

Chapter 7

Frequent Questions

Animation Missing

Q *When I create an ANI animation and place it on my desktop, I only see a stationary image. How can I make use of my ANI files?*

A Unfortunately, the default Windows desktop does not support using ANI images. The desktop only displays the first frame of an ANI. However in Windows 95 and later versions, you may use your animations as cursors by going to the *Control Panel* and setting up the cursors under the *Mouse* functions.

The *ActivIcons* utility included with *IconForge* (choose the *Change Windows Shell Icons* from the *Edit* window) will allow some systems to animate various desktop icons. You must run the *ActivIcons* utility in the Windows Task Bar's "Tray" for the icons to animate, however.

CursorArts Company also publishes the *SecurDesk!* and *SecurDesk! LV* programs (which may be downloaded from our site). These applications allow you to replace the Windows desktop and let you use animated icons on both its desktop, and as "mouse-overs" (i.e., the cursor animates when it travels over certain buttons or hot spots on the desktop). There are other programs (databases, programming languages, etc.) on the market which also allow use of ANI files.

Bad Icon

Q *I have an ICO file which appears on my desktop, but when I open it in IconForge, I only get random dots and lines. How can I edit this icon?*

A The problem with this image is that it is not a standard icon file. Later versions of Windows may be able to display this type of image on the desktop, but other versions of Windows, and many other programs, will not.

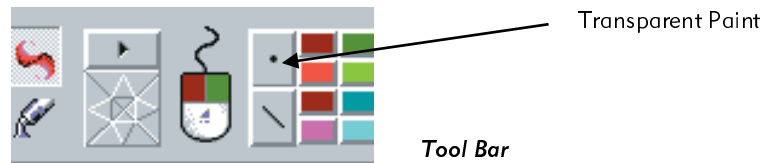
The image that you suppose is an icon is probably simply a BMP or other format image which has been renamed with an ICO extension. BMP format images which have been renamed with an ICO extension are not true icon images, even though some people use them as such (some Windows versions can be configured to display iconized version of BMP images, and these will show any BMP file as an icon, although doing this can dramatically slow down display of file listings).

To import this image into IconForge, you must first rename the file to have a “.BMP” filename extension (instead of the “.ICO” extension). Next, use the *Open* command under the *File* menu to import the image.

No Transparency

Q *The transparent color in my icon does not become transparent when I place the icon on the desktop. How do I get portions of the icon to be transparent?*

A You are probably confusing the transparent preview color (which is set using the *Options/Set Preferences/Trans Color* function) with transparency. The transparent preview color allows you to see how your icon will appear against different colored backgrounds. Icons allow you to use all of the colors on



the palette, and there is no actual “color” to transparent areas in these images.

To paint with transparency, you should click on the palette selection containing a dot in the center (*see illustration above*). All pixels containing transparent paint contain a small dot in their centers (although these may not display well with some preview background colors on some systems). If you change the transparent preview color (using *Options/Set Preferences/Trans Color*), these pixels will use the new color background.

Making Favorites Icons Permanent

Q *My Favorites icons disappear from my Internet Explorer list. What happened?*

A Internet Explorer stores its Favorites icons in its *Temporary Internet Files* folders. These folders are a cache, and material begins to be automatically deleted from these folders as they begin to fill up their allotted space. However, you can make your icons permanent with a couple of steps:

Step 1. In *IconForge*, go to the *File* menu and choose the *Open Favorites Icon from URL Site* option and type in the Internet site location to load the icon for that site. Once the icon is loaded, use *Save As* to save it onto your drive (put in into any folder **other than** those within the *Temporary Internet Files* cache, however);

Step 2. In *ActivIcons*, go to the *Internet Favorites* screen and select the shortcut in the list. Click the *Change Icon* button to specify the icon which you just loaded / saved.

Note that if you want to specify your own icon creation for a Favorite shortcut, you can just use Step 2. You do not necessarily need to use the icon from the Web site.

Slow Display

Q My icons display very slowly in Explorer, particularly if I go to a folder which contains pictures.

A If you are displaying icons showing the contents of your picture files, then this can slow down Explorer considerably (particularly when it encounters very large images). To fix this, go to the *Edit* menu and choose *Change Windows System Icons* to run the *ActivIcons* utility. Click down to the Interface screen and turn off the *Display a picture of the bitmap (BMP) in all file lists* option.

Some graphics software packages also display iconized previews of images. If you have such software, then you may need to turn this feature off inside that program.

Make Cursor More Apparent

Q My pointer gets lost on some light-colored backgrounds. Is there a way to change the pointer depending on the background color?

A Here are a couple of techniques which may help you:

1. Outline your light-colored cursor using a dark outline (e.g., the default Windows pointers use this technique).
2. Paint portions of your cursor using the *Inverse* color (this is located just under the *Transparent* paint button on the palette). The *Inverse* portions of your pointer will reverse any colors over which it passes (e.g., White will become Black, Light Cyan will become Red-Orange, Blue will be shown as Yellow, etc.). The contrast will make

your pointer more apparent over most areas. However, your pointer should not depend entirely on *Inverse* paint, since the *Inverse* of some shades of medium grey can still be difficult to detect. Use the *Test* (the binoculars icon) button on the editing window to view your pointer against a variety of backgrounds.

Corrupt Desktop Icon Display

Q When my icon displays on the desktop, it has lines or spots on it, and it looks terrible.

A It sounds as though your icon is a non-standard size. If your icon is a size other than that specified in the Windows display settings, then Windows will attempt to stretch your icon to fit (and it frequently does a terrible job of it). You can check your Windows default icon setting by right-clicking an empty area on your desktop, then choosing *Properties*, going to the *Appearance* tab and selecting *Icon* from the *Item* list.

The most frequently encountered standard sizes for Windows icons are 16x16, 32x32, 48x48 and 64x64. You can avoid having Windows stretch your icon by creating a Multi-Resolution Icon which contains all of these sizes (or at least the 16x16 and 32x32 sizes). See *Chapter 3* for more information regarding *Multi-Resolution icons*.

Favorites Icon Shows Incorrectly

Q I placed my Favorites icon onto my site, but when I view it in Internet Explorer, it is warped and doesn't show the correct colors. I tried putting another copy on the server, but now it doesn't appear at all?

A Be sure to upload the file to your web site in *Binary* mode. Some FTP and file transfer programs do not recognize the .ICO file format by default and will instead

upload the icon file in *ASCII* format (which will corrupt the file).

Blurry Icon

Q I imported a larger graphic and it seems very blurry in the icon size. Is there a way to import a sharper icon?

A When reducing the size, *IconForge* attempts to preserve as much detail as possible, which can result in a blurred appearance. To correct this, try going to the *Effects* menu and applying the *Sharpen* and/or *Detail* filters to the imported icon. Usually, these will make the icon look much clearer at the reduced size.

Alternatively, you can sharpen the image prior to importing it. After you select the image to import, it will be loaded into the Import Options window. This window has an *Effects* button which will allow you to apply filters prior to importing the image or screen capture. Note that if you like the results of the filter, you can also save the results of the *Effects* filter back into the original image by clicking the *Export* button.

Wrong Colors

Q I have noticed that some systems display my icon with a grey appearance, or using the wrong colors. They look fine on my own system and in *IconForge*, however. Is there something wrong with my icon, or if not, is there a way to avoid having this happen when the icon is displayed on other systems?

A There are a few possible causes for this behavior:

If the Windows Display settings are set to 16 colors or 256 colors, Windows will reduce the number of colors in your icon to 16 — and not always with attractive results.

To avoid this, use a Multi-Resolution Icon which contains both 16-colors and 256-colors versions of your icon (see *Chapter 3 for more information*).

If you cannot use a Multi-Resolution Icon, you may be better off either using a 16-color icon which contains only the 16 default Windows colors. To reduce your icon to the default 16 colors, go to the *Options* menu and choose *Color Depth*. Selecting the *16 Dithered Windows Colors* option usually produces the most pleasing result.

Another problem which can occur is that some versions of Windows do not correctly display icons which contain more than 256 colors (e.g., Windows NT and 2000). Converting your icon down to 256 colors will solve this, with very little loss of image quality. Go to the *Options* menu and select *Color Depth* to reduce the number of colors. Note that if you are using a Multi-Resolution Icon, you should also remove any 16-million color icons from this as well, since these Windows versions will still attempt to display 16-million color icons, even though they cannot correctly do so.

Cannot Run Program with New Icon

Q I have changed the icon for an .EXE program using *IconForge*. When I attempt to run the program, it will no longer run. Why?

A Some programs do not allow their icons to be changed (this also applies to other program files, such as .DLL's). This is why we recommend making a backup for any program file you attempt to edit.

However, the most likely reason you cannot run the program is that you used the *Save As* command instead of the *Save* command when saving your icon. You must use the *Save* command to write your icon back into the program file. Using *Save As* writes out a new file, and may

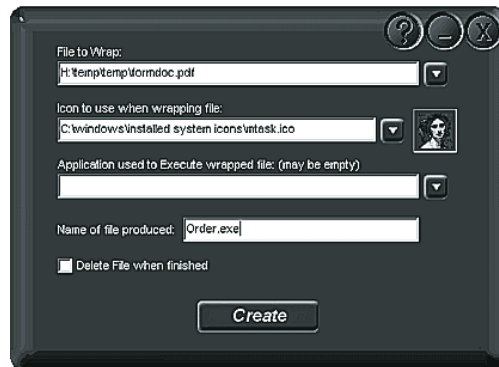
not contain all of the information necessary for the program to execute.

Files without Icons

Q *I have a couple of programs which do not display any icon. How can I place an icon into these files?*

A Generally, you cannot insert an icon into an existing program or document unless it already contains icon resources. However, you may be able to use the *IconForge Wrapper* utility (found under the *Tools* menu). This places the file into a small program which extracts and launches your file whenever someone chooses to run it. Because the file will be encapsulated in a program which contains an icon, you are able to specify an icon for the program produced by the wrapper.

You must specify the *File to Wrap* (just click on the arrow icon at the right side of the field). Choose a 32x32 icon.



If you are wrapping a document, image, or other non-program file, fill in the *Application used to Execute* field and specify the command line for the program which views or edits your file. Leave this field blank for

programs and scripts, or if you wish Windows to use the application associated with this type of document.

Specify a filename for the new program using the *Name of file produced* field. If you want the extracted file to be deleted by the program after it has been run, checkmark the *Delete File when finished* option.