

WS-FTP Help offers this advice:

- A file that is text, HTML, postscript, other ASCII format (.txt, .html, .htm, .cgi), or EBCDIC should be transferred in ASCII mode. Note: Transferring a binary file in ASCII format can damage the file.
- A file that is a bitmap, an executable, or compressed (.bmp, .jpg, .exe, .zip) should be transferred in binary mode. (Binary mode should also be used if there is no file extension or the file extension is not registered.)

Here's a quick overview of files and how they should be transferred:

ASCII		Binary	
.txt	ASCII text	.txt	Unicode text - see note below
.htm .html	HTML Web page	.jpg .jpeg	JPEG image
.xml	Extensible Markup Language	.gif	CompuServe GIF image
.cgi	Common Gateway Interface script	.png	Portable Network Graphics
.pl	Perl scrips <i>must</i> be transferred in ASCII	.bmp	Windows bitmap image
.php	PHP program script	.doc	MS Word or Word Perfect document
.cf	Cold Fusion script	.xls	MS Excel spreadsheet
.svg	Scalable Vector Graphics image	.mdb	Microsoft database file
.asp	MS Active Server Pages script	.exe .com .dll	Executable programs
.rtf	Rich Text Format	.zip	Compressed files
.ps	Postscript files	.pdf	Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Format files

Note about Unicode

Unicode is the system which ultimately will replace ASCII, because it has the potential to include all the characters of all human languages. It can do this because instead of 7 bits it can use 8, 16, or 32. It is still evolving, but more and more programs are coming to use it.

Since it uses all the bits in each byte, it must be transferred in binary mode. Unfortunately, the extension .txt is routinely used for Unicode text files, making it impossible to tell from the extension whether to transfer it in ASCII or binary.