Internet On-Ramp

Powerful Presentations with Microsoft® PowerPoint®

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You're a scientist, not a graphic artist. When you give presentations, appropriate software can help you display your ideas and data attractively, without distracting you with fonts, colors or formats. A presentation can be an on-line projection from a laptop computer, a set of overhead transparencies, 35-mm slides or printed handouts for your audience to use for note taking.

Have you ever seen a presentation in which the slides were too vivid, there were too many fonts on each slide or there was little visual continuity from slide to slide? Have you spent hours talking to your Graphics Production Department, only to be disappointed with the results? Have you printed out a presentation, only to find that having text and backgrounds of similar intensity will cause unreadability when printed in black and white? Presentation software provides tools for quickly creating readable, eye-pleasing presentations and handouts. Several packages are available (see BioBit: Other Commercial Presentation Software); here we focus on Microsoft® PowerPoint®, part of the Microsoft Office™ suite of software available for both Macintosh® and Windows®. Many graphics departments prefer presentation files in PowerPoint format for making 35-mm slides.

Default Visual Style Templates

PowerPoint includes dozens of professionally designed templates for your visual aids. Let's create a simple presentation of four slides: a title slide, a slide with "bullet points", one with clip art and one containing a scanned image.

Look in the Microsoft Office directory or folder for PowerPoint. On the "Create a New Presentation Using" screen, choose "Template". You may have seen slide presentations using PowerPoint's Blue Diagonal template. It has a blue background with diagonal lines, yellow titles and white text. Yellow bullets mark off each text line. Or, choose any of the other attractive (and readable) Presentation Designs. As you select possible templates, a preview slide shows the colors and graphics that template includes. Once you've picked a template, click on APPLY or OK. You can always change your mind later and apply new formatting to your whole set of slides.

Creating Simple Text Slides

On the "New Slide" window, the first AutoLayout format shows a typical title slide: an upper line for the presentation's title and a second line for your name. Click on that first AutoLayout square, then on the OK button. Follow the instructions on this template slide, which is your title slide. First it says "Click to add title". Type the title of your presentation in that box. PowerPoint will automatically wrap your title onto the next line and center the two lines of text. The title is displayed in yellow in the same large font as that instruction at the top of the slide. Below, it says in white "Click to add sub-title". That's where you can type in your name and organization.

To add a second slide, from the horizontal menu bar, choose INSERT then NEW SLIDE. Or, click on the NEW SLIDE button. Choose the second AutoLayout, "Bulleted List". Click in the top box to add a title. Then type in the first topic you would discuss on this slide. Long lines will be automatically wrapped and indented. Pressing the RETURN key adds a new bullet and positions your cursor to start typing text.

If the bulleted topics in your list seem too close together, you can add blank lines by highlighting the text on your slide (by swiping it with the mouse) and choosing FORMAT: LINE SPACING. Type 2 in the line-spacing box for double spacing.

news.group.news

News.group.news goes to cyberspace and back to gather Net news for you. We emphasize practical, methods-related issues that are discussed in many newsgroups and also feature issues of general interest to biological scientists. But be warned! On this page of *BioTechniques*, we don't *review* it — we just *report* it!

Inhibition of transformation—in the absence of detectable problems with restriction digestions, dephosphorylation or ligation—may be due to contaminants in your agarose. Netters advise switching to a high grade of low-melting-point agarose if your cloning procedure suffers from these symptoms.

Seeking a **potent RNase-inhibiting agent** for use during extraction of mRNA from soil bacteria, one netter was advised to try ATA, originally described for this purpose in R.B. Hallick, B.K. Chelm, P.W. Gray and E.M. Orozco, Jr., 1977, Use of aurintricarboxylic acid as an inhibitor of nucleases during nucleic acid isolation, *Nucleic Acids Res.* 4:3055-3064.

Apoptosis or necrosis—can't tell the difference? Check out the Web site of the Cell Death Society at www.celldeath-apoptosis.org for these definitions and other fun facts.

Fading fast? To reduce fluorescence quenching during microscopy, try antifade agents *n*-propyl gallate (5% in glycerol) or *p*-phenylenediamine (as described in G.D. Johnson and G.M. Nogueira Araujo, 1981, A simple method of reducing the fading of immunofluorescence during microscopy, *J. Immunol. Methods* 43:349-350).

BioTechniques Editorial Department

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BioBit: On-line Resources for Microsoft PowerPoint

The PowerPoint home page has extensive tips and tutorials:

<http://www.microsoft.com/powerpoint/>

Internet Assistant for PowerPoint95 converts presentations to HyperText Markup Language (HTML) (Windows 95® only). Internet publishing is built into PowerPoint97 and will be included in the next Macintosh version. A nice example output presentation is called "Tips for Effective Presentations": <http://www.microsoft.com/office/mspowerpoint/internet/ia/>

Free PowerPoint viewers:

Windows: <http://www.microsoft.com/office/mspowerpoint/internet/viewer/>

Macintosh (Version 2.0, 3.0 and 4.0 .PPT files): http://www.microsoft.com/macoffice/work_ppt_fs.htm

The double-triangle icons on the lower right enable you to progress forward or backward within your slide presentation.

Clip Art and Images

PowerPoint comes with a library of colorful clip art to enliven your presentations. Insert a third slide that will include clip art. Choose the "Text and Clip Art" AutoLayout. Put in a title, then double-click on the clip art placeholder. Choose the *Science & Medicine* category. If you scroll down, you'll find that the second to the last graphic is a DNA helix. Or, choose *Academic* and scroll down to find clip art of test tubes or a microscope. Click on an item to include it on your slide, then click on OK. Fill out the left side of the slide with the same types of bulleted text you used on the second slide.

Our fourth and final slide will include an image file (in PICT, TIFF, GIF etc. format), which you have already scanned into your computer—perhaps a Western blot or a protein gel. Insert a new slide, then choose the "Bulleted List" AutoLayout. Type in a title, then click in the "Click to add text" box. Instead of adding text, go to the horizontal menu bar, choose INSERT then PICTURE. Use the downward triangle to locate the file folder containing your image file, then click on INSERT. You can drag handles on the sides and corners of the image to resize it.

You can insert any image you find on the Internet (with due respect to copyrights). For biological clip art, see the archive at the Texas Agricultural Extension Service (<http://leviathan.tamu.edu:707c/clipart/>)

Outline

The VIEW submenu has five choices: *Slide View*, *Outline*, *Slide Sorter*, *Notes Page* and *Slide Show*. So far, you've been in *Slide View*. Views can also be changed using the five icon buttons at the bottom left of the slide.

Outline displays your slides as text, with no color or graphics. A great way to start a new presentation is to create an outline for your speech by first listing your major topics then filling in subtopics. PowerPoint automatically creates a basic slide for each of your major topics, with the subtopics listed as bullet points. You can then add clip art or images.

Slide Sorter

Slide Sorter displays miniatures of your slides. Drag them to new locations to change the order.

This view also allows you to specify special effects for on-line presentations. Have you seen presentations where the bullets are revealed one by one? That is done using a *Build Effect* from the menu under the downward triangle next to *No Build Effect*. You can also choose how subsequent slides are placed over prior

BioBit: Some Biomedical Slide Presentations on the Web

Immune system and respiration slides by Miriam Ashley-Ross, Wake Forest University: <http://www.wfu.edu/~rossma/bio112/>

Photosynthetic Carbon Assimilation by Harry Roy at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute: http://www.rpi.edu/dept/bio/info/Genetics_Notes/carbon/sld001.htm

Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory slides (plus photo archive): <http://www.lbl.gov/image-gallery>

slides. The default is *No transition* style, which is like a slide projector. However, you could choose a more cinematic transition, such as having the second slide cover up the first like a window shade or wipe over it from left to right. Experiment with different transitions from the menu next to the *No transitions* default.

Notes Page

Notes Page lets you write notes for yourself that are associated with a slide, but the audience will not see them.

Slide Show

To view the special effects you selected in the *Slide Sorter*, click on the *Slide Show* icon, which looks like a projection screen. Move forward through your slide show with the arrow keys or by hitting the space bar. Move backward with the left arrow. Press the ESC key to exit.

Before You Print

You can easily change template styles for different media: slides, transparencies or handouts. Rich colors make lively computerized presentations and 35-mm slides. However, colored overhead transparencies are easier to read with light backgrounds, and printed handouts are typically black and white.

The FILE: PRINT screen has a "Print What?" choice. You can print your outline form, a single sheet with all your slides, notes pages or audience handouts with two, three or six slides per page. You can also choose to print B&W audience handouts by checking a box on the Print screen.

PowerPoint on the Internet

Computer files with the extension .PPT contain PowerPoint presentations and can be found on many Internet sites. These can be opened in PowerPoint or in the free PowerPoint viewer (see BioBit: On-Line Resources for Microsoft PowerPoint). With PowerPoint97 (or using an Internet Assistant for PowerPoint95), you can export your files as Web pages so they can be viewed in a regular browser.

BioBit: Other Commercial Presentation Software

Corel Presentations (in the WordPerfect™ Office Suite): <http://www.corel.com/products/wordperfect/cp8/index.htm>

The "Show-It!" browser plug-in lets you save and view Corel Presentations on the Web (Windows 95 and NT™ only).

Lotus Freelance graphics: <http://www.lotus.com/home.nsf/tabs/freelance>

Web Screen Show Player is a Windows plug-in/ActiveX control. There is also a Freelance Mobile Screen Show Player for Windows.

ClarisWorks: <http://www.claris.com>

This multifunction software comes preinstalled on many Macintoshes and is also available for Windows. It can present on-screen slide shows.