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An amateur woodworker's top 7 PowerPoint solutions

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On weekends I like to spend time in my workshop making projects out of wood. Not huge stuff, mind you — a shelf here, a table there. I'm not great at it, but I read everything about woodworking I can get my hands on. And no matter how much I learn, I'm always amazed at the tips and tricks master woodworkers have devised for getting around tough cutting challenges. Their years in the shop have taught them some valuable lessons that are helpful to weekend woodworkers like me. Unfortunately, their master tips usually cost me \$29.95, plus shipping.

In the spirit of sharing professional knowledge, I'd like to pass along some great presentation tips I have found useful over the years. For best results, clip this column and hang it beside your computer when you prepare for your next presentation.

1 The Presentation Challenge: *You have many objects onscreen and are having a hard time selecting the object you want.*

The Solution: Today's presentations seem to be integrating more and more graphical elements. Text, scans, drawn objects and clip art all try to occupy the same space on your screen.

To select the object you need in PowerPoint 95 or 97, you can use your TAB key on the keyboard to cycle between objects onscreen. Each time you hit the TAB key (SHIFT-TAB for reverse order), a different object will be selected. Even objects that are totally obscured onscreen can be selected this way.

Want another approach? Go into the CUSTOM ANIMATION menu in PowerPoint 97 and you will see an inventory of objects onscreen (animated and non-animated). Here

you can select the object description and see the specific object highlighted in the preview menu. With the object description highlighted, click OK. When you return to your PowerPoint slide, the object will remain highlighted.

2 The Presentation Challenge: *Sometimes selecting and dragging objects to just the right spot on the slide is difficult because of invisible grids. How can you move screen objects more precisely?*

The Solution: Sometimes the width of a pixel can be the difference between having an unintended line show up or an image misaligned. With your object(s) selected, you can use your keyboard arrow keys to move the objects in those directions. If the SNAP TO GRID option is turned on, the objects will tend to move in larger jumps according to the invisible grid that defines default movement. This isn't always bad if the other objects onscreen are snapping to the same grid. But sometimes you need to move in smaller increments.

In PowerPoint 97, go to the bottom left corner of your screen and select the DRAW option. Next select the SNAP option and deselect GRID. PowerPoint 95 allows you to do the same function by pulling down the DRAW menu and deselecting the SNAP TO GRID option. Now your arrow keys will allow you to move objects in one-pixel increments.

3 The Presentation Challenge: *Creating presentations takes long enough as it is without losing important productivity by constantly pulling on drop-down menus.*

The Solution: Quick keystroke equivalents of common menu-driven functions can save a surprising amount of time. If you

never learn any others, learn these six. They represent much of the movement out of the slide work area to pull-down menus.

CONTROL C = COPY
CONTROL V = PASTE
CONTROL X = CUT
CONTROL Z = UNDO
CONTROL S = SAVE
CONTROL A =

SELECT ALL
As an extra bonus, a right-mouse click on any screen object will pop up context-sensitive menus to manipulate or enhance selected objects.



4 The Presentation Challenge: *When you're resizing an object (text or art) that's already centered just where you want it, it can take a few extra attempts to move it back into position at the new size.*

The Solution: After selecting your object, hold down CONTROL (and SHIFT to maintain proportion) and grab a corner resize handle of the object. The object is now anchored at its middle point and any resizing you do will change the object's size but not its relative center position in the frame. This can be done with multiple objects selected as well. This is especially valuable when text is centered and you need to grow both ends at the same time.

5 The Presentation Challenge: *Text or graphic elements you thought were identically placed throughout the presentation move slightly from slide to slide when you're running through a screen show. This problem tends to crop up with text placement that isn't using a default place-holder loca-*

tion but appears in the same place on every slide.

The Solution: Simply copying and pasting the images from slide to slide will ensure exact placement, but we often move objects around during creation without paying attention to screen registration. Most PowerPoint users know they can call up a set of crosshair guides through their VIEW menus (VIEW GUIDES). Once turned on, these guides can help you position text and objects onscreen for perfect slide-to-slide registration.

Need an extra set of guides? After calling up the GUIDES (CONTROL-G), hold down the CONTROL key. Then grab one of the guides with your mouse and drag out another guideline. This can be done on either axis to create as many guides as necessary.

6 The Presentation Challenge: *You inserted a scanned photo or piece of clip art and accidentally distorted the image when you were resizing it. How do you restore the*

object's original proportions?

The Solution: This is one instance where PowerPoint 95 had the easier solution. By simply double-clicking on any of the corner resize handles, the original undistorted proportion would be restored. Try that with PowerPoint 97, however, and you'll launch the clip-art insertion box or, in the case of a distorted scan, absolutely nothing. There is a way, though: With the art selected, a right mouse click will reveal a PICTURE TOOL BAR selection. Select the farthest right icon and the image will reset to its original proportion.

7 The Presentation Challenge: You INSERT a scanned photo and the image doesn't seem to be as clear as it could be when it's projected electronically.

The Solution: You'd think that once you insert a scan, it would be ready to go. Well, not quite. What appears to be the simplest answer — resizing the scan — frequently creates a distorted final

image. So, once the bitmap image is inserted, follow these steps: In PowerPoint 97, a format-to-picture selection (right-mouse click on FORMAT PICTURE) will reveal a dialog box for manipulating the bitmap image. Select the SIZE tab, then select the BEST SCALE FOR SLIDE SHOW option and select the resolution of your laptop. You will see that PowerPoint has determined an optimal new image size. PowerPoint 95 has less latitude in displaying a resized bitmap image. The DRAW-then-SCALE choice provides a similar solution. ■

