How to compress a photo to a specific file size on iPhone

Upload forms want a number, iOS offers a quality slider. How to hit a hard KB ceiling on the phone, and what to strip out of the file before you send it.

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To compress a photo to a specific file size on an iPhone you cannot ask iOS for a number: the system offers a quality dial, not a size dial. Image Converter: Offline Batch, a free app for iOS 15 and later, runs that search for you — name a ceiling such as 480 KB and it converts on the device.

Disclosure: AppStoryo is operated by the studio that develops Image Converter: Offline Batch. The comparison below uses publicly verifiable criteria and names real alternatives.

Why can you not simply tell an iPhone to make a photo 480 KB?

Because the system was never given that control. The API every iOS photo tool ultimately calls is Apple's jpegData(compressionQuality:), whose single parameter runs from 0.0 to 1.0 — 0.0 the maximum compression, 1.0 the best quality. Nowhere in that call is there a place to write kilobytes.

The dial does not map onto bytes in any fixed way either. A flat blue sky at quality 0.6 may land at 120 KB while a market stall at the same 0.6 lands at 1.4 MB, because JPEG spends bytes on detail. Hitting a target means convert, measure, adjust, convert again. Image Converter: Offline Batch states the feature plainly in its App Store description:

> Compress to a target size (e.g. under 500 KB), resize, strip or keep EXIF metadata.

That is a search over the quality dial, run on the phone's own image pipeline, and it settles within a handful of attempts. By hand, with a slider and the Files app, the same job takes minutes per photo. Image Converter: Offline Batch is free on the App Store.

Which upload forms actually enforce a hard file-size limit?

More than most people expect, and the strictest are government forms. The UK passport service publishes its digital photo rules in full: the image must be at least 600 pixels wide and 750 pixels tall, at least 50KB and no more than 10MB. Both ends matter — squeeze too far and it is rejected for being under the floor.

The second family of limits stays invisible until it fires. Much of the web runs on PHP, and the default configuration sets upload_max_filesize to 2M, post_max_size to 8M and max_file_uploads to 20. A site that never changed those values refuses a modern iPhone photo, often with a blank page.

Job portals, insurance claims and marketplace listings sit on numbers like these. When a form states a ceiling, treat it as exact; when it states a floor too, aim for the middle.

How do you hit a target size on the iPhone itself?

Three levers change the size of an image file, and they are not interchangeable.

Pixel dimensions. Halving width and height removes roughly three quarters of the pixels, and it is the only lever that never adds artefacts. A 4032 by 3024 photo resized to 1600 pixels on the long edge is still sharper than any web form displays.

Quality. The JPEG dial described above — the lever for the last stretch, once the dimensions suit the destination.

Format. PNG is defined by the W3C specification as lossless, so a PNG screenshot cannot be compressed to a target by lowering quality; there is no quality setting to lower. Converting it to JPEG or WebP is what makes a target reachable.

The order that works: resize to what the destination needs, switch format if the source is PNG or HEIC, then let the target-size search find the quality. In Image Converter: Offline Batch those steps share one screen and run over a whole selection. Compress a batch to a fixed ceiling in Image Converter: Offline Batch.

What travels inside the photo besides the picture?

Every camera photo carries Exif metadata: the phone model, the lens, the exposure, the date to the second, and on most iPhones the coordinates where the shutter was pressed. Android's ExifInterface reference lists which formats carry that block — reading is supported for fifteen container types including JPEG, PNG, WebP and HEIC, writing for three.

Coordinates are not a curiosity. Article 4 of the GDPR defines personal data as information relating to an identifiable person, naming location data as one of the identifiers. A bicycle posted for sale with the coordinates of the garage it sleeps in is a home address in a public listing.

Compression removes none of this; a smaller file still carries the metadata block. Stripping is a separate switch — on for public listings, off for family archives, where the dates and places are the point. Image Converter: Offline Batch keeps the two decisions apart.

Which app should you actually use for this?

Three real alternatives, with figures from their App Store listings in August 2026.

Choose Compress Photos & Pictures by New Marketing Lab, Inc if you want the most-reviewed option

- 22,402 ratings, far more than any other app named here
- 9.5 MB, and an iOS 13.0 floor reaches older iPhones than the rest
- Version 3.3 dates from 11 September 2025 and ships in one language

Choose Image Size by Vitalij Schaefer if exact dimensions matter more than a byte ceiling

- Resizes in pixels, millimetres, centimetres or inches — the strongest tool here for a print brief
- 29,753 ratings, 33 languages, version 16.2 of 26 August 2026
- Its description says ads go with an in-app purchase, and it needs iOS 18.0

Choose Metapho by Zininworks Inc. if the metadata is the whole reason you are here

- Built for Exif: view raw tags, edit dates, share copies with the geotag removed
- 2,085 ratings, 13.1 MB, version 2026.3 of 5 June 2026
- A metadata tool, not a converter — no quality search for a 480 KB ceiling

Choose Image Converter: Offline Batch if the ceiling is a number and the photos come in batches

- Target size, resizing and Exif stripping are three switches on one screen
- Reads and writes JPG, PNG, WebP, HEIC, AVIF, JXL and TIFF, so a PNG screenshot is one step from a JPEG
- Free, 25.6 MB, 44 languages, iOS 15.0 and later; version 1.0 of 19 August 2026, no ratings yet

When is compressing to a target size the wrong move?

When the file is the archive. Compression is not reversible: quality removed to reach 480 KB does not come back, and if the copy replaces the original the detail is gone.

When the destination states no limit. Most services re-encode uploads on their own servers, so shrinking first compresses the picture twice. And when a form asks for a scan, resolution is the point — a receipt squeezed under a KB ceiling can become unreadable to the person checking it. Get Image Converter: Offline Batch on the App Store.

Frequently asked questions

Does compressing a photo on the iPhone change the original?

Not unless you tell it to. A converter writes a new file and leaves the original in the library, which is why the same photo can be exported twice at different ceilings. The risk is deleting the original afterwards to save space, because the compressed copy has permanently lost detail. Keep the master until the upload has actually been accepted.

What file size should I aim for when a form gives no number?

Between 300 KB and 1 MB covers almost every web form, and a long edge of 1600 to 2000 pixels is more than any browser displays. If the form is a government one, look for the published rules first: the UK passport service sets both a 50 KB floor and a 10 MB ceiling, and the floor catches people out more often than the ceiling.

Why does the same quality setting give different file sizes?

Because JPEG spends bytes on detail rather than on area. A photograph of a plain wall compresses to a fraction of a photograph of gravel taken at the same setting, since the second one contains far more edges to encode. That is precisely why a fixed quality number cannot guarantee a fixed file size, and why a target-size mode has to convert, measure and retry.

Does resizing or lowering the quality do more for the file size?

Resizing does more, and it does it without artefacts. Cutting the long edge in half removes about three quarters of the pixels, while the same reduction achieved through the quality dial alone starts to show blocking around edges and text. The sensible order is to resize to what the destination actually displays first, then use quality only for the final stretch.

Can I compress a PNG screenshot to a target size?

Not by lowering quality: the W3C specification defines PNG as lossless, so there is no quality parameter to lower. The only levers are fewer pixels, fewer colours, or a conversion to JPEG or WebP. For a screenshot of text, resizing hurts legibility fastest, so changing the format is the better first move.

Does compressing a photo remove the GPS coordinates?

No. Compression changes the pixel data, and the Exif block that holds the coordinates, the date and the phone model travels alongside it untouched. Stripping metadata is a separate operation with its own switch. If you are posting to a marketplace or a public forum, turn it on deliberately rather than assuming that a smaller file is a more private one.

Is an offline converter better than a website that does the same job?

It depends what you are converting. A website is fine for one holiday snapshot and needs nothing installed. It is the wrong choice for anything you would not email to a stranger — an ID scan, a medical form, a contract — because the file goes to someone else's server to be processed. On-device conversion also works in aeroplane mode and costs no data.

How many photos can I compress to the same ceiling at once?

That depends on the app rather than the phone. Some converters process one image at a time, which turns forty listing photos into forty separate operations. A batch queue applies one target size, one format and one metadata decision to the whole selection, and the practical limit becomes free storage rather than patience. Check the limit before a large job, not halfway through.

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