

By Susan Sales Harkins

PowerPoint is a powerful presentation package, but most of us don't use it often enough to learn its many timesaving tricks. The good news is that you don't have to be an expert to get more mileage out of PowerPoint features. Here's a look at some of the shortcuts and tricks you can use to put PowerPoint to work for you.

1 If you don't like the design, pick another

You can build a presentation from scratch, but most of the time a design template is more than adequate. These templates apply consistent design and formatting attributes from the first slide to the last. Click the Slide Design button on the Formatting toolbar to open the Slide Design task pane to get started. (In PowerPoint 2007, choose a design template from the Design group.)

You're not stuck with a design once you choose it. At any time, even after the presentation is complete, you can choose another design. Simply select the one you want; you won't lose any content.

You can also change the design for only selected slides, without actually removing the template from your presentation. In the Slide pane or Slide Sorter View, select the thumbnails that represent the slides you want to change. Next, click on the drop-down arrow beside the desired design in the Apply A Design Template list and choose Apply To Selected Slides. (There's no drop-down arrow in PowerPoint 2007; just right-click on the design.) PowerPoint will immediately update the selected slides.



2 Hone for focus

Resist the urge to crowd as much text as you can onto a single slide. If a busy slide doesn't overwhelm your audience, it will most certainly distract them. Instead of listening to you, they'll read ahead.

Once you have a rough draft of your presentation, review it with the following goals in mind:

- ◆ Replace complete sentences with key words and phrases
- ◆ Get rid of unnecessary clip art
- ◆ Remove punctuation

By following these steps, you may reduce content by as much as half, and your presentation will be more focused.

3 Don't forget *The end!*

When you come to the end of your presentation, what comes next? If you click out of Slide Show View, your audience will get a behind-the-scenes peek at your work, and you probably want to avoid that. Instead, end your presentation with a slide that maintains the presentation's master slide details but displays a simple message such as *Thank you for your support* or *Thank you for coming*.

Of course, the end slide doesn't have to display a message. A blank slide might be adequate. You might even consider combining two end slides: Display a short thank you, or otherwise appropriate message, and follow it with a blank slide. That way, if you click out of the message slide, you're still covered.

Professional presentations include a slide dedicated to ending the presentation. It protects you and cues your audience.

4 Create your own AutoContent template

The AutoContent Wizard is a great place to start when you're not sure what a presentation should cover. This wizard creates a new presentation using built-in templates, and you can customize the results.

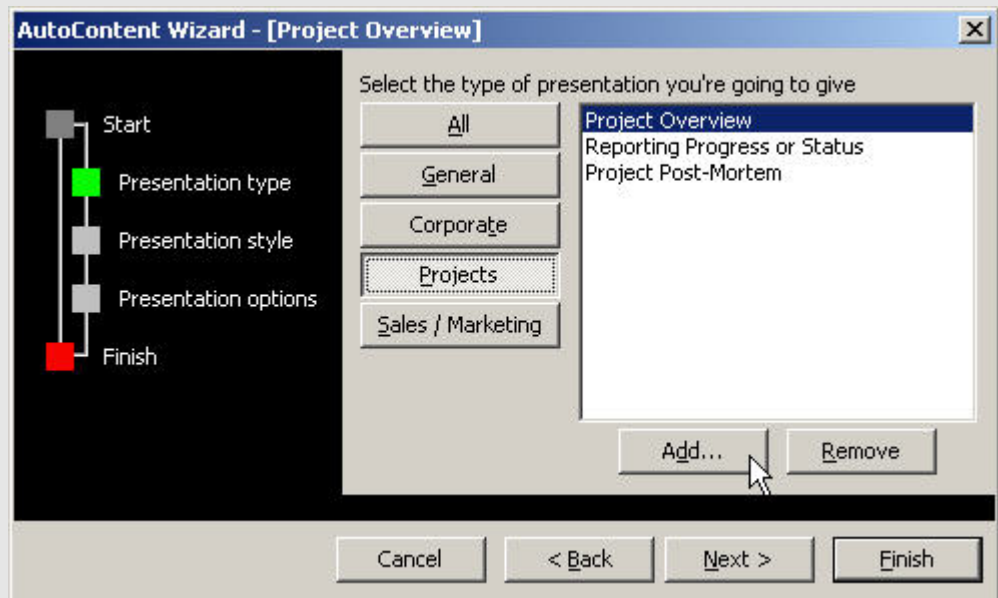
What you might not know is that you can add an existing presentation to the AutoContent Wizard's library. To do so, complete the following steps:

1. Launch the wizard by choosing New from the File menu.
2. Click the From AutoContent Wizard link in the New Presentation task pane.
3. Click Next in the wizard's first pane.
4. Choose the most appropriate content template category and click Add.
5. Locate your presentation file and click OK.
6. Quit the wizard.

At this point, the presentation you added is available to use as a content template. Don't let a good, generic presentation go to waste. Most likely, you'll have to customize it, but that's true of any content template you choose.

The AutoContent Wizard isn't available in PowerPoint 2007. Instead, use a themed template. Choose File from the Office menu and select New to get started.

Microsoft offers [more free templates](#).



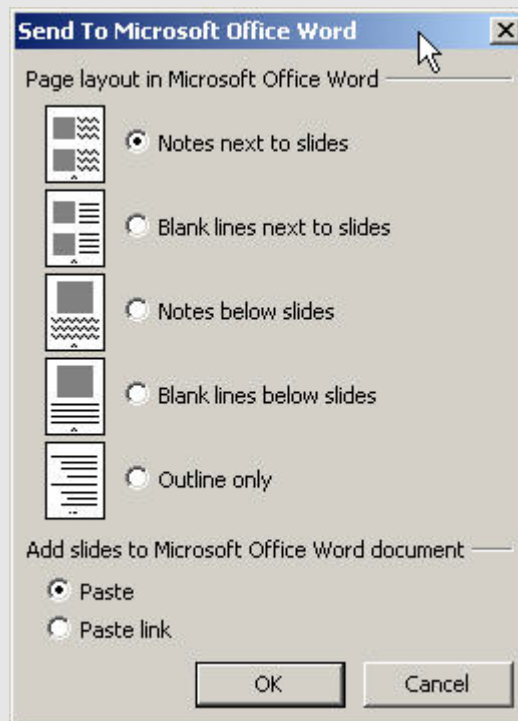
5 Send a presentation to Word

PowerPoint can print views, but you can't modify the results much. For instance, you can print handouts or even individual slides, but PowerPoint just prints a hard copy of your exact slides. If you want to enhance or format handouts, send the presentation to Word, which offers more flexibility. To do so, complete the following steps:

1. Choose Send To from the File menu.
2. Select Microsoft Office Word from the resulting submenu.
3. In the Send To Microsoft Office Word dialog, choose one of the many send options. The Outline Only option sends only the content.
4. Click OK.
5. Once your content is in Word, you can apply formatting and printing options that aren't available to you in PowerPoint.

In PowerPoint 2007, you use the Publish command to send content to Word. Choose Publish from the Office menu and then choose Create Handouts In Microsoft Office Word.

When you do supply handouts, consider handing them out at the end of the presentation instead of at the beginning. Some people will pay more attention to your handouts than your presentation.



6 Reverse those points

You probably know that you can display bullet points one at a time by choosing an animation scheme in the Slide Design task pane. Specifically, choose Fade In One By One from the Subtle section. What you might not know is that you can display bullet points in reverse order. The easiest way to reverse point order is to choose Show In Reverse in the Moderate section of the Animation Scheme task pane.

It's a good idea to spend some time viewing all of the Animation Scheme options. It won't take long, just a few minutes. Being familiar with all the effects is the key to using each appropriately. In addition, where animation is concerned, less is better than more—go easy and use animation only when you have a specific reason to and not just because you like a particular scheme.

You'll find animation options on PowerPoint 2007's Animations tab in the Animations group. Use the Animate drop-down list to choose the desired effect. The interesting advantage in 2007 is that as you choose an effect, PowerPoint displays it, so you can see it at work before you select it.

7 Beware of busted GIFs

PowerPoint 2000 was the first version to support animated .gif files, but the viewer didn't. (PowerPoint Viewer is a support application that lets others view your PowerPoint presentation, even if they don't have PowerPoint installed locally.) Unfortunately, the older viewers don't support .gif files. This limitation has the potential to spoil your otherwise flawless presentation.

The good news is that more recent viewers *do* support .gif files. In fact, they offer full-feature support all the way back to PowerPoint 97. If you're still using an older version of PowerPoint—97, 2000, or XP—the latest viewers will run your presentations, .gif's and all. Microsoft offers [a list of the different PowerPoint Viewer versions](#).

8 Reverse slide print

Most printers allow you to print in reverse, but you can't always get to individual printer options—especially with networked printers that are configured for all users by an administrator. If printing options are limited, you can still have PowerPoint print your slides in reverse order, with or without help from your printer:

1. Choose Print from the File menu. (In PowerPoint 2007, choose Print from the Office menu.)
2. Click the Slides option in the Print Range section.
3. Enter the range of slides in reverse order. For instance, if you want to print slides 1 through 10 in reverse order, enter 10-1 instead of 1-10. It's an easy solution to implement.

PowerPoint will remember this setting until you change it or exit the presentation. Even if your printer has a reverse option available, you might find the PowerPoint route easier to take if you consistently print the same range of slides during the same work session, as your printer might not remember the setting.

9 Reduce file size

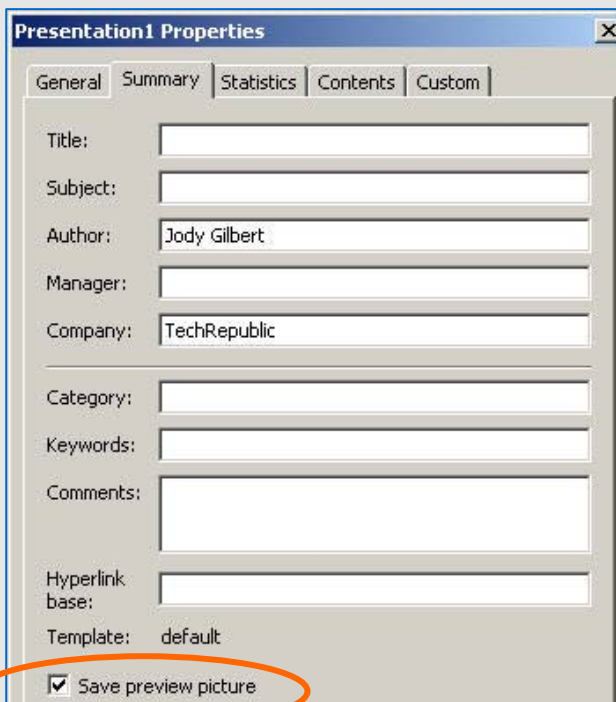
PowerPoint files can be huge. If you send them via e-mail, you might find it takes a while to upload and download a presentation, especially if you or a recipient is still using a dial-up connection.

You probably use special software to compress the file before sending. You can also reduce the size of the original file by deleting the slide thumbnails. To do so:

1. Choose Properties from the File menu.
2. Click the Summary tab.
3. Deselect the Save Preview Picture check box at the bottom of the dialog box and click OK.

Doing this will save a huge hunk of KBs, even before you compress the file. If you disable the thumbnails, you can't preview the file in the Open dialog box, but that seems like a small tradeoff for the KB savings.

This option is harder to find in PowerPoint 2007. From the Office menu, choose Prepare and then Properties. From the Document Properties drop-down list, choose Advanced Properties to find the Summary tab. You'll still save some space, but not as much.



10 Control the pointer from the keyboard

During a slide show, PowerPoint hides the pointer five seconds after you display each slide, and then it disappears. When you click to view the next slide, the pointer becomes visible for another five seconds. You can control pointer display by clicking the icon in the bottom-left corner of the screen, but that's a bit distracting in the middle of a presentation. Instead, consider controlling pointer visibility from the keyboard:


- ◆ Ctrl + H hides the pointer immediately.
- ◆ Ctrl + A displays the pointer immediately.

Once you use Ctrl + A to display the pointer, it's fixed. There's no five-second delay. You must use Ctrl + H if you want it to go away.

About the author

Susan Sales Harkins is an independent consultant and the author of several articles and books on database technologies. Her most recent book is *Mastering Microsoft SQL Server 2005 Express*, with Mike Gunderloy, published by Sybex. Other collaborations with Gunderloy are *Automating Microsoft Access 2003 with VBA*, *Upgrader's Guide to Microsoft Office System 2003*, *ICDL Exam Cram 2*, and *Absolute Beginner's Guide to Microsoft Access 2003*, all published by Que. Currently, Susan volunteers as the Publications Director for [Database Advisors](#). You can reach her at ssharkins@gmail.com.

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