



Creating a Planogram Database

Creating a planogram database is perhaps the most difficult part of creating planograms. Once your database is finished, however, it can be maintained with little effort and can provide you with many planograms for years to come.

There are two choices when it comes to creating your product database. You can purchase the information or create it yourself. This manual is for those who desire to create their own product database. You can get very professional results from doing it yourself. If you wish to purchase product data and images, there is a list of suppliers at the end of this document.

Shelf Logic needs only a minimum amount of information in order to create planograms. You'll need the product's UPC Code, and the product's width, height and depth. If you have a photo of the product, it can be used to show the product as it will actually look.

If you already have the product dimensions in another database or file format, you can probably get that information into Shelf Logic. If your database is ODBC compatible or you can put the information into Excel, you can import it into the Shelf Logic database. Proceed to Section 2 to learn more about this.

If you don't have the information, you just use a ruler to measure the product and a digital camera to take pictures of the product.

Section 1. Creating A Product Database

UPC Code

You will need the UPC Code of each item in the database. If you don't have a UPC Code, you can create a fake one, up to 25 characters in length. International items, for example, often don't have UPC Codes.

Each UPC Code, real or fake, must be unique. If you attempt to add an item already existing with the same UPC Code, you will be alerted.

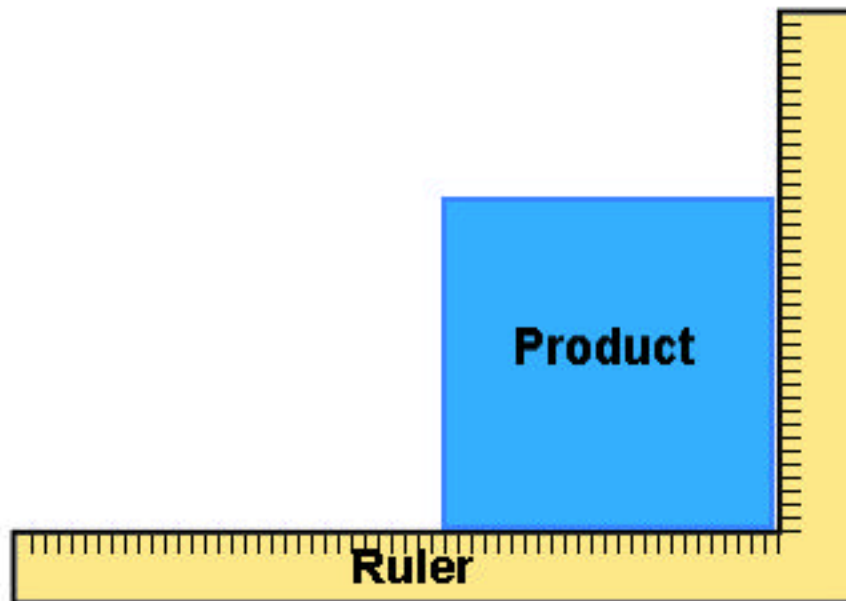
The UPC Code identifies the product in the Shelf Logic database and must be entered.

Product Dimensions

The product width and height are essential. Without them, the product appears as a dot on the Shelf Logic plan. The depth should be entered, but you can create planograms without the depth. It's used for calculating and reporting the quantity of the item on the plan.

Product width, height and depth are measured in inches, or centimeters for metric measurement. You can use a ruler to measure the item. Don't worry about being very accurate. A measurement to the nearest 1/8 of an inch should be fine. In real life, product dimensions will change slightly under different temperature and humidity conditions, or if compressed due to tight packing or stacking.

Here's a tip for doing a quick measurement of the item. If you are taking a photo of the product, then create a photo fixture that has a set of rulers for height and width. See the diagram below to see how this is constructed.



You can get a metal ruler like this at most hardware stores.

When you post-process the photo, you can easily see the measurements and then crop the ruler out of the final photo.

Photo Images

You can use almost any digital camera to take your product photo. Since we recommend the maximum size of a photo should be 400 pixels, any of today's digital cameras will more than do the job in terms of pixels. You do want as sharp an image as possible, so use the highest quality camera with the highest quality lens that you can.

In order to get the best looking photos, there are a few rules you need to follow:

1. Camera Position

Keep the camera at the same level as the product. The camera should be parallel to the face of the product. The idea is that you want the final product image to be rectangular so it fits the product rectangle on the plan.

Putting the product on a table is a good idea. Getting it up to eye level is even better. This lets you shoot directly head on without having to bend down to take the shot. When you look through the viewfinder, the product should look like a rectangle, not a trapezoid. The sides of the product should be straight up and down.

Make sure the top of the product is level with the top of the photo. A tilted product can be fixed in post processing but never looks very good once that's done. So keep the product level. You may need to do a test shot to really see if the camera is level with the surface on which the product is placed.

A tripod is a great idea since once you get the proper camera angle, you can lock it in so each shot is good.

2. Keep the Camera Steady

A tripod is a good idea for another reason. You want the photo as sharp as possible. Making sure the camera doesn't move is vital. And even with a high shutter speed, a tripod still produces superior sharpness.

And speaking of shutter speeds, you should use a high speed if possible. Since depth of field is not important, you can open up the f/stop and increase the shutter speed.

If you are not using a tripod, use at least 150th of a second.

3. Use a Telephoto Setting

Most digital cameras have zoom lenses. Shoot the product photos using the telephoto setting. This gives you a flatter, less distorted image.

With a telephoto setting you need a higher shutter speed or tripod to prevent the camera from shaking.

4. Use Even Flat Lighting

You want the amount of lighting to be even across the face of the product. If the product is lit from above, for example, the top of the product will look lighter than the bottom. It is hard to see this in the viewfinder, you have to view the finished image.

If you want to get fancy, you want diffused lighting coming from both sides. Covering the lights with a diffuser or some sort of fireproof fabric will give you an even light. If you know how to construct a 'light tent', this will give you very even lighting.

Or you can use the flash on your digital camera. Make sure that it doesn't product a bright spot on the front of the product. If you have a detachable flash, you could point it upwards to get softer bounce lighting.

5. Use a White Background

Shoot the product against a white background. This is so that when printing, any excess background won't be printed.

Post Processing

Your digital photos will need some post processing before they can be used. Most image editors can be used. You want the photos to look bright and 'snappy' on the planogram. Keep in mind that each operation that changes the image reduces the quality of the image so try to keep them to a minimum. At a very minimum, you are going to have to do most of the following:

Crop the Photo

You will need to crop the photo to the edges of the product. There should be no space around the photo. This will also let you know how well you did when shooting. If you were level and the product came out as a rectangle, you will be able to tell that when cropping. It will result in no white space and no clipping of the product if it wasn't exactly rectangular. isn't perfect.

Size Your Photo

For most purposes, your photo should be about 400 pixels as the longest side. If you want a very high resolution printout, then 600 to 800 pixels should be used.

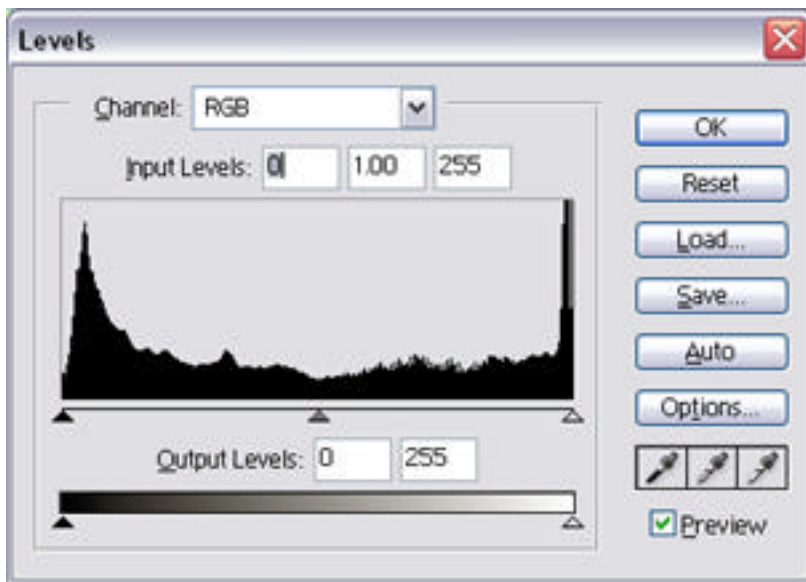
Adjusting Levels

A good photo has a dynamic range going from dark black to bright white. In many cases with digital cameras, particularly in indoor lighting, the dynamic range is compressed so that the whitest white is more like a light gray.

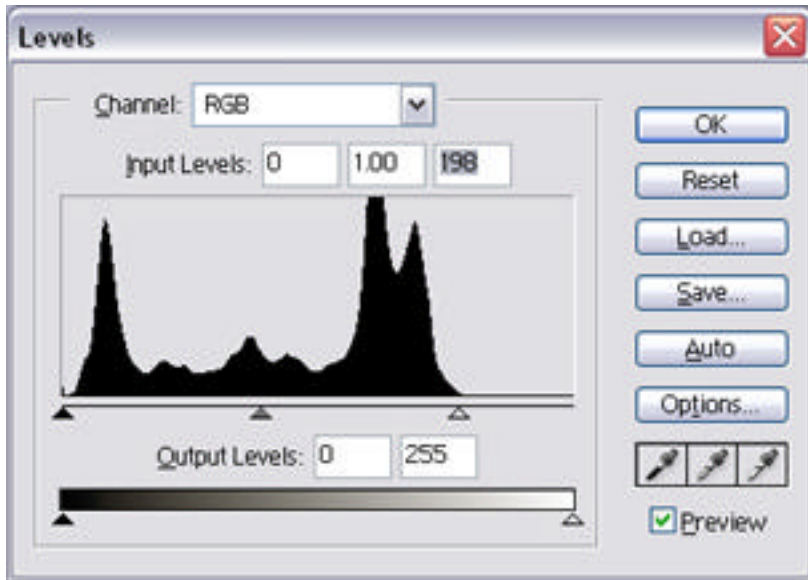
You can adjust the levels and expand the dynamic range so you get bright whites and dark blacks.

Using a program like Photoshop, you can adjust the levels manually or automatically. Try doing it automatically and see if you like the results. Sometimes an automatic leveling can create off-color results.

If you don't like the automatic leveling, do it manually. Here's what's the levels look like in a photo with a good dynamic range.

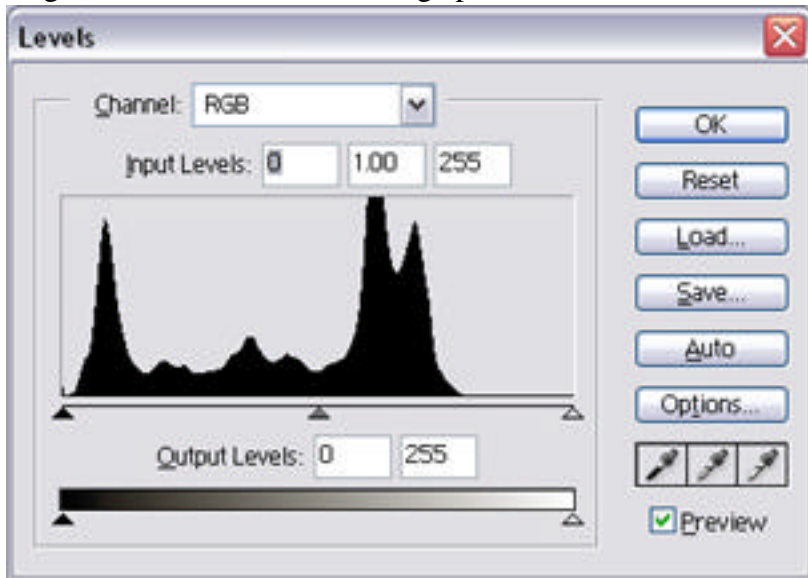


You can see the graph covers the back and white areas from one end of the graph to the other. Here's the graph of levels for a photo that is underexposed and doesn't have the proper levels of white.



The graph shows that the white area of the photo (the right side of the graph) is lacking giving you a photo that looks dark.

You can adjust this by clicking on the triangle under the graph on the right side. Then drag it to the left to the end of the graph area, as shown below:



Then click “OK” and the dynamic range of the photo will be changed. In some cases, this produces a dramatic improvement of the photo.

The middle triangle can be dragged left or right to brighten or darken the photo.

Sharpen the Photo

Many photos can use sharpening. This is also needed if you have reduced the image size. In Photoshop, you would use the unsharp mask feature. Sharpening will also bring out the lettering on the product label.

Once you have established a good setting for the sharpening, you can use it on the rest of the photos, if they have been shot with the same camera using the same setting.

Section 2. Importing the Product Database

Product information can be imported from an Excel spreadsheet or other comma delimited file. The spreadsheet must be in a specific format, with the correct name and number of columns. You can even maintain your database in Excel and then import it into the Shelf Logic database. Shelf Logic uses an Access2000 database, so you can put the data directly into it or hook into an ODBC compliant database to obtain your data.

Data is imported using the "Import" selection from the "File" menu. This same data is exported using the "Export Item File" selection from the "File" menu.

Spreadsheet Format

The easiest way to get the proper format for importing data is to open up one of the sample plans and export the item database. This will create a comma delimited file with a ".CSV" extension. Open this file with Excel and you'll see the proper format. The first row has the field names to guide you. Just delete the data from row 2 on down. Then cut and paste your information column by column. The only information you really need is the UPC Code (or some other unique number), and the product's height, width and depth. With this information, you can create planograms.

One more important piece of information:

The UPC Codes must have an asterisk (*) in front of each one. This preserves leading zeros. The "*" is needed even if the UPC Code has no leading zeros. When the data is imported into Shelf Logic, the "*" is stripped from the UPC Code.

Purchasing Product Information

If you want to purchase product data, there are three companies that can supply this to you. They can be found on our website on the “resources” page. They are listed below:

Gladson Interactive

1973 Ohio Street
Lisle, IL 60532

Contact: Paul Waldron at 630-435-2224

Email: pwaldron@gladson.com

Website: www.gladson.com

SMSB Consulting Group, Inc.

1750 New Highway, Suite 1
Farmingdale, NY 11735

Contact: Alfred Lozito at 631-755-5800

Email: alozito@smsb.com

Website: www.smsb.com

POPMax International

9 Meadow Wood Drive, Suffield, CT, 06078

Contact: Colleen Loveless at 860-668-9701

Email: POPMaxCL@aol.com

Website: www.popmax.com