

PowerPoint Slides Creation Tips

Use a Blank Slide as Your Starting Point

One of the biggest hindrances to getting away from the dreaded PowerPoint look is the PowerPoint template structure. There's nothing wrong with templates because they can save you time. But the default PowerPoint templates encourage bullet point lists and boring slides. So I suggest that you get away from using the templates.

Start with a blank slide. Then you'll get used to building and adding your own screen elements. Personally, I like to start with the title only slide. Then, I go into the master slide and move the title off screen (like you see in the image above). This way I can use the title for information, but the learner doesn't see it in the published course. This really helps when I need to add hyperlinks, which you can see in the tutorial below.

Step Away from Linear Slides, Think in Layers

By design PowerPoint is going to publish your slides like you'd publish a book. You start at page one and keep turning until you get to the end. This works in many cases. However, when you design your courses in PowerPoint, it's important to see your slides from a slightly different perspective.

Think of your slide like a bucket of information. Your job is to connect the information. Sometimes the default linear settings work and sometimes you have to create your own branching and navigation. When I was a kid, I had an anatomy book where some of the pages were transparent. I could lift up the skin and various organs to get down to the bones. Think of your slides in the same way. Instead of linear pages, they can be like layered transparencies. To the learner it looks like a single slide, but in reality, it's just a series of slides.

The learners don't see PowerPoint slides. They see a single screen. All you're doing is layering information on the screen so that when they click it just looks like the same screen with some new content.

Make Full Use of the Master Slides

Most of the rapid elearning courses I see neglect the master slides. That means the developer is copying and pasting the same content over and over again instead of using the master slides.

In PowerPoint, you can have as many master slides as you want. If a course has the same content on 3 or more slides, it makes sense to put it on the master slide. First, it's easier to manage and edit. Second, it improves your publishing time because you only have to publish the master file once rather than the same content multiple times over a series of slides. It'll also load faster for the learner since they'll load the master slide movie once and the individual slides will be much smaller.

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Add Hyperlinks to the Master Slide

Adding hyperlinks in PowerPoint can be tedious if you need the same links over a series of slides. Why not try using the master slides? The links get spread across all of the slides that use that master. So if you have the same links (like a home button) just add it to the master rather than copying and pasting it on every slide. Where you don't need it on a slide, just cover it up.

Bonus tip:

- I usually create my own shapes for the hyperlinks rather than linking the object. This helps if I decide to switch objects or if I want to quickly move the link around.
- Don't group objects that have hyperlinks. They'll work in PowerPoint, but probably not when converted to Flash. That's why I like to keep my links separate from my objects.