

# Invite Brand Engagement With Free and Low-Cost Stock Images

When you're designing your website, sales pages and opt-In pages, finding the right photos and images can go a long way towards:

- Creating the right first impression
- Making your offer and campaign memorable
- Standing out on Facebook
- Making your page design interesting
- Increasing viewer engagement
- Holding the visitor's attention longer
- Helping your client identify with the words on the page by seeing themselves in the images
- Direct your website visitor to take the specific actions you want them to take (opt-in, buy, click to see another page)
- Make your offer seem more real and valuable

And all of that helps you...

- Increase opt-ins
- Make more sales
- Convert more visitors to buyers
- Have a successful launch
- Rock your return on investment
- Make more money
- Create a gorgeous page you can be proud of!

So, how do you find those just-right images without wasting a lot of time looking at the wrong sites, paying too much or getting frustrated by having to look at a lot of bad images? And how do you find unique stock photos that everyone else in your industry isn't already using?

## Free Photos, Icons and Buttons

Everyone hopes for free images... and this can be the most challenging kind of image to find.

Think about your time vs. money investment – if you can find a good-quality image in a fraction of the time with the Low-Cost Options in the next section, and spend all that other time that would have been sucked up looking at page after page of poor images working on other aspects of your launch... that would be better, right?

This can also make it look like you're not willing to invest in your brand – people will see the poor quality of the photos, and you may have to credit the artist or photographer which screams “I couldn't afford this!” – and, if it's what you've got to do to launch, it's what you've got to do.

Pros:

- They're free.
- There are some great free icons and buttons out there.

Cons:

- They're often not the highest quality.
- You have to sift through a lot of not-so-fabulous images to find a good one.
- Takes time. Lots of time.
- You may have to credit the photographer or artist on your site. Please read the regulations to see what you have to do to use the images commercially.
- Often, free images are only available at web resolution. If you want to use them in a matching print campaign (where you need higher-quality images), you're out of luck.
- Looking at bad images just isn't very fun.

Resources:

- [www.sxc.hu](http://www.sxc.hu)
- [www.freedigitalphotos.net](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net)
- [www.creativecommons.com](http://www.creativecommons.com)
- [www.iconfinder.com](http://www.iconfinder.com)
- [www.artdesigner.lv](http://www.artdesigner.lv)



# Low-Cost Photos, Icons and Buttons

For most launches, low-cost photos, icons and buttons will be a good way to get a solid return on your photography investment.

You do have to be careful of one thing: “Secret Asian Man” Syndrome. This is a phenomenon which happens with the most popular stock photos. Many companies will buy the same photo and use it prominently on their products, web pages, and even billboards. And then the photo loses its credibility and power because it’s overused.

Here’s a funny article about this (serious?) syndrome:

## Secret Asian Man

BY Terry Marks

I have angina. I have failing eyesight and I'm going deaf. I'm a teacher. I'm an architect. I'm an avid PC user. I donate blood. I attend Phoenix University. I love Stamps.com. I bank at US Bank, BankAmerica and Citibank. I'm in the National Guard. And my life has been rebuilt thanks to advanced antipsychotic medication.

Of course, none of the above assertions are true. But there are those who would have you believe so. At least until you favor their product or service. I'm not famous. I'm merely ubiquitous. My name is Terry Marks, and I'm the quasi-Asian face of the new century.

You see, my image was included on what was perhaps one of the most pervasive stock-photo CDs of the last few years. The result: Much like David Hasselhoff, I'm big in Europe.

OK, you're still thinking, "What in the H-E-double toothpicks is he talking about?" Here's the skinny: Long, long ago, in a galaxy far, far away, where information CDs were hardly more than a notion, some companies were making their mark selling royalty-free images on CD. Yet stock images of people were still—to use the technical term—poo.

Enter stage left Mel Curtis, noted photographer and friend of Terry Marks. While creating a stock-image CD of hands and faces, he shoots a vast number of people, mostly friends. On the way to a lunch, Mel shoots Terry. Maybe 15 or 20 minutes in the chair. Release is signed. Off to eat.

Fast forward a few months. CD debuts. Photos are great. It's a hit. Holy monkey! Of the 100 images, eight or so are of Terry. Hee hee. Ha ha. Very entertaining. Back to work. Then it began—a cavalcade of appearances by this unknown Asian. Secret Asian man. For the last three years, there's been a steady trickle of notices, brochures and ads with my face arriving on my doorstep.

My image has been used to pimp everything from AIDS testing to Oracle, from the U.S. Census to dating services. I'm even the "turn off your cellular phone" guy in some movie theaters. Lately, I've been receiving junk emails with the subject "Why haven't you called me back?" that have my face embedded in the body. While in Paris, the director of PhotoDisc Europe remarked to Mel, "Who ees thees Chinese man? He ees so popular!"

Like I said, I'm big in Europe.

My image has been spotted in Japan, France, Germany, the Netherlands (as a billboard on an agricultural-products factory) and of course, in our good ol' U.S. of A. Chances are, I'm even huge in Djibouti. (Did I say "booty?")

The saturation has been so dense that, as I meet new people in the design world, I'm invariably received with a look of faint recognition. That "Do I know you?" stare. Creepy sometimes to say the least. But I guess it might actually work to my advantage.

This happens so often that I was struck with a bolt from the blue: Why not make a short film about how it's affected my life? Not my life now, but 50 years from now. Having been used to hawk so many services, products and causes, my future self suffers a loss of identity, first with those around him, and ultimately with himself. The result: a grouchy, gnarled man in plaid trousers and running shoes, with a Yiddish accent.

Many friends have been outraged, or at least stunned, by the phenomenon. But please know I have no remorse. I'm not bitter. Who could have known this would explode the way it has? I have, it seems, that "he's Asian, but he's not too Asian" sort of face. I fit a comfortable demographic. Besides, I did get paid. And \$40 will almost buy lunch for two.

We're all familiar with Andy Warhol's idea that each of us will have 15 minutes of fame. I know I do. It's just sneaking by in 28k snippets on the World Wide Web. So to those of you who have contributed to my collection of appearances, I thank you. Especially if you chuckle about this with me and not at me. Or toward me, for that matter.

And for those of you whom I've not yet had the pleasure of meeting, please introduce yourself. Then buy me a drink. (The power of suggestion!) If you are so inclined, send me samples of my mug from your junk mail. And to all of you, remember: You only have 15 minutes; please use them wisely.

TERRY MARKS

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Speaker

<http://designtaxi.com/article/437/Secret-Asian-Man/>

I warn you about Secret Asian Man to show you the danger of this level of photography – that when you’re putting up your gorgeous site, or sending your products off to the printer – your closest, fiercest competitor could be launching together a page or product with the exact same image.

For example, how many times have you seen this image (which is #1 in the “health” search on [www.istockphoto.com](http://www.istockphoto.com))



Use these images with care. And you may not want to use the very first image that pops up in your search.

The best strategy? Dig a bit deeper to find an image that 21,000 people have not downloaded.

Pros:

- There are a lot of good photos out there for not very much money.
- Lots of variety available.
- You can get many photos in a variety of size ranges – from tiny for the web to billboard-sized.
- Some of these mid-level image search engines even let you search based on color palette or image orientation – saving you lots of time

Cons:

- Secret Asian Man Syndrome
- It can take time to find the “just right” image
- Sometimes the photos are not very ethnically diverse
- Some of the images are downright cheesy

Resources:

- [www.istockphoto.com](http://www.istockphoto.com): Tip: Use the price slider on the left side of the page to dial in your price range!
- [www.shutterstock.com](http://www.shutterstock.com) (they have a lot of buttons, satisfaction guaranteed seals and the like)
- [www.dreamstime.com](http://www.dreamstime.com)
- [www.123rf.com](http://www.123rf.com)

A screenshot of the iStockphoto website. The main header shows the iStockphoto logo and a search bar. Below the header, there are navigation tabs for Photos, Illustrations, Video, Audio, Flash, Participate, and Help. The main content area features a large image of a butterfly with the title "Metamorphosis". Below the image, there is a description: "A butterfly emerging from its cocoon, a fresh coat of paint, the changing of the season – beautiful transformation is everywhere." and a "View Lightbox" link. At the bottom, there are several sections: "Royalty-Free Stock Photos, Illustrations &amp; More", "How iStockphoto Works" (a 3-step process), "This Week's Free Files" (a small image of a red tractor), and a "Buy Royalty-free Stock From:" section with a price slider and a "FOR ALL LOW AS \$0.95 PER CREDIT" badge. The price slider shows options for 1, 3, 7, 10, and 15 credits.

- [www.canstockphoto.com](http://www.canstockphoto.com)
- [www.vectorstock.com](http://www.vectorstock.com)

# Premium Photos

If you're looking for a main image for your product, course or brand, and you want to get an outstanding image, consider higher-level photography options. Strategically, this is a great choice for making your brand, product or program look remarkable.

This saves you from "Secret Asian Man" syndrome.

One note: You'll want to search for "Royalty-Free" images on these sites. I don't recommend Rights Managed photography unless you have a spectacularly high budget, or you just want a good shock at the prices.

Finally, I don't recommend buying buttons or icons from these sites. You can get those at a much better price at the Low-Cost options, above.

Pros:

- Unique: not everyone uses these sources, avoid Secret Asian Man Syndrome
- Beautiful, high-end photography
- Memorable
- Adds value to your offer by looking high-end

Cons:

- They cost more
- You need to get a better return on investment with your launch to pay for the photography

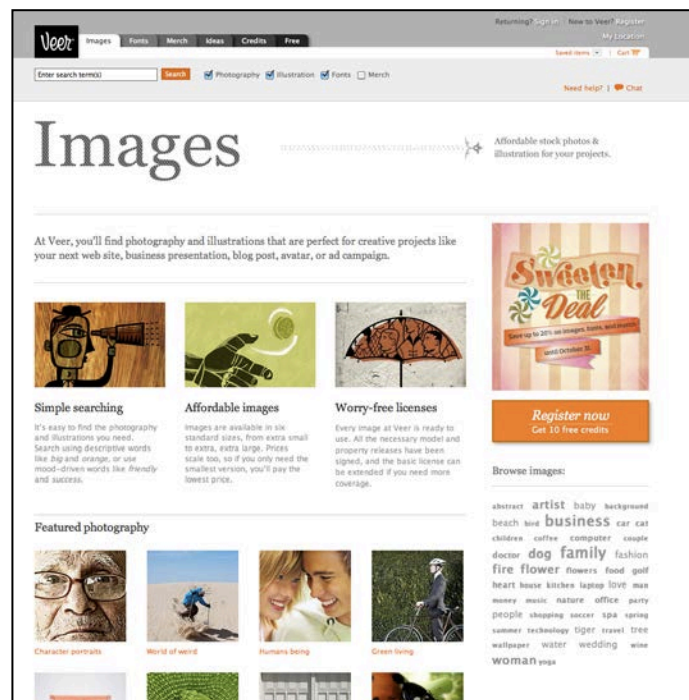
Resources:

[www.gettyone.com](http://www.gettyone.com)

[www.corbis.com](http://www.corbis.com)

[www.istockphoto.com](http://www.istockphoto.com) - Use that price slider again; just dial it up to the higher brackets.

[www.veer.com/products/images/](http://www.veer.com/products/images/)



# All-In-One Search: Search Free, Low-Cost and Premium Images at the Same Time

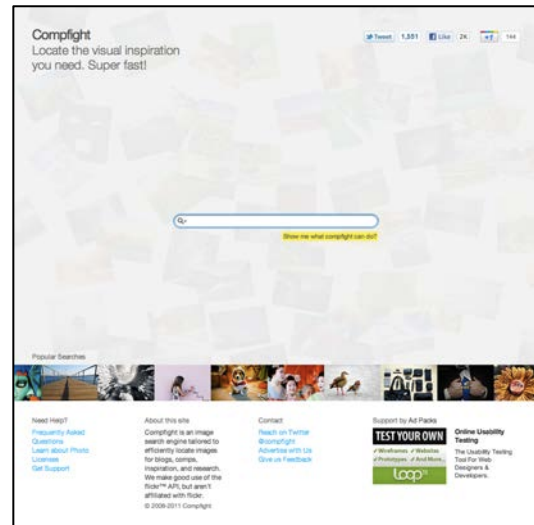
This is an image search engine where you can search all 3 kinds of images at the same time.

## Pro:

- Saves time and lets you see what's out there and possible
- Great for brainstorming and getting ideas

## Cons:

- You may fall in love with an image only to find that it's out of your price range
- You're searching through everything out there – so you'll have to take some time refining your searches or wade through lots of results.



[www.compfight.com](http://www.compfight.com)

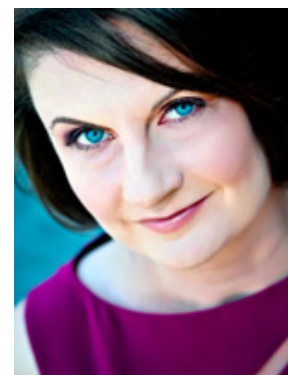
## Want To Learn More, For Free?

Send an email to [brandstyledesig@aweber.com](mailto:brandstyledesig@aweber.com) to sign up for my ezine where you'll get complimentary tips and information on how you can invite more sales with your brand.

## About Erin Ferree

Erin Ferree is a branding coach, design genius and strategic thinker. She's been told that her right-brain, left-brain combination of creativity and logic is hard to come by... and that it's what small business owners need to be successful. She loves connecting the dots between passion and profit, mixing strategy and inspiration and shaking things up.

She deeply enjoys working with entrepreneurs who want to help more



people and look good doing it. Who want all of their branding and marketing to make sense and speak to their ideal clients. And who want an open, honest, inviting brand with integrity - instead of using icky, pushy, sleazy marketing tactics and trickery.

She's branded over 450 small businesses in the last 10 years. She's been published in so many books and periodicals that she stopped counting. She's shared stages with some awesome people - like Michele PW, Linda Hollander, Lisa Cherney, Sheri McConnell and Kelly O'neil.

In the rare moments when she's not obsessing about branding or design, she can be found hugging her corgi-dog Stanley, going for long walks, cooking improvisationally, or throwing parties so her friends can enjoy them.