Crabby's in love again...with the new PowerPoint

Applies to: Microsoft Office Access 2007, PowerPoint 2007, Access 2003

Crabby Office Lady

With the newest version of PowerPoint, you now have no excuse for dulling your audience to sleep with poor graphics, confusing charts and tables, and the same old layout.

Yeah, yeah, I've heard the jokes and seen the cleverly scathing (yet somehow familiar) cartoons about PowerPoint. (By the way, I wouldn't be surprised if PowerPoint attains the status of verb in all the dictionaries.)

But joke as much as you want, we all know that if you want to present facts, figures, ideas, or even kick off a brainstorm session, having visual aids can make the difference between people blankly watching you blather on...and your audience getting involved and remembering the info long after the coffee has gone sour, the doughnuts have fossilized, and the meeting has ended.

You get my point. If you want just facts and figures on a spreadsheet, Excel can do the job quite nicely. If you need to keep track of all your notes in one place and put the "O" in organization, OneNote is your solution. And if it's words and words (and words) you want to impart, Word is the program for you. (And whoever came up with the name for that program, well, give that person a medal.)

But if you want to *WOW* your audiences with the great information and data you have in a way that gets them to engage *and* retain the information, PowerPoint is what we're talking about here. And lucky for you, the new PowerPoint 2007 has felt the tug of the plastic surgery trend. In other words, we've lifted, we've tucked, and we've colorized. We've added a little bit *here*, taken out a little *there*, and spiced up some of the duller parts. Let's just say that your do-it-all-and-with-color-and-graphics program has had...*some work done*.

Today, I'll give you the overall basics of what I think are three of the most exciting changes and new things in PowerPoint 2007. Then I'll point you to some resources that will go into these (and others I don't cover) in more depth. Be prepared to be *WOWED* yourself.

Custom slide layouts

Repeat after me: "I can now make my own slide layouts." That's right — you are no longer confined to the pre-packaged layouts that used to come with PowerPoint. (If you like those and have no problem whatsoever with them — think they're great and useful and all that's good about PowerPoint — good for you, they're still there. If not, move on and get creative.)

PowerPoint aficionados: Consider yourself unrestricted and set free. You can now create layouts that have the multiple elements such as graphics, video, and audio. And you can always save your layouts for a future project. You never know when your kickin' (and yes, Crabby can say "kickin'" — she still is, you know) layout becomes the buzz topic of the building. Not to mention, if you need a bunch of presentations to look similar for a client, you create the layout once and then reuse it again...and again (...and again, if that client is so impressed by your layout technique that she can't help but give you her business...repeatedly).

How?

So, if the standard layouts neither thrill nor impress you, learn how to add (and customize) a new layout.

NOTE In case you're unsure what a layout actually is, read this great overview of layouts. It explains all the different elements (such as headers, footers, background objects, and title placeholder) that can go onto a layout.

New diagrams and tools

"Stunning." Now, my first manager here at Microsoft used to use that word a lot. Unfortunately, we know overuse can lessen impact. (As when someone sends all their e-mail flagged as high-priority red, which I know *you* don't do.) Hence, I never really knew if my work was truly stunning or if that was some sort of code word for mediocre (ouch).

But I have to say that the new visual effects you can add to your presentations are simply...stunning. You can add three-dimensional objects, shading, reflections, glows...and more. You can create diagrams from scratch, and they are so dynamic (another over-used word but in this case, true) that they can be adapted to what you need. You're just not confined to static and stiff graphics (the worst kind, as we all know — I wouldn't give a stiff graphic the time of day). Aligning and manipulating your objects and graphics just got a whole lot easier. (This was one of your biggest requests. Ask and ye shall receive.)

And think about this: All this glitz and glamour can save you money. Why? Because you don't have to hire a professional designer to create your professional-looking charts and diagrams, that's why. (Sorry professional designers; I'm sure there are lots of other jobs out there.)

How?

Here is some more information about adding charts, diagrams, or tables as well as adding pictures, shapes, WordArt, or clip art.

New file formats

OK, this is a big one. In other versions of PowerPoint, when you had a very large file size, it was very difficult (perhaps even impossible in some cases) to share or send that presentation through e-mail. Now we use something called the PowerPoint XML format, and even if you don't know what that means and have no intention of exploring it further, just know that it reduces file size.

But wait, there's more! You can now save your presentations as a Portable Document File (PDF) or as an XML Paper System File (XPS) giving you even more sharing options, which, in turn, can only mean better collaboration. (And you WILL play nice with your coworkers, young man!)

How?

Here are some links to help you get started (I've also included these in the **See also** box at the top of this page):

- Use PowerPoint 2007 to open or save a presentation in another file format
- File formats that are supported in PowerPoint 2007
- Save a file in XPS format

The list goes on...

There are many more new and improved features in the new release of PowerPoint. Examples are:

- **Improved graphic effects** Effects that used to seem like they were known only to the secret society of graphic designers are now available to you. And I'm talking 3-D, shadow, glow, reflection, bevel, and more. While yes, this is related to the new diagrams tools, this is more about being able manipulate your graphics so that they look exactly how you want them to look. (If only life/boyfriends/girlfriends/managers/editors were so easily manipulated...)
- **Improved table and chart formatting** These are now much easier to edit, modify, and manipulate. (There's that word again.) The redesigned interface makes it easy to find the right option for your particular table or chart, and style galleries have all the effects and formatting tools that you need to make your tables and charts look like they were done by a professional. Again, it's about not having to hire a professional artist to put your data into a table or chart so that everyone can understand the information at glance.

- **New themes and styles** PowerPoint 2007 comes with brand spankin' new themes, layouts, and styles so that you're never at a loss for presentation options. What used to take some time — having to choose color and style options for your charts, graphics, and tables to match one another — is now quick as a click: Every object in the presentation gets updated with the theme or layout you've chosen. So everybody is all nice and matching, ducks all in a row — appealing to the most, um, picky of you. So, combined with the custom slide layouts, your new themes and styles will let you make the most eye-popping presentations known to humankind.
- **Presentation tools** Create custom slide shows based on existing presentations. Set up rehearsed timings or continuous looping presentations. Use the Presenter View, which uses multiple monitors — one for you, one for your audience. (In other words, no more shifting through your pile of notes — everything you need is on YOUR monitor while the audience sees only the final product.)
- **Protection and management of your presentations** New: Help protect your private information with the new Document Inspector, add a digital signature, and when you use SharePoint Server 2007, get more control over your presentations with records management and information management policies.

If you want to get a real idea about how new and different PowerPoint 2007 is, I suggest you Test drive the 2007 Microsoft Office release.

NOTE The real-time test drive does not require product installation or download — it's the fastest way to try out 2007 Microsoft Office system programs. In just minutes you can start exploring Microsoft Office through your Web browser on your own, or follow the step-by-step tutorials to experience all of its useful features.

And don't forget to visit the PowerPoint Home Page to get an idea of what's new, look at some demos, and learn how to get started using PowerPoint 2007. Now throw out your stale presentations along with those doughnuts.

"My belief is that PowerPoint doesn't kill meetings. People kill meetings." — Peter Norvig, Google, Inc.

About the author

Annik Stahl, the Crabby Office Lady columnist, takes all of your complaints, compliments, and knee-jerk reactions to heart. Therefore, she graciously asks that you let her know whether this column was useful to you — or not — by entering your feedback using the **Did this article help you?** feedback tool below. And remember: If you don't vote, you can't complain.