

FEAR player insignias tutorial

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This tutorial will cover how to make player insignias for FEAR. These insignias are the little icons that float above your head during game play. I have noticed that there is not a lot of bits and pieces of information out there but nothing complete.

To get started I must first tell you what the little insignias really are they are a type of image that resembles icons in nature. They are .dds files which is another form of bitmap. The .dds stands for Direct Draw Surface. Most of us who game know what Direct X is. These file are related to that.

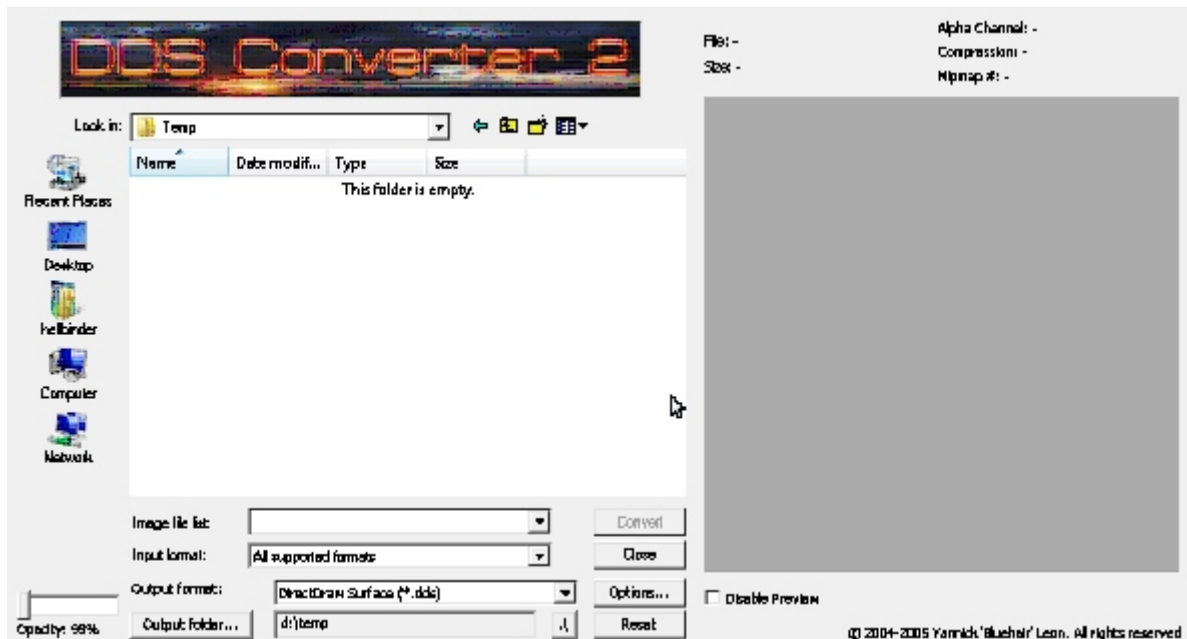
Before you can start making any insignias there are a few programs that you will need. The first program that you will need is a good graphics program. I would suggest Adobe Photoshop or a Corel product. Whatever program you use needs to be able to save images as .jpg or .png. I would not suggest using MS paint it is not the most precise program ever created... You will need this program to create your artwork that you will use for the insignias. Personally I like to use Adobe Photoshop because of it functionality.

The second program that you will need is a DDS converter. There are many out there. What this program does is takes images rather they be in bitmap or .jpg or .png and converts them into .dds files. I personally use DDS Converter 2.1 because it has a simple interface and is easy to use.

The last program you will need is the FEAR public tools 1.08 package. This is a rather healthy program. It weighs in at 640MB. This package contains a bunch of programs that are used to edit maps, models, effects and such. For creating insignias we will only be using the archive edit program. I must warn you that this program pack takes a while to install simply because it has a map editor in it and it unfolds all of its resources...

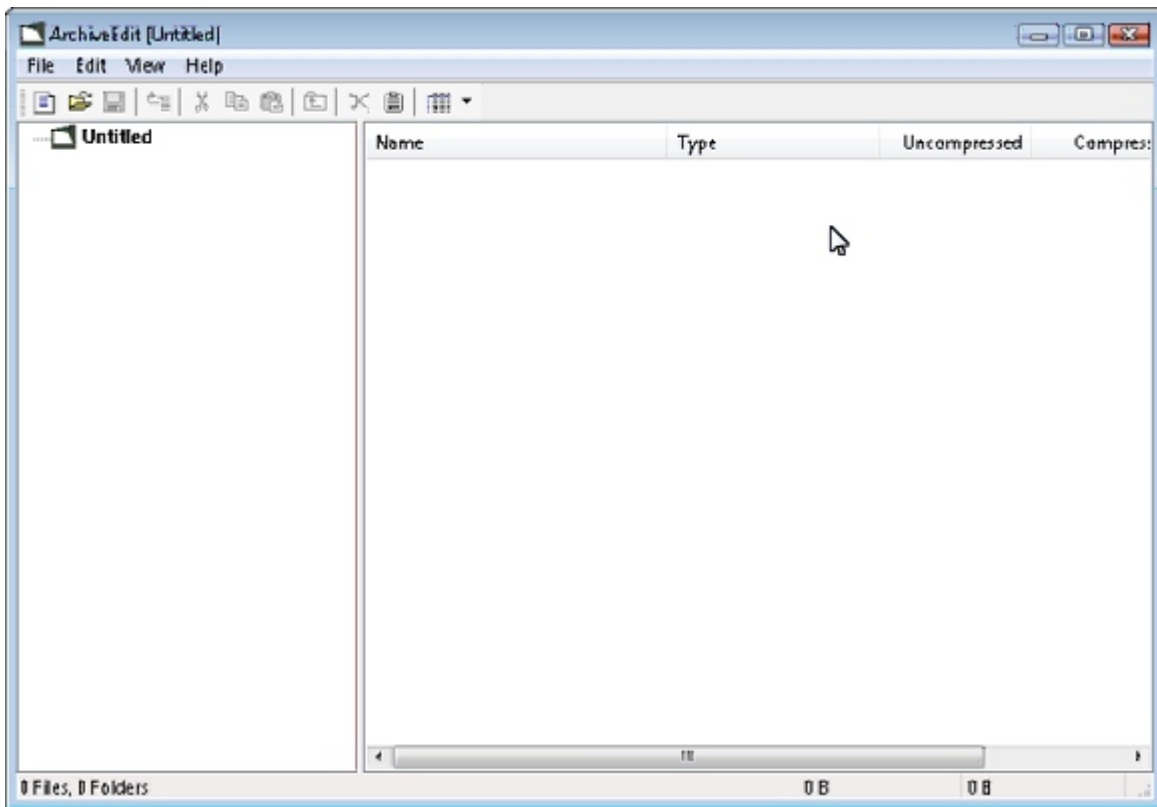
Ok assuming that you have all of the necessary programs you must start creating the artwork that you are going to use for the insignias. There are not to many rules on this except that the artwork must be 128 X 128 pixels. I would suggest RGB color. The image resolution shouldn't go below 96dpi. The image can have any type of background that you want. It can be black, white, or transparent. You can use photo images if you like but the insignias are so small that the detail might not be the best. Vector images seem to work the best in my experience. Another words shapes and text. After you have created the artwork that you would like to use you must save it as a .jpg or .png file. You can use other file types but I wouldn't suggest it. When saving this completed image file make sure you save it to a temp folder of some kind. Also when saving the file make sure the resolution does not change.

Now that you have a completed image file to use you must convert the file to .dds. Open the DDS converter 2 program and you should see a window that looks like the one below.

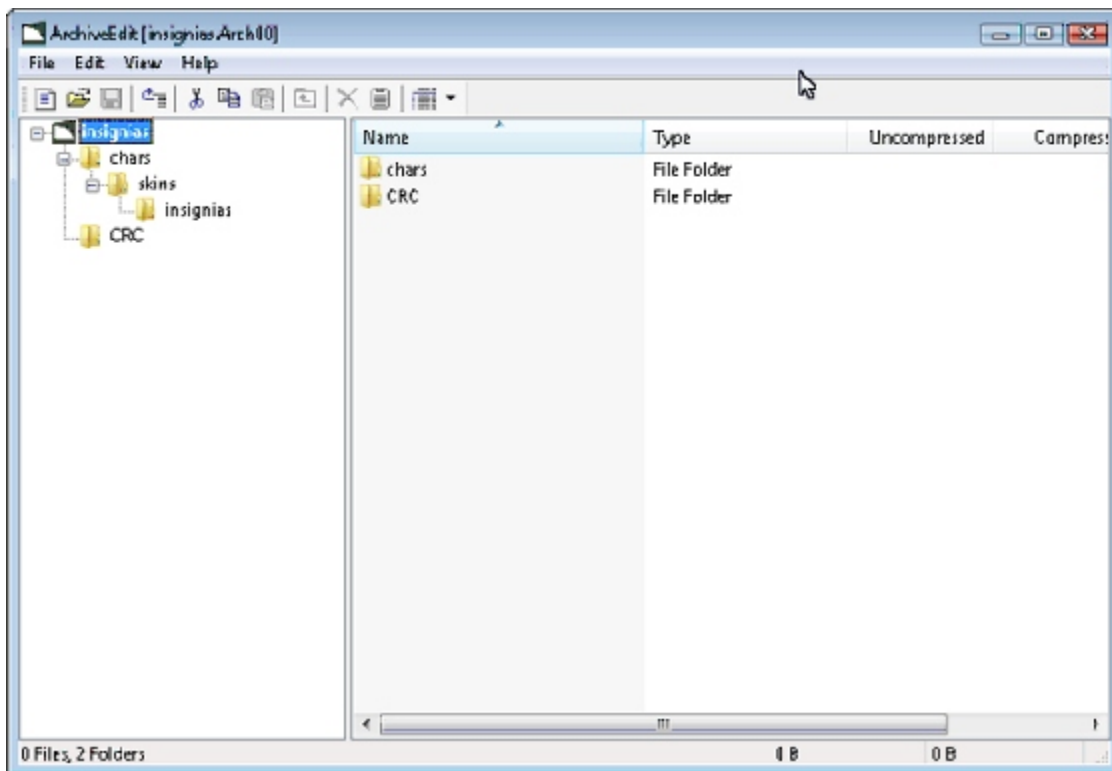


To load your image you must click on the scroll down button at the top where it says Look in: Go to the folder that you saved your image file in and click on the folder you should see your image file name show up in the white window. When you see your image file in the window click on it so that it is selected. Now click on the Output Folder button and a new window will pop up asking you to select an output folder. I would make it the same folder that you loaded your image from to make things simple. Now in the Image file list are you must type the directory of your image file. So if you saved your image to example; c:\temp\image.png that is what you would type into the Image file list box. Now you are ready to convert. Click on the .\ button. Once you do this you will notice that the Convert button is not grayed out any more. Click on the convert button and it will begin to process the image. A new window will show up showing you the status. It will show you when it is done. When it is finished use windows explorer and check the folder that your original image was saved to. You should now see your image file and also a .dds file with the same name. It doesn't matter what you named your original image file but make sure that the .dds file doesn't have any more than eight characters in it. Rename it if necessary.

Now that we have done all that we are ready to add our file to the fear archive so that the game can see it. To do this open the Archive edit program in the FEAR public tools folder. You should see a window like what's shown below.



At the top under the file menu click on save as and in the new window type the name as: “insignias” do not include the quotes. Save this file to a temporary folder. Once you do this you will see that the Untitled name changes to insignias. Now where it says insignias right click on this and you will see in the scroll down menu, click on new folder. Name the new folder “chars” without the quotes. Now put your cursor over the chars folder and right click again and in the scroll down menu click new folder again. Name this folder “skins”. Now do the same thing again on the skins folder and name the new folder insignias. When you are all done you should see a tree of folders in the left window that spans like this:



If you did everything right you should see what's listed. Don't worry about the CRC folder it is suppose to be there. It is very crucial that everything is spelled right or the insignia you create will not show up. Now to add your design you need to open up the file browser such as windows explorer or my computer and go to the temp folder where you saved your original image. That is where you also made the .dds file. You must click on the .dds file and drag it into the DDS Converter window and drop it into the insignias folder. After you do this you will see the .dds image file sitting nicely in the insignias folder. Now go to file and save. You are now done creating your new insignia. You can close all programs now except for the file browser.

Now I will tell you how to add the insignias to FEAR. FEAR has a handy little function built into it that allows you to add stuff to the game. When you install FEAR it creates a folder called additional content. This is where add on or user created files need to go. Where this game folder is created can be different and hard to find with the different operating systems. In windows Vista FEAR creates a folder called:

C:\Users\Public\Documents\Monolith Productions\FEAR\Custom\AdditionalContent

If you are using Windows Vista you would copy and paste the the insignias.Arch00 file into the above folder. If you are using Windows XP you would copy and paste the file to this directory:

C:\Documents and Settings\All Users\Documents\Monolith
Productions\FEAR\Custom\AdditionalContent

For those of you that are using a mod for the fear game such as COOP Warfare you would need to put the insignias.Arch00 file into the mods AdditionalContent folder. This would be true for any mod that you would use with the game that creates a AdditionalContent folder.

Through out this tutorial I have made you save your files to a temporary folder. This is because the insignias.Arch00 file can have insignias added to it later. You can add as many as you want to it. To add to it you simply open it up in the Archive edit program and drag and drop more .dds graphics to it and then re save it. The main reason why I use the temporary is because I have noticed with Windows Vista at least that when you actually save the insignias.Arch00 file to the actual AdditionalContent folder it becomes a pain to remove if needed. It will also not let you re write an existing insignias.Arch00 file. As for Windows Vista this may be due to file permission grants which is quite a hassle with Vista. In order to erase the insignias.Arch00 file from the additional content folder you will have to use the archive edit program. You do this by clicking on the additional content folder in archive edit. You will see the insignias.Arch00 file. Right click on the file and in the scroll down menu option click on delete. This will erase the file and then you are free to copy and paste and insignias.Arch00 file from your temp folder to the additional content folder. It is a good idea the leave a copy of the insignias.Arch00 in a temp folder anyway so that you always have a copy of it. These anomalies that I mentioned above with Vista don't exist with XP that I know of.

To test your new insignias out just simply go into the game and click on client settings and if you do everything right you should see your insignias among the various insignias included. For other people to see your insignia they will have to have the same insignias.Arch00 file on there computer. If you are the one running the server this wont be a problem because when people join your server the file will automatically download to them. If you are just a player you will have to see if the server admin will include your insignia into his server. This isn't a problem if he is already using custom insignias he can just add yours to the insignias.Arch00 file he already has.

I hope that this tutorial was helpful to anyone wanting to make custom insignias.

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