

# How do I... Add music and narration to a PowerPoint presentation?

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The best presentations engage the audience using a number of creative tools. Sound effects, such as music and voice recordings can mean the difference between a good presentation and an outstanding presentation. You can energize your audience with a quick tempo, play your company's latest jingle, or add narration to an on-demand presentation. At the very least, you can play music at the beginning and ending of a presentation as the audience enters and leaves the room. The only limits are good taste and your imagination.



*This blog post is also available in PDF form as a TechRepublic download.*

## About sound files

Microsoft PowerPoint supports media clips, which include sound and video files. The computer playing your presentation will need a sound card and speakers. That doesn't mean just the system you use to create the presentation, but any system on which you might play the presentation. Today, most systems come with everything you need, but older systems might need an upgrade. (It's highly unlikely that you'll encounter such an old system, but don't rely on that — check it out first!)

**Table A** lists the media files PowerPoint supports, although this article deals only with sound files.

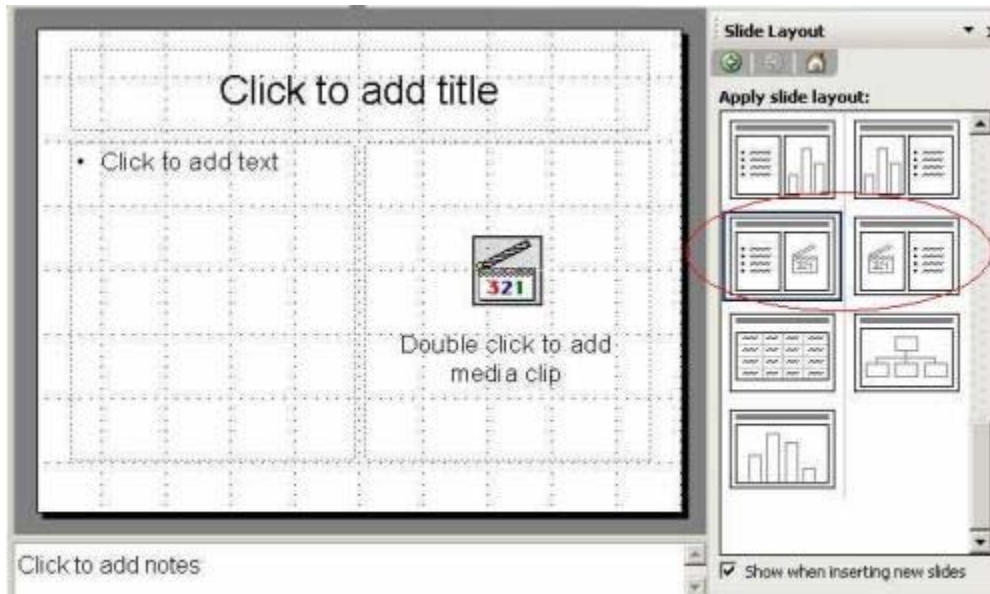
### Table A: Media support

Like most special effects, sound can catch the attention of your audience and convey a message or emotion in a way words or pictures can't. On the other hand, used poorly, sound can be distracting or even annoying. As always, your purpose will determine how much, if any, sound your presentation needs.

## The basics — inserting sound

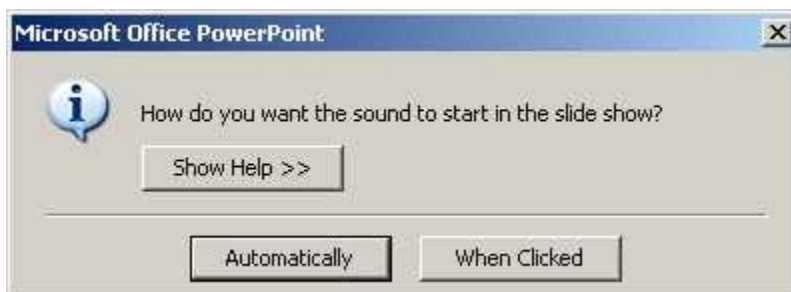
Including sound is as simple as selecting a file:

Use existing clips by double-clicking one of the Title, Text and Media Clip layouts from the Slide Layout task pane. Double-click the media clip icon shown in **Figure A** to launch the Media Clip dialog box.

**Figure A**

Choose a media slide from the Slide Layout task pane

When you double-click a WAV or MIDI file, PowerPoint displays the prompt shown in **Figure B**. The options Automatically and When Clicked are self-explanatory.

**Figure B**

PowerPoint will play the sound file when the slide is current, or you can click the icon to play it

Work with unique sound files by choosing Movies and Sound from the Insert menu and then selecting Sound From File or Sound From Clip Organizer. You can also record sound or play a track from a CD. After selecting a file, PowerPoint prompts you to specify how to execute the file (see Figure B).

If PowerPoint doesn't support a clip's format, choose Object from the Insert menu and choose the appropriate object type. Alternately, you can convert the file to a supported type. Use a search engine to search for "video file conversion." However, don't be surprised if the converted file is less than satisfactory. It's difficult to maintain quality when converting media files.

In PowerPoint 2007, you'll find the Sound option in the Media Clips group on the Insert tab.

PowerPoint displays a sound clip as a small icon, which shows during Slide Show view. When the presentation plays the clip automatically, you might want to hide the icon. There's really no good reason to display it.

To hide the icon, right-click the icon and choose Edit Sound Object from the resulting submenu. In the Sound Options dialog box, shown in **Figure C**, check the Hide Sound Icon During Slide Show option, and click OK. Double-click the icon in PowerPoint 2007 to find these options.

**Figure C**



**Edit the file's attributes**

If you choose the click option, it's worth mentioning that clicking the icon a second time doesn't disable the sound — the file plays from beginning to end once you click it. In PowerPoint 2007, clicking the icon restarts the file.

To learn just how long a file lasts, right-click the icon and choose Edit Sound Object. The file's playing time is in the Information section at the bottom (see Figure C). If you want the file to play continuously, while the slide is current, check the Loop Until Stopped option. Moving to the next or previous slide will cancel the loop.

## Narrating a presentation

To record a unique sound or message, you'll need a microphone. Unfortunately, some microphones that come with today's systems aren't very sophisticated. If you record someone talking, it may sound distorted when played. Suddenly, you may have a lisp or an accent! Specialized software can clear up some problems, but they're expensive and that's just one more piece of software you'll have to learn. It might be more efficient to invest in a better microphone.

PowerPoint makes it easy to narrate a presentation, which is a plus in a Web-based, automated, or on-demand presentation. You might also use this feature to include a statement from an individual, such as a celebrity or your company's CEO.

Don't jump right into recording. First, write a script and rehearse it. Once you're comfortable with your speaking part, you can record your narration:

Choose Record Narration from the Slide Show menu to open the Record Narration dialog box. In PowerPoint 2007, this option is in the Set Up group on the Slide Show tab.

Click Set Microphone Level to check your microphone. Read the sentence that appears in the Microphone Check dialog and let the Microphone Wizard adjust your microphone automatically. Click OK.

If you need to adjust the quality to CD, radio, or telephone, click Change Quality to open the Sound Selection dialog box. Just remember that quality increases the file's size. If file size is a concern, you may have to compromise quality just a bit.

By default, PowerPoint stores the narration with the presentation. To store the sound file in a separate WAV file (in the same folder) check Link Narrations In. Click Browse to change the location of the separate WAV file, but use caution when doing so — only store the two separately when you have a good reason for doing so. If a sound file is over 50MB, you must link it.

Click OK and start recording. As PowerPoint displays your presentation, you narrate just as you want the message played. Continue to narrate each slide until you're done.

At the end of the presentation, PowerPoint will prompt you to save the timings with each slide. This can be helpful if you didn't get each slide just right and you need more practice.

Step five mentions linked files. If you're using the same system to both create and show the presentation, linked files are fine, but not necessary. Linked files are a good choice if the sound files are large or if you plan to change the source file. By default, PowerPoint automatically links sound files that are larger than 100KB.

To change this setting, choose Options from the Tools menu, and then click the General tab and update the Link Sounds With File Size Great Than option. PowerPoint 2007 users will find this option by clicking the Office button, clicking the PowerPoint options button (at the bottom right) and then choosing Advanced. The option is in the Save section.

Use the Package for CD (PowerPoint 2003) or Pack And Go Wizard (PowerPoint 2002) to make sure you save linked files with the presentation. Names can be problematic: A linked file's path name must be 128 characters or less.

## More options

Narration is only one type of recording you might consider. If you can record it, you can include it in your presentation. To record a single message or unique sound, choose Movies and Sound from the Insert menu and choose Record Sound. In PowerPoint 2007, this option is in the Sound option's dropdown list, in the Media Clips group on the Insert tab.

In the resulting Record Sound dialog box shown in **Figure D**, enter a description and name. Click Record when you're ready to begin. Click Stop when you're done. Use Play to listen to the new recording. Click OK to save the sound with the presentation. Or, click Cancel to exit and try again. If you save a sound, it appears as an icon, which you can use anywhere in the presentation you like. Mix this capability with action settings for a unique effect. Just don't over do it!

## Figure D



You can record sounds inside PowerPoint

## Playing a CD

Playing music is a great way to begin or end a presentation. However, the music doesn't have to be a top 10 tune. It only needs to be appropriate. For example, you might play Mendelssohn's Wedding March if your presentation is about catering receptions. Or, pleasing dinner music might be the way to go. It's really up to you; just keep your audience in mind. To include a song from a CD, do the following:

Insert the CD.

From the Insert menu, choose Movies and Sound. Then, select Play CD Auto Track to open the Insert CD Audio dialog box. In PowerPoint 2007, choose Play CD Audio Track from the Sound option's dropdown list. You'll find this option in the Media Clips group on the Insert tab.

The Start At Time and End At Time fields let you capture just part of a track instead of using the entire track.

Use the Sound Volume button to control the audio's volume.

Check the Hide While Not playing option in the Display Options section if you don't want the audio's icon to show when the music isn't playing.

Click OK when you're done. PowerPoint lets you play the track by clicking or displaying the slide.

Like other sound files, Power Point displays a CD icon on the current slide. Just be careful that you don't violate any copyright laws when including someone else's music in your presentation.

## A word on animation

You can use custom animation to control sound files to add a unique and creative dimension to your presentation. To get started, select a sound icon and display the Custom Animation task pane. PowerPoint offers a ton of options, and does a good job of disabling inappropriate choices for the selected clip.

Creating custom animation can be complicated and the truth is most presentations won't need that much energy. However, the feature's there and you might as well learn a bit about it. There's an entire tab dedicated to animation in PowerPoint 2007. Click the Custom Animations option in the Animations group to create custom effects.

## Design for effect

Multimedia files can liven up any presentation and sound is definitely part of that mix. You can play an appropriate tune or your company's jingle. With one click, you can play your company's latest radio ad for the head honchos. Whether you're pitching a new product or sharing photos of your new baby, use sound to set the mood.

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