

Building a Poster

Using PowerPoint

A Guide for Using PowerPoint to Present Your Research as a Large-format Poster

1: Know your story.

What is the main information you want to tell? In the short time someone stands in front of your poster, what do you want them to learn? The title should reflect the story being told and the poster should include only what supports that story. Knowing the story you want to tell helps you edit. If you are unsure of your story, the audience will be too.

2: Know your audience.

Knowing your audience helps you choose the best way to reach them, and the best language to use. Are they from your own field or the general public? Do acronyms need to be defined? If many languages are spoken, consider less text and more pictures to communicate your story. Remember, some images or words may be offensive to some audiences.

3: Think about how you are going to use the poster.

You are making a visual tool to convey information to an audience. Before you begin designing this tool, consider its use.

- Where will the poster be used? How close will the reader be to it?
- How much space is available (or allowed) to display the poster?
- Will it stand alone or will you be there to add to its content?
- Does it need contact information? Website? Phone number? Email?
- Will you use it in more than one situation? If so, consider changes to the content or size to accommodate more than one use.
- Did someone give you assistance with, or funding for, your research? You may want to include an acknowledgment.

4: Sort everything into main categories.

Before opening PowerPoint, gather everything you *think* you want on the poster. This is the time to edit! Ask yourself, “Is it necessary? Does it help tell my story?” If the answer is “Not really”, don’t use it.

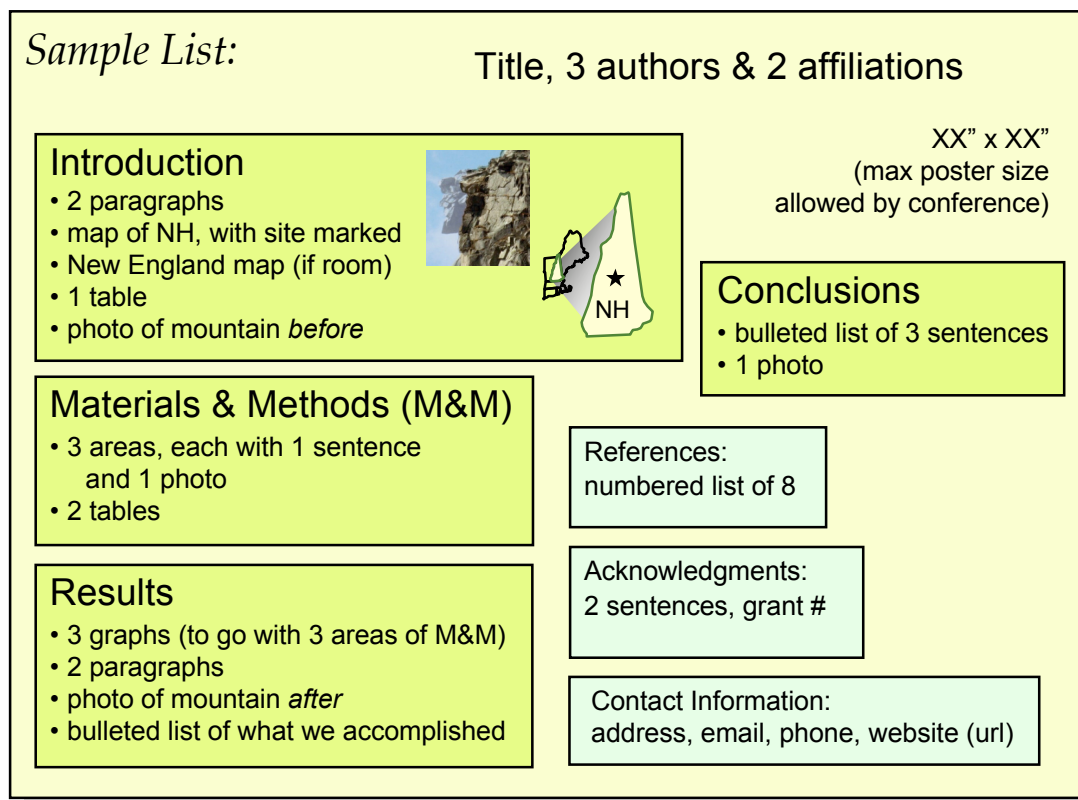
Sort everything into 3-5 main categories (3-5 is just a guideline, every poster is unique).

Note: References and acknowledgments are not main categories.

5: Make a list of the categories and their content.

This is not a design, but a listing of what goes with what, notes about size requirements, and/or a reminder of parts you need to obtain to make a category more complete. You will refer to it often as you bring text and images onto the poster.

Keep graphics near related text. If the text refers to “Figure 1”, place the figure nearby and give it a title. If a table is used, place it where the viewer will find it useful and give it a title; this can eliminate both the need to call it “Figure 1” or “Table 1” and extra words used to describe where it is. *Don’t expect the reader to hunt for anything; chances are, they won’t.*



Note: The four categories in this sample, Intro, M&M, Results, Conclusions, are of equal importance; the body text (main paragraphs) will have the same point size and font style; and the point size and font style used for subheadings will be consistent. This consistency helps the viewer quickly find the categories and navigate through the poster. References, acknowledgments, and contact information are less important, so a smaller point size can be used for text and titles.

6: Review your list and edit more.

The goal of the poster design is to make the information easy to grasp. Anything that does not aid that process is distracting. Unnecessary words are like boulder fields to climb through. Make the path easy and the viewers will read; your information will reach someone.

Avoid a poster that is all text; remember, you are making a visual tool!
Photos communicate immediately; a strong image can bring people to your poster.
The audience is standing (not sitting to read a journal article); they may only stand in front of your poster for a minute or two - make it easy!

Print out a sample of your text at 28-30pt to get an idea of the space it will occupy on the poster. Edit!

7: Begin.

1) Open PowerPoint (PPT).

MAC '04 & '08 and PC '03:

>File >New >Blank Presentation >Slide layout; choose the empty box (Blank).
Go to File >Page Setup, select "Custom."

PC '07:

Office Button (upper left of screen); choose New; choose Blank; click "Create" (lower right corner of screen). Go to the "Design" tab; choose "Page Setup" (left side on ribbon).

2) Both MAC & PC, all versions:

Once you have chosen "Custom" (the default is "On-screen"), type dimensions.
PPT allows a maximum of 56" x 56"; however, many large format printers are 44" or 36" wide (not 56"), so the largest PPT poster would be 44" (or 36") x 56" (either vertical or horizontal format). Check with the printer to be sure the poster you create can be printed without reducing it to fit the paper.

Close other windows (outline, layout) to give yourself the most room to work.

NOTE: When using PowerPoint for posters, know that you are making a presentation of one slide; everything on the poster is on one slide. Determine the poster size BEFORE you begin. Changing the size after placing elements on the slide can result in a ruined design, distorted images, and crazy text wraps. It could take hours putting it right; avoid this by setting up the slide at the correct size from the beginning.

8: Use guides.

■ **See guides.** There are two guides:

PC '03: >View >Grid and Guides, check "Display drawing guides".

PC '07: Right click on the slide; in the dialogue box check "Grid and Guides"; check "Display drawing guides on screen"; leave other boxes unchecked.

MAC '04 & '08: >View; >Guides, check "Guides" ('04) and Static Guides ('08).

8: Use guides.

■ Get more guides.

PC '03 & '07: Click* on a guide, hold Ctrl, and drag another guide from it.

MAC '04 & '08: Click* on a guide, hold Alt, and drag another guide from it.

Note: MAC '08 has problems with guides; often, duplicate guides cannot be made and/or guides disappear. Make a line using the line tool, holding Shift to keep it straight, and place it wherever you need a guide. Be sure to delete all measuring devices like this before printing!

Note: The number of guides is finite! Don't move them into the gray area outside the poster, they can't always be retrieved.

**Caution: Click on a guide at the edge of the poster or away from anything that you don't want selected and moved or deleted by mistake. Be sure you see the numbers that appear when clicking on a guide (they indicate location); if you don't see them, it means you have clicked on something else.*

- **Use guides to set margins.** A general rule: Left, right, and top margins are the same (1 1/2" to 2" is good for a 36"- or 44"-wide poster); the bottom is slightly larger than the top, providing a "visual base" for the poster to rest on. Margins "frame" the poster, separating it from its surroundings, and help the reader focus on the content.

- **Use guides to align text boxes or shapes.** Select a text box, line, or shape and bring it to a guide. What seems "close enough" on your 14" screen may not look as good when enlarged on a wide poster! Lack of alignment can detract from the readers' concentration.

- **Use guides to set columns.** Refer to your list (Step 5, page 2) as you bring everything onto your poster. Keep the content of each category together (text, images, graphs); this will help determine column widths.

Since we generally read left to right, begin with the category you wish to be read first. Place text boxes for this category along the left margin of the poster and place a guide for what will be the the right edge of the column (you can move it any time). Pull on middle side handles of the text boxes to make them fit between the guides marking the width of the column.



If more than one category can stay together and fill a column, try that. The goal is to keep related information together. If a category has four parts, avoid placing some parts in one column and the remainder in another; the audience may read only what is in one column and miss the rest. Don't ask the audience to hunt for all the parts; they won't.

- **Determine the width of a column.** Content determines width. Related information (graphs, tables, paragraphs) will ideally stay together; try to keep categories unbroken.

The columns don't have to be the same width; but the space between columns should be consistent. Allow enough space (about 2") so that the viewer doesn't read across to another column before reading down. Avoid a line of text over 20" wide; the viewer should not have to walk to get the rest of a sentence!

9: Text: Bringing into PowerPoint

■ Directly in PPT

Choose the Text Box tool; click and drag to make a text box; begin typing; it will expand as you add text. The text box can be resized to fit any column width by pulling on the middle side handles. Select text and change font style, size, or color at any time.

■ From Word

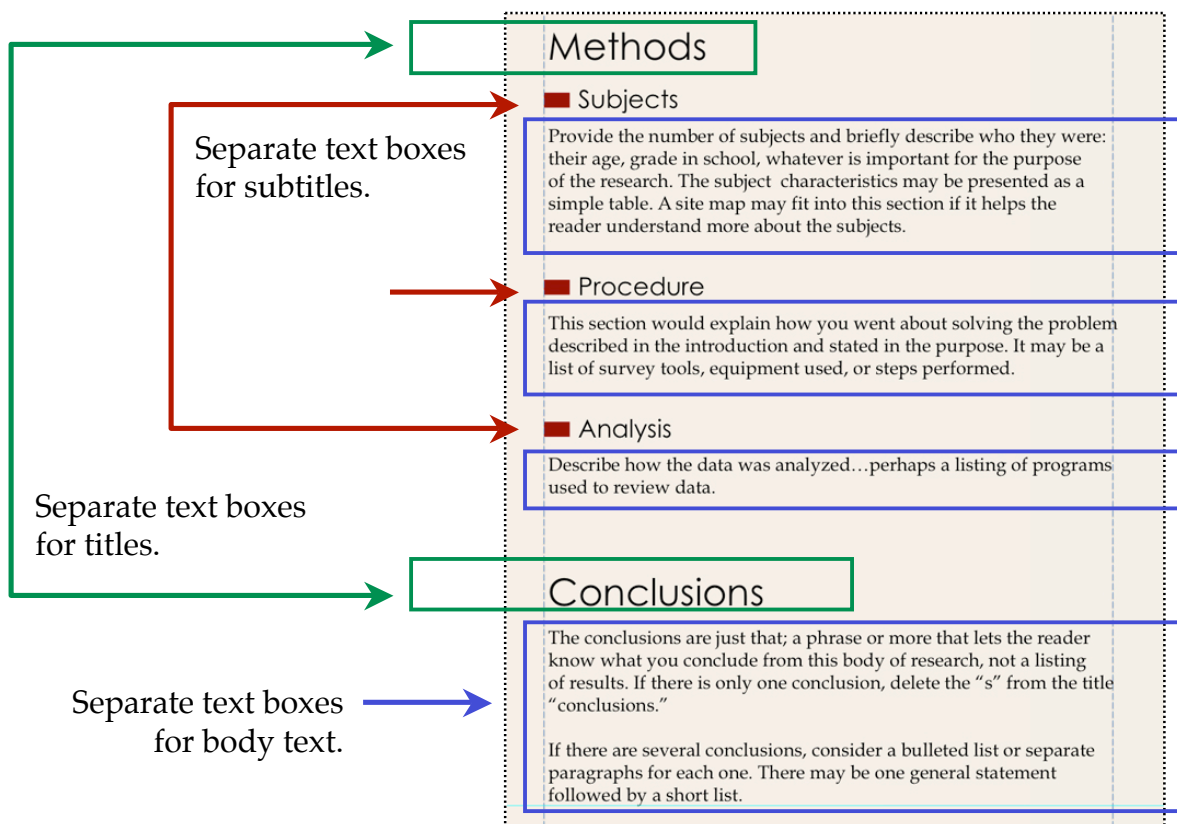
With *both* Word and PPT open, select the text in Word; >Edit >Copy; return to PPT; create a text box; then >Edit >Paste.

The text can now be edited; size, font, and color changed. Creating a text box *first* is important, because once filled with text, it can be resized and edited easily and the text will wrap to fit.

Enter all main text (paragraphs, not titles) and change the point size to ~26-30, to be easily read from 5ft; this will give you an idea of the space left for graphics or images. If space allows when everything has been entered, consider increasing the point size. Captions, references, acknowledgments, and contact information can be smaller (~18-24pt).

Make separate text boxes for titles and body text.

Sizes and styles can easily be changed for all titles or all body text by selecting only the text boxes that you want to change. For example, all body text on the poster can be selected and changed to 30pt Bookman, dark green. If you decide to change it to 26 or 28pt, to create more white space, or change the color, it can be done quickly.



AVOID THIS: “Gray mass”

Pare down. Avoid “gray mass” – a large block of text with no breaks. Create subheadings, pull out key words; if items are listed, use bullets rather than have an important list lost inside a “gray mass.” Don’t make the audience work hard. They may spend only one minute in front of your poster; make the information easy to get. Choose a font style and color. Keep it simple; use only 2 or 3, one for body text, another for titles. The poster should put forth your message, not be an ad for fonts and colors. Use the same font style or color to visually bind like ideas and a different font style or color to attract attention. Choose colors that complement the poster content: a background color that enhances the images used and a text color that contrasts enough with the background to be read easily. Generally, dark text on a light background is easier on the eyes. Lots of white text on a dark background can start to vibrate!

DO THIS: The “gray mass” has been organized for the viewer.

The text has been divided into categories and useful headings added.

Pare down.

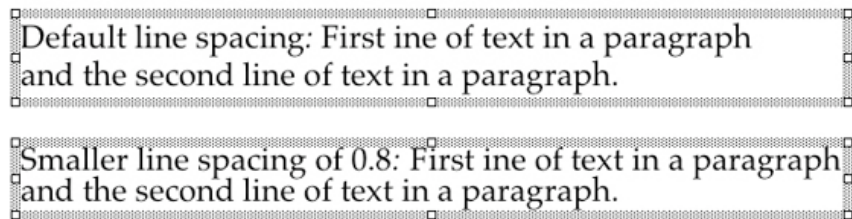
- Avoid “gray mass” – a large block of text with no breaks.
- Create subheadings, pull out key words; if items are listed, use bullets rather than have an important list lost inside a “gray mass.”
- Don’t make the audience work hard. They may spend only one minute in front of your poster; make the information easy to get.

Choose a font style and color.

- Keep it simple; use only 2 or 3, one for body text, another for titles. The poster should put forth your message, not be an ad for fonts and colors. Use the same font style or color to visually bind like ideas and a different font style or color to attract attention.
- Choose colors that complement the poster content: a background color that enhances the images used and a text color that contrasts enough with the background to be read easily. Generally, dark text on a light background is easier on the eyes. Lots of white text on a dark background can start to vibrate!

9: Text: Details.

- **Consider the references.** Long references within a paragraph can interrupt a train of thought and use valuable space. Consider listing references and numbering them. Place only the reference number within the text like this (5). Be sure the numbers are correct!
- **Check font size.** A good starting point for body text (main text in paragraphs) is 28-30pt on a poster ~6' wide. Type a line at 30pt and view it @100% (View >Zoom, select 100); what is on your screen is as it will be on the final printed poster. Stand back and look. *Caution: Changing font styles can change size; for example, 20pt Arial is larger than 20pt Times.*
- **Adjust line spacing.** If the bottom of a *y* and the top of an *f* are too close to the lines above or below, enlarge the space between lines:



MAC '04, PC '03:

(>Format >Line Spacing).

The default is 1.0; try 1.1 or 1.2; if the space is too large, reduce it to 0.9 or 0.8. Hit Preview to see the result before clicking "OK".

MAC '08:

Format Tab; >Paragraph; >Spacing; Line Spacing; Choose "Multiple"; type 0.9 or 0.8.

PC '07:

Home Tab; >Paragraph; >Line Spacing; Line Spacing Options; "Multiple"; type 0.9 or 0.8.

Note: With both MAC '08 and PC '07, there is no preview button, the change happens immediately; click OK or Cancel.

The space between paragraphs can also be changed; if it seems too large, select the space and reduce the point size. Be consistent.

- **Use one space between sentences.** One is enough; two spaces can often appear as too large a gap. The choice is yours, but be consistent.
- **Keep text blocks "tidy".** Delete empty spaces. Make sure text boxes are no larger than the text they contain. If left too large, they may be "clicked on" by mistake; or when included in a group, the group may be overly large. Take this suggestion seriously; it will save you grief.
- **Be consistent.** Decide on a point size for body text, subtitles, and captions, and be consistent throughout the poster. If a section of text is all of a sudden a smaller font size (because you were running out of room), it will appear less important. Edit! Delete unnecessary words.

9: Text: What to avoid.

- The toys, unless they help tell your story.

- **Using unnecessary text or marks.**

Hiding key words.

- **Hiding key words.**

- **Using ALL CAPS, all bold, all the toys.**

Beware of gimmicks like “word art”; they can be overpowering and are often hard to read. Use only what supports your story.

- All caps, unless more space is added between words.

POWERPOINT POSTER TITLE *(tight)*

POWERPOINT POSTER TITLE *(with spaces)*

- Equal justification (distributing words evenly across a text box).

Unless the spacing is quite even to start with, once justified, there

are often large gaps. On a large-format poster, it can look awkward and be hard to read.

The 2 lines above are equal justified. Some fonts are interpreted by the printer as shapes and not letters; when equal justified, spaces occur inside a word, making the sentence difficult and sometimes humorous to read. Your information is lost in the shuffle. “Comic sans” is a troublesome font and does not equal justify well:

hum orous diffi cu lt insidi e awo rd

- Breaking a line in the wrong place; you may send the wrong message.

Awkward:

The future holds real challenges in feeding the world. This is an opportunity for agriculture.

Better:

The future holds real challenges in feeding the world. This is an opportunity for agriculture.

Systematic Planning: Three Ways to Accomplish the Task

Systematic Planning: Three Ways to Accomplish the Task

If a title must take two lines, pay attention to where you break the text. Always break after a colon. Beware of centering a paragraph; space around a few words can bring unwanted attention.

9: Text: What to avoid (cont').

■ Hiding key words; they may go unread.

Lorem ipsum consectetur adipiscing. Lorem ipsum consectetur adipiscing. Lorem ipsum consectetur adipiscing. Ut wisi enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullam corper suscipit lobortis nisl ut aliquip ex eacommodo consequat. Duis autem vel eum iriure dolor in dolore eu feugiat nullaiusto odio dignissim qui blandit praesent luptatum zzril delenit. The purpose of this study is to determine Dolore eu feugiat nullaiusto odio dignissim qui blandit praesent luptatum zzril delenit. Nam liber tempor cum soluta nobis eleifend option congue nihil .

Give key words room to be seen and they will be read, like this:

Lorem ipsum consectetur adipiscing. Lorem ipsum consectetur adipng. Lorem ipsum consectetur adipiscing. Ut wisi enim ad minim veniam, sc quis nostrud exerci tation ullam corper suscipit lobortis nisl ut aliquip.

The purpose of this study is: To determine xxxxxxxxxxxx.

Nam liber tempor cum soluta nobis eleifend option congue nihil maxxim imperdiet doming id quod mazim placerat facer. Luptatum zzril delenit.

9: Text: Using bullets.

■ Allow bullets to do their job.

- Be aware of what you are listing. Use a different size, style, or color bullet for each level of information.
- Put a space after the bullet and set a tab; if there is a second line of text, tab over so the bullets remain in a column by themselves.
- Don't use a bullet if there is only one item (no list), except to stay within a style.

<p><i>Bullets aren't working:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Preheat oven to 500° •Make dough and put to rise (or buy a BOBOLI) •Assemble toppings •anchovies •roasted red peppers •Artichokes •Roll out dough... 	<p><i>More effective use of bullets:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Preheat oven to 500° ■ Make dough and put to rise (or buy a BOBOLI) ■ Assemble toppings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ anchovies ■ roasted red peppers ■ artichokes... ■ Roll out dough ...
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■ Two ways to make bullets:

■ Standard

They are made within the text box. Select the line or lines of text; **(MAC '04 & '08 and PC '03)** >Format >Bullet; To delete a bullet: Select the line; >Format; >Bullet; choose "None". **(PC '07: Home Tab; > Paragraph; > Bullet.)** Choose a style, color, and a percentage of the font size. Experiment with different percentages; the default size can be too small and look more like a period than a bullet. Be consistent.

■ Two ways to make bullets (cont'):

■ By Hand

Create a shape with the Rectangle Tool or one of the Basic Shapes (hold Shift for an exact square); apply a colors and/or line. Select the shape and duplicate it with keys Ctrl+D [PC] or Apple+D [Mac]. Align shapes along a vertical guide (or use the align tool*) and move them as a group, keeping a space between bullets and text. Select each bullet and move it up or down (using the arrow keys) to line up with each line of text. (If you can't place it exactly, see the "wee nudge", one of the "Tricks", page 11.)

* **MAC '04 & '08:** Select shapes; >Drawing Toolbar, >Align; Align Left (Right, Top...)
PC '07: Select shapes; >Format Tab; > Arrange; Align Left (Right, Top..)

Down side: Takes a bit of time.

Plus side: Because the text box is on its own, problems with tabs and indents are avoided. You don't have to play the "Tab Game"!! Your bullets are unique and custom made for your poster. The bullets used in the "More effective" pizza list example on the previous page are rectangles, duplicated and aligned.

Caution: Group the bullet shapes with the text box.

10: Importing photos.

■ Insert >Picture >From File:

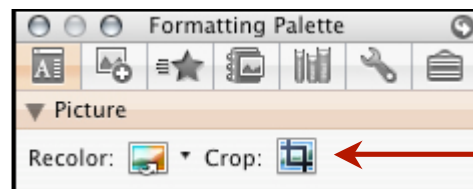
Select the image file wherever it is stored (folder, desktop, CD, USB). The image should be at least 100dpi, the **same size** it will be on the poster. Unsure of the size it will be in the final design? Use a rectangle as a place holder and scan the picture later. Save the image as a "JPG"; PowerPoint loves JPGs!

■ Cropping a photo in PPT:

MAC '04 & PC '03: The Picture Tool Bar will appear when a picture is selected; choose the crop tool. If the Picture tools aren't in sight, go to "View"; >Toolbars; check "Picture".

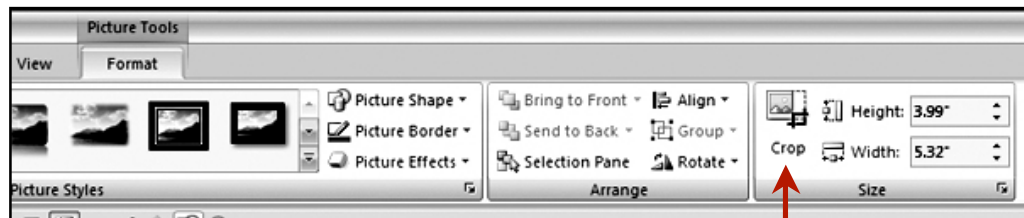
MAC '08: Select the image;
 > Formatting Palette; >Picture;
 choose the Crop Tool and crop from any side.

MAC '08



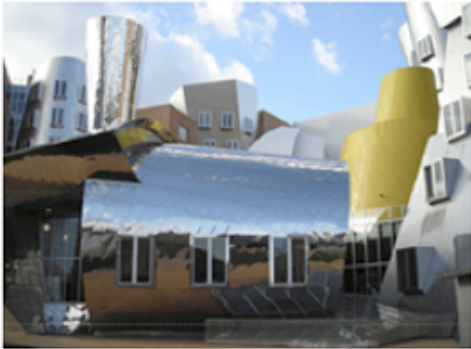
PC '07: Right click picture; >Format Tab; >Size; choose the Crop Tool.

PC '07

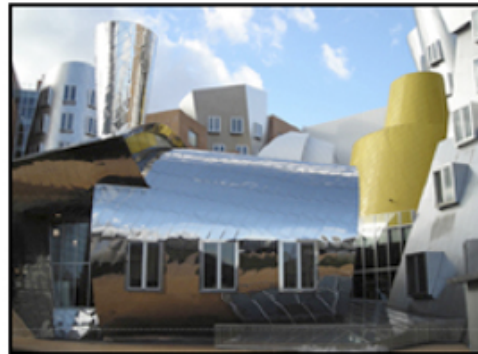


The remaining image after cropping can be resized. The Crop tool acts like a mask; you can use the tool again to get the picture back (reverse the crop).

- **“Framing” a photo:** A line around the image gives it a clean edge and separates it from the background. Without the line parts of the image may blend in with the background.



No line around image.



Line around image.

Select the image; view @100% (You can now see it as it will appear in the final print and better judge the choice of line weight; when viewed as a small poster on the screen, the line weight may appear heavier than it actually is.)

Note for all PPT versions: The default width of 0.75 is quite thin; try 1.0, 1.5, or 2.

MAC '04 :

Double click on the image; the “Format Picture” dialogue box appears; >Line; choose a color; weight, and style*; click “Preview”; click OK or cancel and make other choices.

MAC '08:

Double click on the image; the “Format Picture” dialogue box appears; >Line; select Solid; choose a color; >Weights & Arrows; choose a weight and a style*. There is no Preview button; the weight will change immediately as you type in the size.

PC '03:

Double click on the image; >Format Picture; >Colors and Lines; > Line; choose a color and weight; Click “Preview”; click OK or cancel to try another weight.

PC '07:

Double click on the image; the “Format Picture” dialogue box appears; >Line Color; select Solid line; choose a color; >Line style*; choose a line weight. *Alternative:* With one click on the image, the Format Tab is selected; choose “Picture Border” to change or apply a line color and weight.

There is no Preview button; the weight will change immediately as you type in the size.



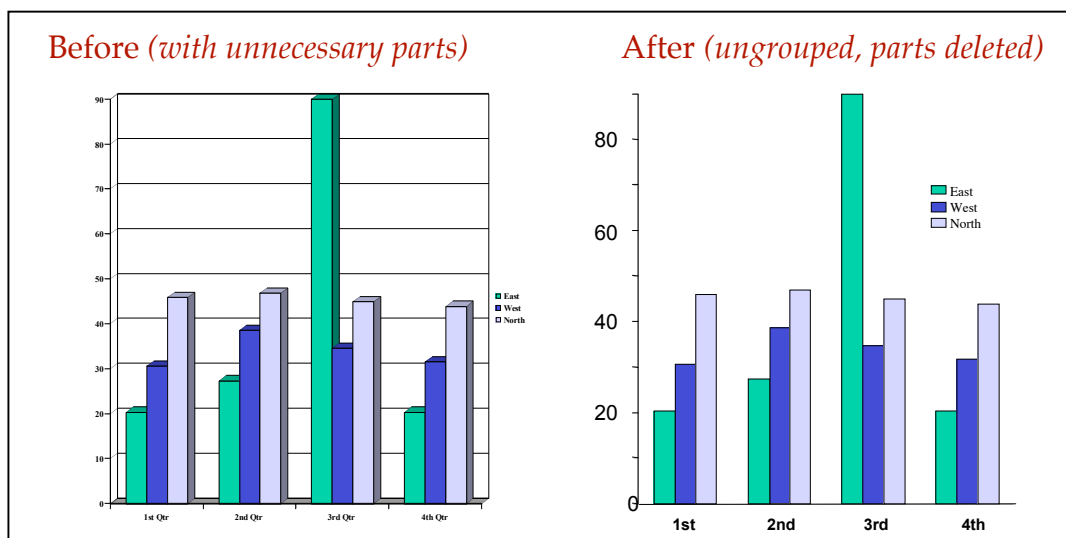
* **Line Style:** Choose a solid or other style; whatever you choose, be sure it complements, not overpowers, the image.

11: Creating graphs; simplifying existing graphs.

- Keep it simple from the beginning. Avoid “Chart Junk,” or anything that adds unnecessary clutter: 3-D graphs, lots of grid lines, shadows. A filled shape doesn’t always need a line around it.
- Avoid labels for every tick mark when fewer will do. Labels are often too small; use fewer and make them larger (easier to read).
- Whenever possible, combine graphs to share axis titles, labels, or legends. Don’t ask the reader to read anything twice.
- Eliminate the graph legend if elements can be labeled directly. Often labels can go within the sections of a pie chart, for example, where they can be seen quickly.

Using an existing graph? Simplify it: Select the graph, >Draw >Ungroup*. Delete everything that is not necessary.

Note: Ungrouping graphs is not an option in PPT ‘07 for PC and ‘08 for MAC.



- Increase the point size of lines and remaining text, staying consistent with other graphs on the poster. You may want to extend the length of some or all tick marks (or only those labeled).
- Change colors to complement the entire poster. Be sure the colors you choose for bars or symbols are different enough from each other and contrast with the background.
Caution: Change the colors in the legend at the same time.
- Create or simplify the graph in a separate PPT file; it will save zooming in and out. Copy and paste it onto the poster; group all the parts; and resize (hold Shift to keep proportions and lettering from being distorted). Some of the text wraps may change during the resizing; ungroup the graph, and one by one, pull out each text box so all the text is seen.

11: Simplifying existing graphs. (cont.)

- If two or more graphs are grouped together and have the same axis numbers and/or titles, let them share. The remaining titles or labels (or dates, as in the example below) should clearly identify the difference between the two. The graphs can now share a larger title.

Final appearance of graphs simplified and enhanced:

Notes on text box alignment:

The left axis labels are “right justified” and their text boxes are right-aligned to align 0’s.

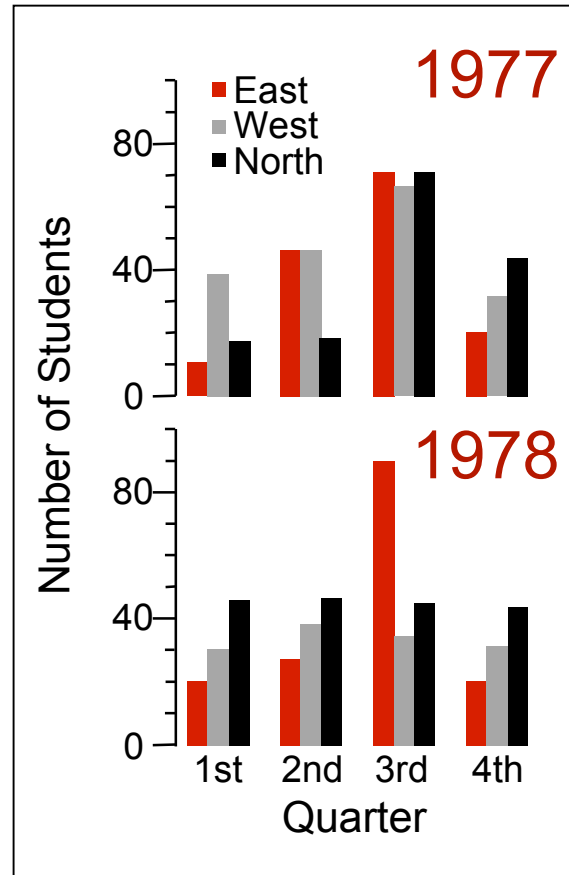
The bottom axis labels are “center justified” to easily center under groups of bars.

The axis titles are center justified and their text boxes are centered with the axis lines.

The large title labels, 1977 & 1978, are “right justified” and their text boxes are right-aligned.

Note: *The bars were grouped and stretched horizontally to accommodate the lower axis labels (this did not change accuracy).*

Remaining axis labels were made a larger point size and tick marks between bar groups were deleted.



12: Knowing some tricks always helps.

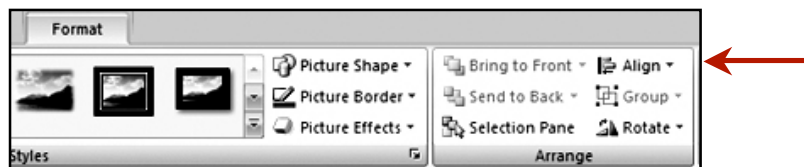
- **Use alignment tools.**

Select 2 or more text boxes or shapes, use an align tool to quickly align them.

Note: *If text boxes still don’t line up when you use the align tool, it may be that the text boxes have different “Internal margins”. Go to Format >Text Box; choose the tab “Text Box”; set the internal margins either to zero or at least the same for each text box.*

MAC ‘04 & ‘08 and PC ‘03: >Drawing Toolbar >Align > Align Left (or Right, Top...).

PC ‘7: Format Tab; >Arrange; >Align (Align Left, Right...)



12: Knowing some tricks always helps (cont').

■ Duplicate anything.

Select a text box, image, shape, or group of things; >Ctrl +D [PC] or Apple +D [MAC] to Duplicate. If it is a text box, you simply need to edit the text; the formatting is done!

Subtitle styles, such as “Conclusions” with a band of color behind the text, can be made by building a template, duplicating it, and editing the text; this keeps the style consistent. Use the same style for all main categories on the poster.

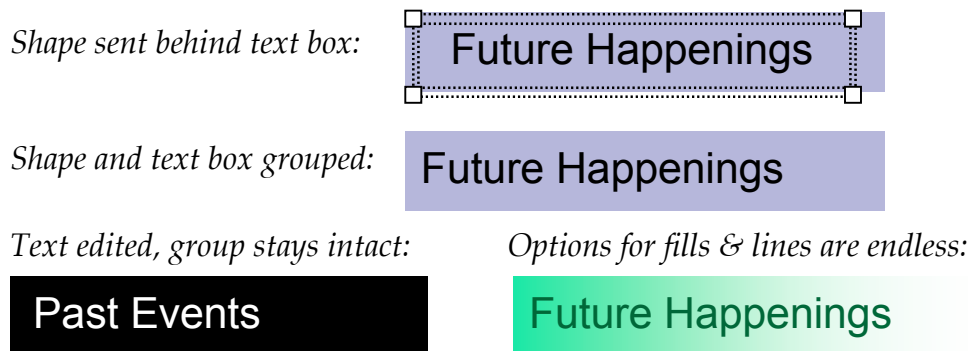
To make a template:

- Create a text box using the longest subtitle and the one with letters like “k,t” or “g,y”; this ensures that all titles will fit the template.
- Create a rectangle or any shape; with it still selected: Give it a color and/or line; send it behind the text box.

MAC '04 & PC '03: >Draw >Order [PC] or Arrange [MAC] >Send to Back).

MAC '08: Formatting Palette; > Size, Rotation, and Ordering; >Arrange; Send to Back.

- Group the text box and colored shape; duplicate group; edit text.



■ Need a wee nudge?

Things attach themselves to an invisible grid and sometimes this is not where you want them. To get just a wee nudge, hold Alt [PC] or Apple [MAC] as you click and drag a guide, object, text box, or group and place it exactly where you want!

■ See your poster from a distance.

View >Slide Show [F5 on a PC]; hit “Esc” key to exit. Do this often to see how the overall design is working. Inconsistencies are often more apparent in this view.

12: Knowing some tricks always helps (cont').

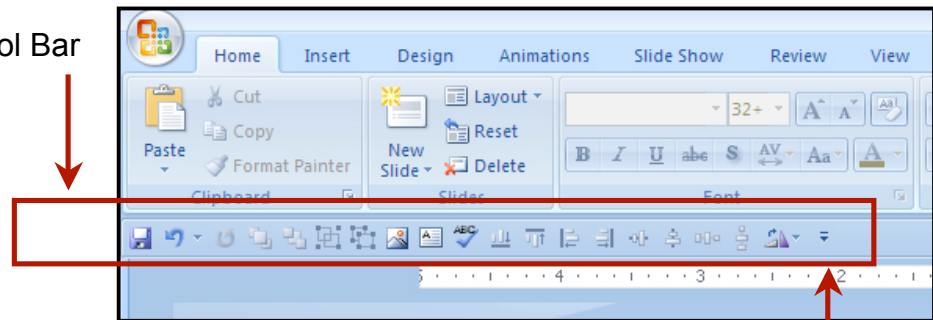
■ Customize your toolbox. Are there tools or commands you use often?

Customizing the toolbars, having the tools in one place, can save time. Add the icons or to any Toolbar.

MAC '04 & '08 and PC '03: View; >Toolbars; >Customize; choose Drawing tools (to start). Select "Commands"; choose an icon; and drag it to your toolbox. [Group, Ungroup, Bring to Front, Send to Back, Align Left (or Right, Top, and Bottom), and Insert Picture are especially useful.]

PC'07: The Quick Access Tool Bar, located over or under the ribbon along the top of the screen, provides a place for the tools you use often.

Quick Access Tool Bar



1) Click the down arrow to access more commands.

- 2) Select category. 3) Select icon. 4) Click "Add". 5) The icon will appear in this list and in the Quick Access Bar.

Change the position of Bar, above or below Ribbon.

Change the position of the icons on the Bar with the up & down arrows.

To remove icons, select from the list on the right and click the "Remove" button.

6) Click OK.

13: Last but not least: The background.

Whatever your choice of background—color, pattern, texture, or picture—be sure that it does not overpower the poster content, make the images hard to see, or the text hard to read.

■ A Background Color.

It should complement the poster content and images. Try different colors; you can change them any time. Keep the contrast high between text and background so that text is easy to read. Colors begin to tell a story as the viewer approaches your poster. (Pink may not be the best choice to tell a story about violence.) Vibrating colors may force an audience to walk away.

Every monitor and printer will interpret your color choices differently; check the printer's color charts (Hex Chart [PC] and Crayon Library & Apple Palette [MAC]) to see how the printer interprets your choice. Ask for a draft print from the same printer and on the same paper as the final to be sure the colors are as you expect.

Consider other background styles:

MAC '04 & PC '03: Format; >Slide Background; Choose a style— Automatic (selecting one of the colors presented), More Colors (select from a variety of sources), or Fill effects (select either a Gradient, Texture, Pattern, or Picture).

MAC '08: Formatting Palette; >Slide Background; >Format Background; choose Solid selecting from Theme, Standard, or More Colors (choose from the Color Wheel, Apple Palette, Crayon Library, or RGB, Gray Scale, or CMYK sliders); or choose Gradient, Picture, or Texture.

PC '07: Design Tab; >Background; >Fill; choose Solid fill, Gradient fill, or Picture or Texture fill.

■ Gradient.

Note: Be sure the text color can be read in all areas of the gradient.

MAC '04 & PC '03: Format >Background >Fill Effects, choose Gradient; then style and colors: one color (to darker or lighter) or two different colors.

MAC '08: Formatting Palette; >Slide Background; >Format Background; >Gradient; >Style; begin with Linear (experiment with others). The bar shows a default color blending to white; two “button” arrow sliders under the bar relate to the colors; move the sliders to see the effect of the gradient; click “Add Color” to add another arrow; assign a color to the arrow in the “Color” field; click “Remove Color” to delete the arrow.

■ Pattern or Texture.

This style can be very effective but use with caution; be sure that the text remains easy to read (a colored shape may be needed behind text). Often the resolution of the textures is not high enough for a quality print at large format poster sizes.

■ A Background Template.

Like “clip art”, it can be treated like a recipe, not a prescription! Select it; >View Master; select the “template”; Ungroup; and delete or alter any part that does not support your story.

■ A Photograph.

It can be great, but it must be high enough resolution to look good when printed; at least 100dpi at the final size. Ask your printer what is required. Place the photo on the slide master to avoid selecting and moving it by mistake.

Be sure text placed on top of the photo is easy to read. If light text is over a light area in the photo, you may want to put a shape with a dark fill behind the text (or light fill for dark text on a dark photo).

Note: Experiment with transparent color under the text so the photo will still be visible. Ask for a draft print to be sure the transparency looks OK; some transparencies appear like millions of dots when printed, even though they look fine on screen. The dots can compete with text and make it hard to read.

**Remember: If it doesn't help tell your story, don't use it.
Have patience, keep it simple, save often.**