Microsoft PowerPoint 2013™ Hints and Tips (Level 3)

Contents

Introduction

The aim of this document is to show you how to make the best use of Microsoft PowerPoint and, in particular, to save you time when creating a presentation.

Note that this document doesn't include tips applicable throughout the Microsoft Office suite – see the document *Microsoft Office 2013 – Hints & Tips* for details of these. The Office tips include starting a program and opening files, customising the *Ribbon* and *Quick Access Toolbar*, issuing commands from the keyboard, *AutoText*, quick methods to select text, and when to use the mouse button rather than the keyboard.

Be aware that there are several other documents on using PowerPoint, including *An Essential Guide* and several *Advanced Topics*. The main idea of this session is to focus on good/bad practices in a presentation and shows you how to save time by making good use of some of the facilities in Microsoft PowerPoint.

An example file *hintsandtips.pptx* is available to accompany this document. This covers many of the points raised in the notes and can be downloaded by clicking on the link provided above.

Planning a Presentation

Consider your Audience

When preparing a presentation, it's important to consider whom it is for. Most presentations are for lectures, seminars etc, in which the lecturer is talking to the audience while running the slides. Sometimes, however, the lecturer isn't present. This could be a teach-yourself lecture in a Blackboard module, for example, or a show that runs continuously at an Open Day. Fundamentally different types of presentation are needed for these two situations.

Lecturer-led presentations:

Keep the text in the presentation as brief as possible

- Display just headings and elaborate on them in the lecture
- Include (hidden) links to extra slides and jumps over slides so that you can adapt your presentation to the available time/audience
- AVOID reading out the text on the slides
- Use the PP *Notes Pages* to store extra information – eg lecture notes

Audience-led presentations:

- The text (or sound files) must include everything you need to say
- This includes instructions on what to do next
- Provide buttons to move on/back, restart, suspend the show etc
- If using built-in timing, allow enough time for your audience to read the information (and take notes, if necessary)
- AVOID presentations which are too long or over-complicated; attention span can be fairly limited in the absence of any human interaction

Accessibility

Whichever type of presentation you are preparing, accessibility is of paramount importance. The slides must be easy to read (and not just by those at the front of the room with the keenest eyesight). Changes should be made to the *Slide Masters* so that they are consistent throughout the presentation (and can easily be altered, if necessary).

- Select fonts which are designed for clarity – sans-serif ones are best
- Select suitable font sizes – be aware that PowerPoint automatically reduces the font size if too much text is typed into a placeholder (to stop this happening, format the placeholders on the *Slide Master* – *right click* on them, choose **Format Shape** then click on **Text Box** and, under *Autofit* turn off **Shrink text on overflow**)
- Take care choosing or setting up a *Design Template* – fancy backgrounds should not detract from the clarity of the words
- Take particular care with the *Theme Colors* – built-in templates often provide alternative themes, but many give very poor accessibility. If necessary, customize your own theme (and create your own templates)

Preparing the Presentation

One of the commonest faults with presentations is that people try to cram too much information on each slide. This can lead to many problems - poor accessibility is inevitable and lecturers tend to read the information on the slide rather than elaborate on it. The problem is exacerbated if the text appears all at once (ie without animation). To improve things:

- Only show part of the text at a time – introduce bullet points one by one
- When moving on to the next bullet point, dim or change the colour of the previous one (but leave it still legible in case someone is lagging behind)
- If a lot of points need to be covered on a particular slide, consider animating the text by replacing one point with the next, using *callouts* (from the **Draw** *Autoshapes*) or using a zoom in/out animation
- AVOID animations which distract from the points you are trying to put across
- Consider using different animations for different types of information …
- … but AVOID using too many different animations

Another common problem is consistency. It's most distracting if one slide doesn't lead to the next in a logical manner or if one slide looks completely different from the next (as though it belonged to a different presentation).

- Consider applying a slide transition to move smoothly between slides …
- … but AVOID transitions which detract from the presentation
- AVOID using different transitions unless they introduce a particular type of slide (then repeat the transition each time this occurs)
- AVOID using different templates and themes …
- … though you might consider using a different slide master to introduce each new section of your talk, for example
- Stick to the theme colours when selecting colours for your text, background etc (then you can easily change the overall look of the show by changing the theme)

Problems with Text Placeholders

One of the drawbacks with the text placeholders provided is that all of them are for bulleted lists. Quite often, people want to write an introductory sentence before the list. Be aware of the following:

- You can turn off the bullets for any paragraph by clicking on the **[Bullets]** button
- The second line of a paragraph is, by default, indented – it's been setup to deal with a numbered or bulleted list. You can change this setting by moving the *First Line Indent* marker on the *Ruler* BUT …
- Consider changing the default paragraph settings in the *Slide Master* – you can then use the settings for the *Second Level* and higher for your lists
- Another tip to overcome an indented second line is to press **<Enter>** at the end of each line, to create new paragraphs each time
- Note that, by default, paragraphs have extra space added before the first line. You can alter this setting under **Spacing** in the **Paragraph** dialog box
- Each paragraph in a text placeholder has its own *line spacing* settings. AVOID pressing **<Enter>** to get extra space between paragraphs; instead, increase the *Before paragraph* or *After paragraph* settings to give this automatically
- To get more than one paragraph under a single bullet point, press *<Shift Enter>* at the end of each paragraph
- Pressing **<Ctrl Enter>** at the end of one placeholder moves the typing position into the next (or adds a new slide if in the last placeholder on a slide)

Non-standard Animation of Text, Charts etc

As well as the built-in text animation, you may want to include customised animation effects. For example, you may want the legend to update on a chart as extra data series are added or you may want one piece of text replaced by another to get extra information on a single slide (without compromising the font size).

- Consider using a series of small text placeholders instead of one large one – each can then be animated separately and in different ways (each can also have its own *Ruler* setting)
- To replace one piece of text with another, use a series of text placeholders, each the same size and in the same position – set the fill colour to the colour of the slide background to block out previous text
- OR use the animation setting to hide each text box before displaying the next
- To hide part of the text in one copy of a placeholder, change the font colour to that of the background
- To animate a chart in a non-standard way, draw the final chart then duplicate it as many times as necessary. Work backwards through the sequence, hiding one series at a time by changing the fill and line colour to the background colour of the chart area. Draw rectangles in the background colour to hide parts of the legend

Graphics

When using the drawing tools to add graphics to your presentation (eg arrows with text boxes attached to explain things in more detail), it can be very time-consuming getting animation sequences correct. It's important to know how to select objects and to group them – so that the animation takes place to all the component parts of the object simultaneously.

- To select more than one object, hold down **<Shift>** as you click on each in turn – handles appear around each object to indicate they are selected
- To unselect something selected by mistake, **<Shift click>** again
- You can also select a group of objects by enclosing them in a selection rectangle – this appears as you hold down the mouse to drag out a rectangle
- Once selected, use the *<arrow keys>* to nudge the group sideways slightly to check all the component parts have been selected, then nudge them back
- Group component objects into a single object using **[Group]** in the *Arrange* group on the **DRAWING TOOLS FORMAT** tab
- Make use of the **[Bring Forward]** and **[Send Backward]** commands in *Arrange* on the **DRAWING TOOLS FORMAT** tab to move objects forward/backward relative to other objects/placeholders
- An easy way to select objects which are hidden behind others is to use the **<Tab>** key – this jumps between one placeholder/object and the next
- Another way to select objects is to display the *Selection and Visibility* task pane by clicking on the **[Selection Pane]** button in the *Arrange* group on the **DRAWING TOOLS FORMAT** tab

Positioning Placeholders

When creating a presentation, users often move placeholders about or change the default size. The net result can be slides where placeholders don't line up properly or ones that aren't centrally positioned.

- To align or equally space objects or placeholders, select them by using **<Shift click>** on each in turn, then move to the **DRAWING TOOLS FORMAT** tab and choose the appropriate **[Align]** command
- To select a *Text* placeholder, click inside it then press the **<Esc>** key
- Always turn on the *Guides* to show you where the centre of the slide is located – choose **[Guides]** on the **VIEW** tab

- Create extra guide lines to split up the slide area – hold down **<Ctrl>** and drag an existing guide line
- Use the *handles* on a placeholder to line it up with respect to your *guides*
- Be aware of the *Grid*, which limits the exact placement of a placeholder or drawing object (eg an arrow) – to display the grid, *right click* and choose **Grid and Guides...**
- To temporarily suspend the grid, hold down **<Alt>** as you drag an object or **<Ctrl>** as you move it with the arrow keys
- To turn off the grid completely, uncheck the *Snap objects to grid* option in the *Grid and Guides* window
- To restrict movement to the horizontal or vertical, hold down **<Shift>** as you move the object

Running Presentations

No matter how well a presentation has been put together, when it comes to running them the action is almost inevitably amateurish. How many times have you been to a conference to see one speaker after another having to load up their file at the start of their talk?

When they finish and have to answer questions, they scroll up and down through their slides to find the one with the relevant information, and then begin the show at that point. This can even happen part-way through a show – the speaker presses **<Esc>** to jump out of the presentation in order to move back to a previous slide. If they are reasonably experienced, they *right click* to display a pop-up menu and choose ***Previous*** from this – but even this is hardly professional.

- Be aware of the key presses which take you on/back a slide or straight to a particular slide
- Know how to suspend a presentation for a short time (by displaying a black or white screen)
- Make use of the pointer and pen for adding information to a slide as the show is running
- Arrange presentations so that one immediately starts up once a previous one has ended
- Be aware of *Action Buttons*, which let you jump to other slides (maybe in other presentations) or other applications (eg if you want to show an *Excel* file in the middle of a *PowerPoint* show)
- Be aware of hyperlinks – active links to web pages or email
- Be aware of *Custom Shows*, which allow you to select just certain slides from a longer show, and *hidden slides* (ones which you can include if you so choose as the presentation is running)
- Make use of the *Rehearse Timings* facilities both to practice your own talks and when creating a show which loops continuously at an Open Day
- If using non-standard fonts (eg if using the branded *University* templates), embed the fonts in the file when saving it – click on the **[Tools]** button in the *Save* dialog box and choose **Save Options** then check on **Embed fonts in the file**

Useful Web Sites

Here are some web sites with many useful tips:

http://www.pptfaq.com/index.html– 32 (printed A4) pages of tip links to further pages of information

http://www.microsofttraining.net/hints-tips-powerpoint-8.html – sadly this site hasn't been updated much since 2012 but it still contains some useful information (80+ tips)