

VSN *Art Submission Specs*

What is VSN Looking For:

- » Stamp on any theme that moves you or get inspired by an upcoming challenge (listed in the current issue or on the website.) I look for a wide range of styles: funny, scenic, weird, cute (but nothing pornographic please.)
- » To maximize your chances of getting published, challenge related artwork is a good way to go! I also look for artwork that is created with interesting techniques, whether challenge related or not. I also look for seasonal art that fits the issue month.
- » **VSN** accepts both full-color and black & white artwork.
- » Artwork may be printed in an upcoming issue and/or in **VSN's** website Gallery.
- » There is no financial compensation for contributions. As a small thank you, if your stamp art is published in **VSN** you will receive an unmounted "VAMP STAMP ARTIST" stamp (one per stamper.) Second time contributors receive a small unmounted stamp of the Editor's choice. Published stamp artists also receive a

complimentary copy of the issue with their published work. But the best part is that your stamp art or writing will be seen by thousands of stampers! It's fun!

» Artwork can be submitted two ways: by sending the original piece by mail or sending a high quality picture of the piece by email. (Specs for each are covered below.)

IMPORTANT: Avoid disappointment! Artwork not sent using the *Art Submission Specs* cannot be considered for publication and will not be part of the monthly challenge drawing! All information needs to be included and any art that you send via emailed file must be in the right format for your artwork to be considered for publication.

Submitting to Online Art Gallery Only: If you prefer to submit artwork specifically for **VSN's** Gallery ONLY (and not for consideration for possible printing in **VSN**), follow the guidelines below for *Stamp Art Submitted to VSN by Emailed file*. The only difference would be that if you send an emailed file, it can be 72 dpi resolution instead of the usual 300 dpi print resolution. Please include a note that the submission is for the Gallery only.

You might consider this option if you are unable to provide a high resolution (300 dpi) file for print and/or are unwilling to part with the art itself.

Requirements for ALL Submissions:

» Your overall art design should be your own and not a duplicate of someone else's work. If it is closely based on someone else's work, say so; give credit where it is due!

» Please send your best work and not every card you've ever made. Make sure your piece is neat without smudges and unwanted specks, ink spots or dirt. Make sure layers are straight (unless they are meant to be crooked!)

» When sending artwork for a challenge, please read the challenge carefully and don't just read the challenge name. If you don't understand the challenge or have a question about it, email me (vampstamp@prodigy.net).

» By sending art to **VSN**, you are giving permission for it to be published in **VSN**.

» You **MUST** let **VSN** know if you are sending the same artwork to another stamping publication. You retain any rights you have to your artwork, but I ask that you not allow the same artwork to be published in another stamp or craft publication (something that neither publications nor their readers like!)

» If you want to post the artwork online on your own website or blog, it would be appreciated if you would wait at least a few weeks after the **VSN** issue in which it is published is out.

» If you send a group of artwork, I assume that it is all created by **YOU** and it will be credited that way upon publication. If you are sending a group of artwork that includes art by other artists, you **MUST** have their permission to send their artwork for publication. You **MUST** also include a cover letter in the envelope/box alerting me that not all the artwork is by you. Please do not assume that I'll pick up on a name somewhere on the piece. When dealing with a group of art, that is easy to miss. You must let me know that it is a group submission or it will not be credited correctly!

Stamp Art Submitted by MAIL:

» If you are submitting artwork for a specific challenge, please identify it on the envelope or in a cover letter and/or at the top of the directions.

» PRINT your full name and address on the back or attached to the project if possible (printing helps me spell your name right!) If you can't attach it, then make sure to include it with the artwork.)

» Include credits for all stamps used. Please credit each stamp individually unless they are all from the same company. It is not necessary to include catalog numbers for each stamp.

» Include a supply list. Any supply listed should be mentioned in the directions and vice versa. Do NOT use abbreviations for company names!

» Describe how you created your art — especially what materials you used, brand names if applicable, and any special techniques involved. Do not use abbreviations even if you think they are commonly understood by stampers. (For example, use “*embossing powder*”, not “*ep*” and “*cardstock*” and not “*cs*”, etc.)

» VSN is UNABLE TO RETURN projects, so only send what you do not need back. If a project is especially unusual or precious, consider sending a high resolution digital file. PLEASE NOTE: Sending a SASE for return of mailed projects is not a way to by-pass this policy! If you need to keep the original, send a high quality file instead!

» When will it be run? I try to run stamp art as soon as possible, but it can run several months to a year or more after it is received — especially if it is seasonal or if it uses a technique I'll cover in a future issue or is for a particular challenge. Most artwork sent for a particular challenge is printed in the challenge issue or in the online art gallery for the challenge month.

» I do not decide when a piece will be run when I open the email or the attached file for the first time! Decisions on whether a particular piece will be run are made at the time the issue is finalized.

» Did it arrive at VSN? Include a self-addressed stamped post card if you want confirmation that the project is received OR alternatively, when it will be printed. If you don't indicate which (or indicate both), I'll send it when I know the printing schedule (usually a week or two before the issue comes out).

Stamp Art Submitted by EMAILED FILE:

Please don't be intimidated by the length of this section. Submitting artwork by file is usually not difficult. There are simply many levels of computer skills and I have included some basics here for creating files for print that may not be familiar to stampers who are more used to creating picture files for posting on the internet.

Important: I must have all of the information listed in [step 4](#) below to consider your artwork for publication. I will not look at artwork or open any emailed art files until ALL of this information is received.

Step 1 - Decide What to Submit:

Make a decision on whether to submit your artwork or not. Please do not email me low resolution art and ask me to decide whether I want it or not before you format it in the correct resolution and send the directions. I do not make decisions on what will go into a particular issue until I have all artwork for that issue (WITH all the required information!), so I won't be able to answer your question. Just take the leap — SEND IT!

Step 2 - Create the Art File to Email:

Scan or Photo? In most cases, scanning a flat card creates a better picture for print than taking a photo. But some projects, particularly non-flat artwork, may need to be photographed. Tips for both are found below.

File Format: To keep the quality high, send a 300 dpi tif file. Check your photo editing or scanning software's HELP to learn how to save a file as a 300 dpi tif file. If you absolutely can't figure out how to create a tif file, I will accept a 300 dpi jpg file (but see the cautions on this in [“Can't Get a Large File to Email”](#) below.)

SCANS: Scanning is usually the best way to create a picture of a flat rectangular object like a card. Some tips:

» Clean your scanner bed and lid before scanning to avoid unsightly debris that can mar the scan of your beautiful work!

» Align artwork as straight as possible in the scanner to help ensure the entire piece is included in the scan (but don't worry if it scans a little crooked, because I can fix that at my end.)

» Scan at a resolution of 300 dpi. Use your scanning software's HELP to learn how to set your scanner to scan at 300 dpi resolution. Please don't just hope your scanner is magically scanning at the right resolution for your purpose. Find out BEFORE you go to all the trouble of sending the file! I have found that when someone says "I don't know what the resolution/dpi is on this file", that nine times out of ten, it is way too low because their scanner is set for low resolution.

» Do not take a file scanned at lower resolution (like 72 or 96 dpi) and try to use photo editing software to increase the resolution on the fly by simply typing in the higher number. This does not work effectively. You must scan the card at 300 dpi to begin with so that the file includes the full information about the card and doesn't look pixelated or blurry when it is printed.

» I prefer the tif file format to keep quality high. Check your scanning or photo editing software's help documentation to learn how to save/convert a file as a tif file. If you absolutely can't figure out how to create a tif file, I will accept a jpg file as long as the resolution is high and it prints ok (but see "[Can't Get a Large File to Email](#)" for cautions on this.)

Resolution/DPI for Beginners: If you don't know what dpi stands for, this section is for you.

"dpi" stands for "dots per inch" (or sometimes ppi for "pixels per inch".) Computers use tiny dots of color to build a picture. Imagine a piece of graph paper where every square represents a computer dot (or "pixel"). If you were to color in those dots with one color per square, you could create a primitive picture. This is roughly what a computer picture file does.

A picture file that has 72 or 96 dots of information per inch (dpi) has much less detail than a picture that has 300 dots per inch (dpi).

A 72 dpi picture looks fine on a computer screen, but looks terrible printed. Try it. A low resolution picture looks jagged when printed, like it was built of little blocks. A high resolution picture looks smooth when printed, like a photograph.

To check image resolution (dpi) using PhotoShop Elements, open your picture file in Elements and then from the menu bar along the top, choose ► **Image** ► **Resize** ► **Image Size**. See more on resolution and dpi in "[Digital Photos](#)" below.

DIGITAL PHOTOS: If your artwork is three dimensional, sometimes scanning just won't work, so you need to use a digital camera instead.

» If you photograph a project, do it in good light. Make sure that your art is evenly lit and there are no shadows falling on your work.

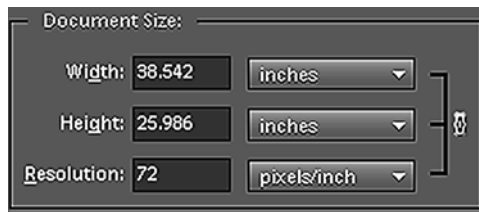
» Use a neutral, plain background — nothing busy. Although a black background can look dramatic, it can make the artwork look dark and can create shadows. Usually a white or off-white background is better.

» Most cards in **VSN** are pictured flat on the page. So photograph the project head on and not at an artistic angle. Photographing rectangular objects like cards can be really tricky because if you take the picture from even the slightest angle, the card edges don't look parallel in the picture. (This is one reason that scanning flat cards is usually a better method.) Either lay the card flat and take the picture from **directly above** or attach the card to a vertical surface and take the picture using a tripod if possible to avoid camera tilt. Center the card in the viewfinder, leaving some margin around the edges.

» I prefer 300 dpi tif files to keep quality high. Check your photo editing software's help documentation to learn

how to save a file as a tif file. If you absolutely can't figure out how to create a tif file, I will accept a 300 dpi jpg file (but see "[Can't Get a Large File to Email](#)" for cautions on this.) **One exception:** The resolution needs to be 300 dpi UNLESS you send me the original un-resized file from your camera as described below.

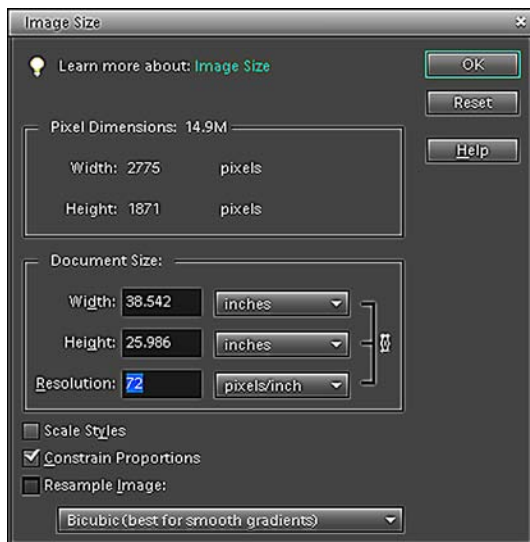
DPI and Digital Cameras: If you don't know what "dpi" stands for, please see "[Resolution/DPI for Beginners](#)". Digital cameras often take jpg pictures at 72 dpi, but if you look at those picture files in software like PhotoShop or PhotoShop Elements, you will probably find that the dimensions (height and width) are huge (probably



around 18" x 20" or even larger.) If you were to print that, you would have a huge low resolution picture (yeck!) BUT! If you use PhotoShop or similar software in a particular way, you can resize your picture to the original card dimensions with good resolution.

The trick is to resize that image from 72 to 300 dpi with Resample Image in PhotoShop unchecked (off); the dimensions will shrink and the resolution improves, giving you a picture that will print nicely and will probably be something like 4.5" x 5" in dimensions.) The Resample Image checkbox is important!

Open your picture file in PhotoShop. From the menu bar along the top, choose ► **Image** ► **Resize** ► **Image Size**. Uncheck **Resample Image** and enter **300** for resolution.



If you can't figure out how to do this or don't have software that will do it, send me the original unresized digital camera file and I should be able to take care of it.

Step 3 - Check The File Quality Before You Send it!

Whether you scan or photograph your artwork, make sure that it looks its best:

- » Make sure that the whole card or project fits into the picture. Check to see that your picture doesn't cut off the sides or corners of the card or ribbons/elements that extend past card edges.
- » Check the finished scan or photo to make sure that there are not shadows across the card or glare that obscures the project details.
- » Check to see that everything is in focus and that no elements are blurred.
- » Look for stray specks and spots on your artwork.
- » Check that rectangular cards have parallel edges; that it appears as if flat on the page.
- » Check that the color looks accurate. Color can vary as a file moves from one computer to the next, so color shifting is a potential drawback to sending a file rather than the original artwork, but at least make sure the scan looks right on your computer to begin with!

Step 4 - Attach the File to an Email:

- » Email to: vampstamp@prodigy.net.
- » Send each art file as an **attachment** to a separate email that has the information below in it. (Do not embed the picture in the email itself.)
- » Double-check that the description for EACH file matches the art file attached to that particular email before you hit send! I've been getting an increasing number of mismatched files and descriptions and it causes a lot of confusion.
- » If you are submitting artwork for a specific challenge, please identify it on the email subject line.
- » When sending multiple cards in a series of separate emails, It is helpful if the subject line and/or a line at the top of the email describes the specific card in some way that helps me later match the artwork to the email description. (It doesn't have to be fancy — it can be “*the green card*” and “*the blue card*” or the “*Wish You Were Here*” card and “*the horse card*” for example.)

The email to which your art file is attached must include:

- » Your name and mailing address.
- » Must identify the contents of the attached file(s).
- » Must include the actual measurements of the original artwork (height, width and depth if appropriate in inches.) Let me know if you reduced the art's height/width (and by how much.)
- » Must include credits for all stamps used. Please credit each stamp individually unless they are all from the same company. It is not necessary to include catalog numbers for each stamp.
- » Must include a supply list. Any supply listed should be mentioned in the directions and vice versa. Do NOT use abbreviations for company names!
- » Must describe how you created your art — especially what materials you used, brand names if applicable, and any special techniques involved. Do not use abbreviations even if you think they are commonly understood by stampers. (For example, use “*embossing powder*”, not “*ep*” and “*cardstock*” and not “*cs*”, etc.)

Can't Get a Large File to Email?

If you have trouble emailing your art file, there are several strategies for dealing with large files:

- » Try attaching only one file to each email you send.
- » Try using computer software like Zip utilities or StuffIt to compress the files to make them smaller for print. I like the StuffIt software myself. It is inexpensive and I have used it for years without problem. It makes your file size smaller and yet it is still easy for the person on the other end to expand it back to regular size whether or not they have the same software.
- » You could also slightly reduce the physical dimensions of the card to make the file smaller. I usually print cards at 70% of the original physical card dimensions. You can reduce the height and width to 70% of the original size — just make sure the resolution remains at 300 dpi! (Example: If your original card is 4" x 6", you could use digital photo editing software like PhotoShop or PhotoShop Elements to reduce it as low as 2.8" x 4.2" (70%). Just BE SURE to let me know if you do this, so I won't reduce it another 70% on top of this!)

» Another option is to save your file as a jpg file instead of a tif file. I will accept jpg files, but tif really is a better format for print. Because jpg files are compressed each time they are saved, the file size can be smaller, BUT information is lost with each jpg save, so the quality is reduced every time you save it. Also, some computer software programs may automatically reduce the resolution if you choose to save as a jpg file (probably because it is assuming that you picked this format for web display and not print.) If you choose to submit a jpg, be sure to check that the resolution stays high and save it only once!

» Finally, if none of this works and you still can't seem to get your file(s) emailed, why not just send the card and descriptive info via regular mail? Then I can do all the scanning or photography for you!

» Some editing programs and/or email programs assume that when you email a file, you want to make it smaller and so they unhelpfully decrease the file resolution. Look for this if your high resolution file turns low resolution when you email it. Some contributors find that using a file compression software like Zip utilities or StuffIt get around this problem.

Step 5 - What Happens Next?

» I will send an email reply after I have opened the attached file and checked the resolution, etc. I rarely have time to open a file the day it is received. It may be a week or even a few weeks before you hear back, so please be patient. Please don't re-send the file unless you've heard back from me that I either never got it the first time or need it sent again for some other reason. If I see a problem with a file, I'll let you know when I reply.

» When will it be run? I try to run stamp art as soon as possible, but it can run several months to a year or more after it is received — especially if it is seasonal or if it uses a technique I'll cover in a future issue or is for a particular challenge. Most artwork sent for a particular challenge is printed in the challenge issue or in the online art gallery for the challenge month.

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This article was written by VSN Editor Nancie Waterman for the use of Vamp Stamp News contributors. You may save and/or print this article for your own personal use. It may not be used for any commercial purpose without the permission of the author. Thank you for sharing your stamp art. Happy stamping!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the name.