is the native file format for Adobe Photoshop. They seem to be used more for graphics than photography, but they are still used for large photographic files, with lots of layers and detail and can retain up to 30,000 pixels both in height and width.

PSD files are easy to import into other Adobe products such as Illustrator.

The main disadvantage of PSD files is their very large size, which can be difficult to store, send and receive.

PSD files are not natively supported by operating systems like Windows and macOS without the use of Creative Cloud software.