

# skin Designer's Guide



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## Appendix A - Skin Template

## **1. Background**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The main driving point behind the development of the Message Board was to develop an online Message Board that could become an extension of other people's websites.

Most website developers will at some point make use of third party components within their websites, whether it be a simple guestbook, some kind of web mail, forum etc... Often such components are a blessing of sorts, after all...how long would it take to code your own forum? The Message Board is one such component, though more often than not these third party goodies will stick out like an OAP in a nightclub for boy-racers, tarts and slappers. Not so with the Message Board - welcome to the beautiful world of skins.

The concept of skinning applications has been around for many years now. When did it all start you may ask? Well, personally I have no idea. The first time I encountered skins was back during my misguided Quake (developed by ID software) days way back in 1995. Back then I was a teenager who wiled away his time shooting the crap out of demonic god knows what. It was even more enjoyable to annihilate other online players whilst donning the skin of a hallucinogenic demented evil jester. It made for colourful gaming and a few laughs.

### **1.2 Aims & Objectives**

Well basically this document is designed to crash course you on the art of developing your own skins for the Message Board. The document will provide you with all the skin information you'll require to get started, links to online tools and resources as well as suggestions from moi. Armed with this document, a software art package such as Adobe's Photoshop and a bit of artistic know-how, you'll hopefully be churning out skins in very little time at all.

### **1.3 Overview of the Document**

Gosh this document is well structured! I blame it all on my University days!! And I blame the fact that I'm addicted to croissants in the mornings on my years spent living in France. But anyway...I'm prattling so let's continue.

I shall be concentrating on four main areas in this document. These are as follows:

- Mandatory skin background images [JPEG]
- Mandatory skin button images [GIF]
- Optional skin images [GIF]
- Skin text colours [Hexadecimal colour values]

## 2. Designer's Guide

### 2.1 Mandatory Skin Background Images [JPEG]

There are **three** images that make up the core of a Message Board skin. These images are relatively large and sit behind the Message Board's menu window, message window and directory window. A further **four** images are required to sit above, below, and to the left and right of the three core images. This is illustrated in the **Skin Template - Appendix A**. All of the below images are mandatory and must conform to the criteria below:

#### 2.1.1 Background Image Descriptions

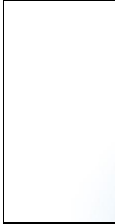


The three core background images are as follows:

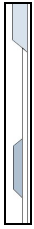



- **image\_05.jpg** -> sits **behind** the **menu window**
- **image\_06.jpg** -> sits **behind** the **message window**
- **image\_07.jpg** -> sits **behind** the **directory window**

The four additional background images are as follows:

- **image\_01.jpg** -> sits to the **left** of **image\_05.jpg**
- **image\_02.jpg** -> sits to the **right** of **image\_07.jpg**
- **image\_03.jpg** -> sits **above** **image\_05.jpg**, **image\_06.jpg** and **image\_07.jpg**
- **image\_04.jpg** -> sits **below** **image\_05.jpg**, **image\_06.jpg** and **image\_07.jpg**

#### 2.1.2 Background Image Dimensions

| Example - [Blue Sharp Skin]   | Name         | Width [pixels] | Height [pixels] |
|---|--------------|----------------|-----------------|
|  | image_05.jpg | 225            | 450             |
|  | image_06.jpg | 400            | 450             |
|  | image_07.jpg | 225            | 450             |

| Example cont...  | Name         | Width [pixels]                                       | Height [pixels]                                       |
|--|--------------|--|---|
|   | image_01.jpg | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | 450   |
|   | image_02.jpg | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | 450   |
|   | image_03.jpg | 850 + width of image_01.jpg + width of image_02.jpg  | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |
|  | image_04.jpg | 850 + width of image_01.jpg + width of image_02.jpg  | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |

### 2.1.3 Recommendations

- When designing images image\_05.jpg, image\_06.jpg and image\_07.jpg, it is strongly recommended that you reduce the opacity of these images so that they do not interfere with any overlaid text; such as that of a message for example. Course this is only necessary when utilising in-depth artwork. If you plan of using solid colour or some kind of gradient then you will not need to consider such issues.
- Images image\_01.jpg and image\_02.jpg could conceivably be 1 pixel in width.
- Images image\_03.jpg and image\_04.jpg could conceivably be 1 pixel in height.
- Try to refrain from branding your skin with specific texts else your skin could prove to be very unpopular with other Message Board users.
- Feel free to include your by-line e.g. name, email address etc...

## 2.2 Mandatory Skin Button Images [GIF]

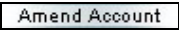
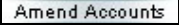
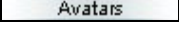
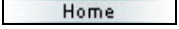

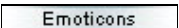
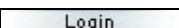
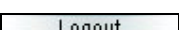
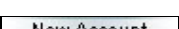
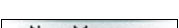


There are **twenty-three** images that make up the buttons of a Message Board skin. These button images are usually small and the majority of which sit in the Message Board's menu window. The remaining button images sit in the Message Board's window menu and appear only when required. All of the below button images are mandatory and must conform to the criteria below:




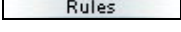
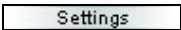
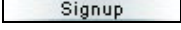
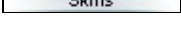
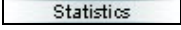
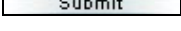
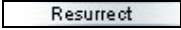
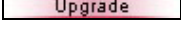
### 2.2.1 Button Image Descriptions

The twenty-three button images are as follows:

- **amend\_account\_button.gif** -> sits in the menu window
- **amend\_accounts\_button.gif** -> sits in the menu window
- **avatars\_button.gif** -> sits in the menu window
- **back\_button.gif** -> sits in the menu window
- **delete\_button.gif** -> sits in the message window
- **emoticons\_button.gif** -> sits in the menu window
- **login\_button.gif** -> sits in the menu window
- **logout\_button.gif** -> sits in the menu window
- **new\_account\_button.gif** -> sits in the menu window
- **new\_message\_button.gif** -> sits in the menu window
- **previous\_button.gif** -> sits in the message window
- **refresh\_button.gif** -> sits in the menu window
- **reply\_button.gif** -> sits in the message window
- **request\_password\_button.gif** -> sits in the message window
- **reset\_button.gif** -> sits in the message window
- **rules\_button.gif** -> sits in the menu window
- **settings\_button.gif** -> sits in the menu window
- **signup\_button.gif** -> sits in the menu window
- **skins\_button.gif** -> sits in the menu window
- **statistics\_button.gif** -> sits in the menu window
- **submit\_button.gif** -> sits in the message window
- **undelete\_button.gif** -> sits in the message window
- **upgrade\_button.gif** -> sits in the menu window

## 2.2.2 Button Image Dimensions

| Example cont...   | Name                      | Width [pixels]                                       | Height [pixels]                                       |
|---|---------------------------|--|---|
|    | amend_account_button.gif  | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |
|    | amend_accounts_button.gif | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |
|    | avatars_button.gif        | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |
|    | back_button.gif           | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |
|    | delete_button.gif         | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |
|    | emoticons_button.gif      | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |
|  | login_button.gif          | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |
|  | logout_button.gif         | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |
|  | new_account_button.gif    | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |
|  | new_message_button.gif    | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |
|  | previous_button.gif       | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |
|  | refresh_button.gif        | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |

| Example cont...   | Name                        | Width [pixels]                                       | Height [pixels]                                       |
|---|-----------------------------|--|---|
|    | reply_button.gif            | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |
|    | request_password_button.gif | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |
|    | reset_button.gif            | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |
|    | rules_button.gif            | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |
|    | settings_button.gif         | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |
|    | signup_button.gif           | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |
|  | skins_button.gif            | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |
|  | statistics_button.gif       | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |
|  | submit_button.gif           | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |
|  | undelete_button.gif         | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |
|  | upgrade_button.gif          | There are no restrictions on the width of this image | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |

### 2.2.3 Recommendations

- When designing your button images it is better to overlay a textual description of the button's functionality. That said every button has its functionality written into a tool tip that appears when users pass their mouse pointer over the button in question. As such textual descriptions are not necessary, however, if you do not design adequate symbols or icons instead then users may find the skin extremely awkward to use, hence your skin could prove to be very unpopular with other Message Board users.
- Whilst there are no restrictions on either widths or heights for image buttons, note that the menu window has rather a lot of image buttons in it. In addition image buttons appear adjacent to one another in many circumstances, therefore try not to make your button images too large. Overly large button images may lap around therefore shunting other button images further down the screen.
- If you require transparent space between adjacent button images then simply use GIF transparency to add invisible pixels to the sides of your button images. This technique will allow you to position button images exactly where you wish.

### 2.3 Optional Skin Images [GIF]



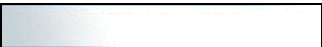

There are **two** images that make up the dividers of a Message Board skin, and a further **two** images that make up the heading backgrounds. All of the below images are mandatory, however, they may be a 1 pixel square transparent GIF should you not wish them to appear in your skin. In addition they must conform to the criteria below:

#### 2.3.1 Optional Image Descriptions

The four optional skin images are as follows:

- **short\_divider.gif** -> sits **in-between** buttons in the **menu window**
- **long\_divider.gif** -> sits **in-between** sections in the **message window**
- **short\_heading.gif** -> sits **behind** headings in the **menu window**
- **long\_heading.gif** -> sits **behind** headings in the **message window**

#### 2.3.2 Optional Image Dimensions

| Example cont...   | Name              | Width [pixels] | Height [pixels]                                       |
|---|-------------------|----------------|---|
|  | short_divider.gif | <= 225         | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |
|  | long_divider.gif  | <= 400         | There are no restrictions on the height of this image |
|  | short_heading.gif | 225            | 30  |
|  | long_heading.gif  | 400            | 30  |



### 2.3.3 Recommendations

- Again, just to recap, when designing your optional images they may be set to a 1 pixel square transparent GIF should you not wish them to appear in your skin.
- GIF transparency is best used when designing your optional images so that they do not completely obscure any background imagery.

## 2.4 Skin Text Colours [Hexadecimal colour values]

There are **five** different types of text used throughout a Message Board skin, and each of these can be set to an exact hexadecimal colour value. All of the different text types below must have specified colour values else they will be set to HTML default values which may not be in keeping with your overall skin design.

### 2.4.1 Text Colour Descriptions

The five different text types are as follows:

- **text\_colour** -> used **predominantly throughout** for standard text
- **heading\_text\_colour** -> used for **headings**
- **link\_colour** -> used for **hypertext links**
- **visited\_link\_colour** -> used for visited **hypertext links**
- **active\_link\_colour** -> used for selected **hypertext links**

### 2.4.2 Recommendations

- When considering the above text colours, be sure not to select colours that are likely to become lost within any background imagery making up your skin.
- Text colours must be specified as hexadecimal colour values. Most software art packages are capable of representing colours as hexadecimal colour values.

## 2.5 Skin Background Colour [Hexadecimal colour value]

You can also set the exact hexadecimal colour value for the Message Board's background colour. In fact the background colour must have a specified colour value else it will be set to the HTML default value which may not be in keeping with your overall skin design.

### 2.5.1 Recommendations

- When considering your choice of background colour, please bear in mind that Message Board users viewing your skin through extremely high resolutions may be subjected to rather a lot of background colour. It is therefore wise to select a neutral colour that will not prove too offensive when used as block colour, else your skin may end up too strong and overpowering.

## 2.6 Skin Scrollbar Colours [Hexadecimal colour values]

Finally, you can set the exact hexadecimal colour value for the Message Board's vertical scrolling bars. Scrollbars are used extensively throughout the Message Board and must have specified colour values else they will be set to the HTML default values which may not be in keeping with your overall skin design. These scrollbars share the same colour values.

### 2.6.1 Scrollbar Colour Descriptions

The two different scrollbar colour types are as follows:

- **scrollbar\_colour** -> used for the scrollbar's **surface** colour
- **scrollbar\_track\_colour** -> used for the scrollbar's **underlying track** colour

### 2.6.2 Recommendations

- In order to keep things simple, the total number of colours available for the Message Board's vertical scrolling bars has been limited to two colours. This means that whatever your choice of colours, your scrollbars will appear flat i.e. two-dimensional. This is worth bearing in mind when considering your overall skin design.

### 3. Testing Your Skin

So that you may test your skin, and refine its design, prior to submitting it for review, a simulated Message Board test environment is provided at <http://mboard.guide-to.net> in the **Skins** section. The test environment will not test every aspect of your skin, but it will provide excellent visual feedback as to how your completed skin will look and feel.

### 4 Submitting Your Skin

Once you are satisfied with your completed skin, you may submit it for either public or private usage. Skin designers are entitled to one **free** Message Board **upgrade** per **public** skin!

#### 4.1 Submitting Your Skin For Public Usage

If you've designed a skin of your own and want to use it, though wish it to remain public i.e. you want other Message Board users to be able to use your skin, then you may do so by emailing it to [designs@guide-to.net](mailto:designs@guide-to.net) for review. You will be contacted as soon as your skin has been accepted.

When emailing your skin, be sure to include all the necessary image files, ideally zipped with WinZip. In addition, please specify the hexadecimal colour values that you wish to be used for your scrollbar, background and text colours. Several choice words from you, the author, would also be appreciated so that they may accompany your skin in the skins directory. Lastly, please include your contact details and your Message Board ID, the number at the end of your Message Board's URL, so that we can upgrade your Message Board for free. After all...you deserve it!

#### 4.2 Submitting Your Skin For Private Usage

If you've designed a skin of your own and want to use it, though wish it to remain private i.e. you do not want other Message Board users to be able to use your skin, then you may do so by referring to the **Skins** section of your Message Board. It is there that you will be able to upload your skin for private usage.

### 5. Feedback

Should you have any suggestions or comments, good or bad, regarding either this document or the Message Board's skinning capabilities, then please post them on the Feedback Board provided at <http://mboard.guide-to.net>. The Feedback Board gives other skin designers the ability to share and respond to your views. It is also checked regularly by the **guide-to.net** team. Any and all feedback is very much appreciated.



## Appendix A

