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DESIGN MATTERS HEADER

## Create an attractive page background in minutes

by Mark Ray

**Application:** Microsoft FrontPage 98/2000/2002, SnagIt (or similar screen-capture program)

**Operating Systems:** Microsoft Windows

A Web page's background is the canvas on which all other page elements appear. This background is frequently a solid color, but it can also include a repeating picture. In this article, we'll show you how to quickly create a background picture like the one in [Figure A](#) using only FrontPage and a screen-capture program.

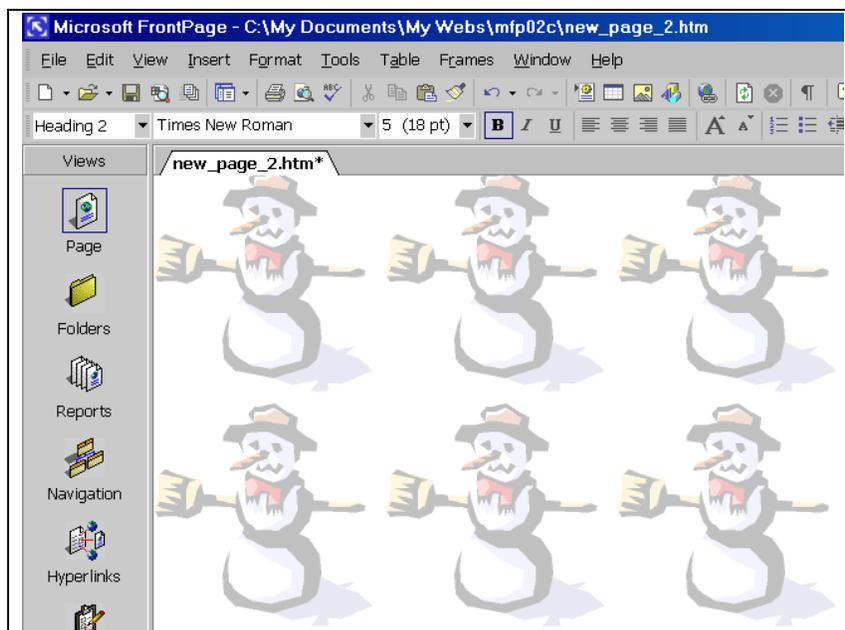


Figure A:

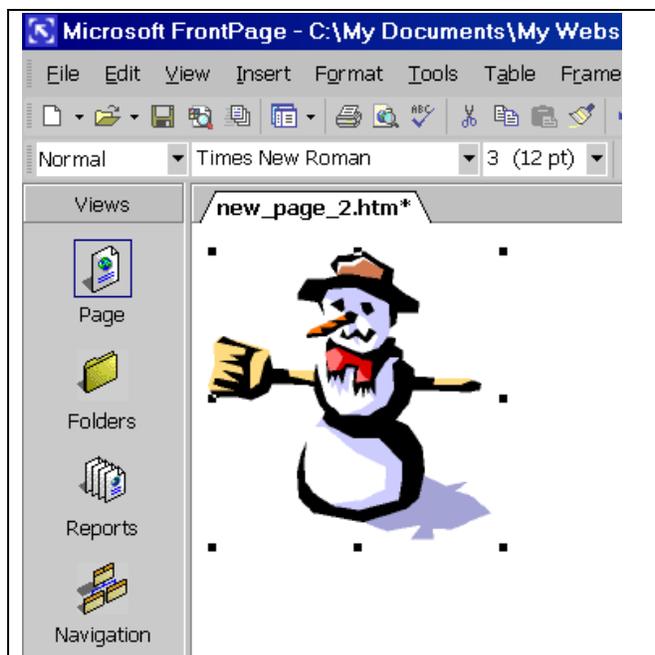
*You don't have to use Photoshop or Image Composer to create a background effect like this one.*

## Tooling around

We'll start by bringing an image into FrontPage, adjusting its dimensions with a screen-capture program, and using FrontPage's Wash Out tool to lighten the image. Then, we'll move the image to the page background. Finally, we'll discuss the differences between an ordinary background picture and a watermark.

## Picture imperfect

Begin by launching FrontPage and creating a new HTML page. Insert on the page the original version of the image that you want to display in the background, as shown in [Figure B](#).



**Figure B:**  
*We'll add this snowman picture to the background of our Web page.*

If you wish, you can resize the image by dragging on one of its size handles. Once the image is the size you want, click the Resample button ([ICON](#)) on the Pictures toolbar or Image toolbar. Doing so improves the image's appearance while reducing its file size.

### BEGIN NOTE FORMAT

**Note:** The Pictures or Image toolbar should appear when you select the picture. If not, choose View | Toolbars | Pictures (View | Image Toolbar in FrontPage 98).

### END NOTE FORMAT

If you examine the picture in [Figure B](#) closely, you'll notice two problems. First, there's little extra

space along the sides of the picture, which means the copies in the background will be too close together, not comfortably spaced as in [Figure A](#). Second, the colors are much too bright, which would make reading text in front of this image very difficult. We'll use a screen-capture utility to fix the first problem and a FrontPage feature to fix the second.

## Snag it, grab it, or steal it

At sites like <http://shareware.cnet.com/>, you can find a wide array of screen-capture programs with names like Screen Thief and Kleptomania. We'll use one of the most popular of these programs, SnagIt 6.1 ([www.techsmith.com/products/snagit/default.asp](http://www.techsmith.com/products/snagit/default.asp)), in this article. You should be able to achieve a similar result with other programs.

### BEGIN NOTE FORMAT

**Note:** Windows includes a screen-capture utility, but the quality of the resulting pictures can be poor. That's why we recommend using a third-party capture program.

### END NOTE FORMAT

In FrontPage, be sure that the picture is not selected and that the mouse pointer is in another part of the page. Now, launch SnagIt and set it to copy a selected region of the screen to the Clipboard. You do this by choosing Region from the Input menu and Clipboard from the Output menu.

Next, click the Capture button. When you do, the SnagIt window disappears, leaving the FrontPage window visible. Using the cursor, draw a rectangle that encompasses the entire snowman picture and also includes the amount of white space on the right and bottom edges that you prefer.

When you release the mouse button, the SnagIt Capture Preview window, shown in [Figure C](#), appears. If you're happy with the captured image, click Finish. If not, click Cancel and try again.



**Figure C:**  
*SnagIt has captured the selected part of the FrontPage window.*

Back in FrontPage, delete the original snowman picture and paste in the selection from the Clipboard. The only difference you'll notice is the extra white space on the right and bottom edges.

## Wash out below!

Our next step, toning down the image, is quite easy. With the new image selected, click the Wash Out button (ICON) on the Pictures or Image toolbar. In FrontPage 2002, this button can be somewhat hard to find. To access it, click the Color button (ICON) and then choose Wash Out from the popup menu.

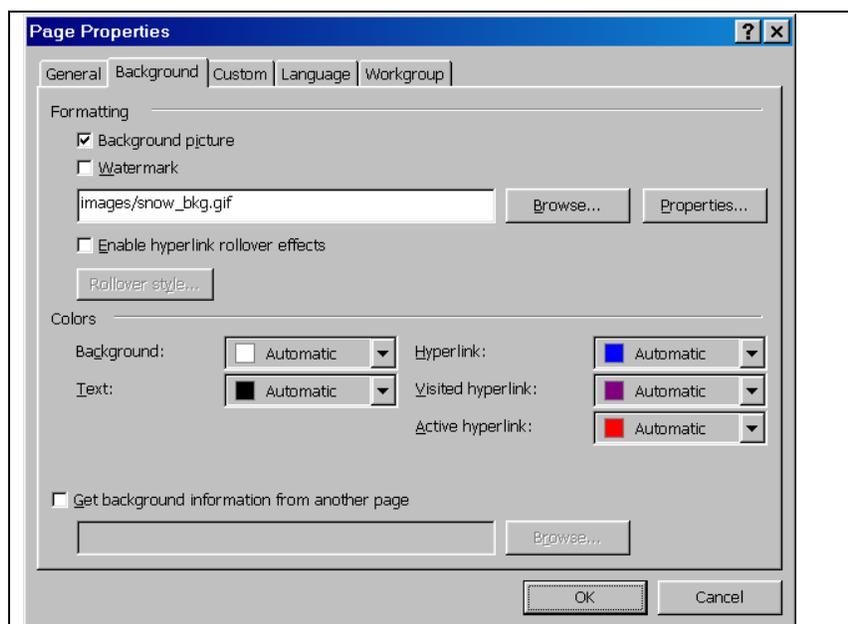
The Wash Out tool reduces the picture's brightness and increases its contrast, all in one step. You can further adjust these settings with the More Contrast (ICON), Less Contrast (ICON), More Brightness (ICON), and Less Brightness (ICON) buttons on the Pictures or Image toolbar; however, you'll probably be satisfied with the initial results of washing out the image.

Save the page to your Web now. After you've done so, the Save Embedded Files dialog box appears, prompting you to save the image as well. Once you've done that, we'll be ready to move to the final step.

## Going on background

Adding an image to the background of a page is quite simple. Choose Background from the Format menu to access the Background property sheet of the Page Properties dialog box. Enable the Background

Picture check box (Background Image in FrontPage 98), then enter the relative URL of your image in the text box, as shown in [Figure D](#). You can also click Browse to navigate to it. Click OK to see the result, as shown in [Figure A](#). (When you return to the page, you'll want to delete the original picture from the foreground.)



**Figure D:**  
*Specify your new picture as the page's background picture.*

### [From image to watermark](#)

Your background picture tiles across and down the page, no matter how large it gets. When the user scrolls the page, the background scrolls as well. If you'd prefer the background *not* to scroll, simply enable the Watermark check box on the Background property sheet of the Page Properties dialog box.

## **Image editing on the cheap**

While you could create a background image in Photoshop or Image Composer, you don't have to. As we've seen in this article, FrontPage—in conjunction with a screen-capture program—can do the job in a flash.

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