Presentation Skills Workshop

Ned Potter, PLAN, September 2023

Activity A: Full-Screen-Image PowerPoint

The first exercise is around creating a presentation using full-screen images with overlaid text boxes.

I've put the text below for 3 slides (one point per slide, naturally) so you can focus on creative slide-making, rather than on creating the actual content of the presentation – so feel free to use the words below. **However if you'd rather make your own presentation entirely from scratch, please do so**!

The only rules are: make a presentation around 3 slides long, make one point per slide, use full-screen images, and have a minimum font-size of 24.

Sample text:

1. Welcome to the [whatever section or area you're most associated with]
2. We offer [pick a service, or services, you want to shout about]
3. Need some help? Get in touch or just ask at the desk

Step-by-step instructions:

Step One: The first stage is to ensure you have a completely blank slate, so we're not led astray into the 'Death by PowerPoint' defaults. Click the drop-down arrow next to **New Slide** then choose **Blank** from the available options. Do this a few more times so you have five or six blank slides to work with.

Step Two: It's usually easier to put in your full-screen image first and THEN add the text box afterwards in the most appropriate location. So first find an image for your first slide, using one of the image sites listed below to find pictures for your slides. Once you've found a picture you like, **left click to get a bigger version of it**, then right-click to either Save As, or just Copy the image. (Copying is quickest and easiest.) Some sites to try:
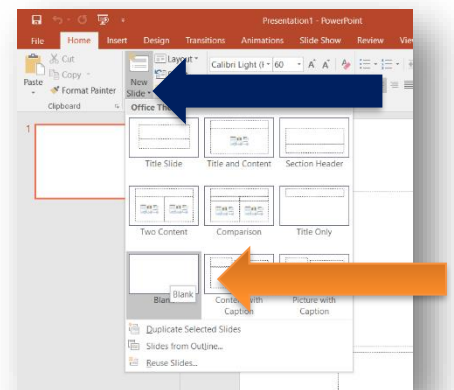
Pexels – www.pexels.com - is the secret weapon of many slide-makers; the images are CC0 public domain so can be used however you like, without even the need for attribution. There's a good selection of above-average images on here! With most of these sites, beware the sponsored photos at the bottom. These are images you would have to pay for; the idea is to use only freely available ones here.

Avoid anything below this line!

Nappy - nappy.co (don't be put off by the name!) addresses one of the major problems with a lot of stock photography, namely its overwhelming whiteness. Nappy describes itself as 'Beautiful, high-res photos of black and brown people. For free' and is a really good source of quality CCO images.

Pixabay - www.pixabay.com - the images here are also CC0 public domain so can be used however you like. There's less quality control than on Pexels, but more images overall.

Step Three: When you've found an image for a slide, go back to your presentation and **right-click on the slide itself**. From the menu which appears, choose 'Format background'. You should see a screen like this on the right of your slide.

Whether you're loading an image from the hard-drive or pasting in an image you've copied, you first need to check the **Picture or texture fill** radial button. (Don't be alarmed when your slide is filled up with a naff looking texture – that will be replaced in a second.)

To insert a saved image click **File…** and find and select your chosen image. PowerPoint will then fill the background of your slide with that image.

To insert a copied image click **Clipboard** and it will do the rest automatically. Copying and pasting in this way soon becomes very quick and intuitive.

(NB: If the image isn't the exact same proportions as your slide, it will do a 'best fit' – in most cases this compromise is worth it for the flexibility allowed by having your image *as* the slide background rather than on top of it.)

Step Four: Next you need to add some words – from the toolbar along the top choose **Insert** > **Text Box.** You will then need to draw your box – do so in the least busy part of the image. A thin box all the way across the slide works well, but you can do whatever looks good.
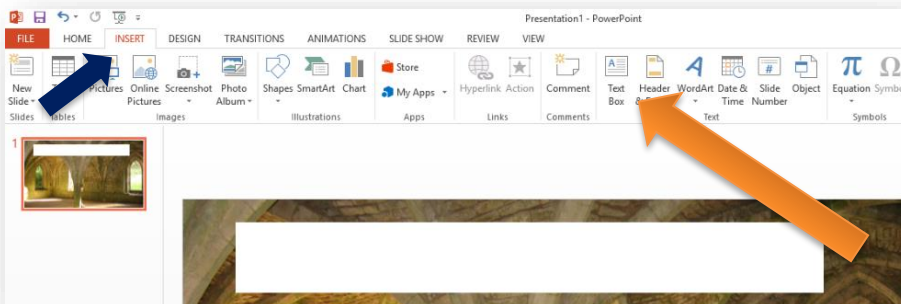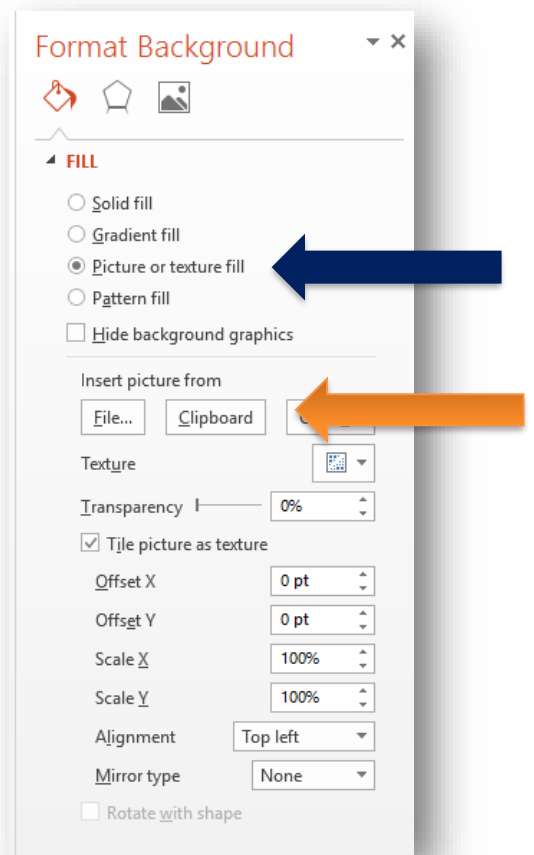
Write in your words – either from the suggested text I put on page 1 of this hand-out, or your own text. Don't forget, font-size 24 or more!

Step Five: To ensure your text can be easily read, you may need to fill your textbox. Right click over the text box, choose **Format Shape**, then go to **Fill** – you want a Solid (rather than textured) Fill. Black or white often works best. It needs to be a contrasting colour to the colour your chose for your text.

Step Six: Finally, make the text box semi-transparent. What you're aiming for is to be able to easily read the sentence, but still see some of the background image through the text box. Once again you need to right-click on the

box, click **Format Shape**, then slide the **Transparency** slider for your Solid Fill. Experiment with different percentages; 25-40% often works well.

That's it! Repeat these steps for each slide, finding a suitable image for each message. This method of slide-making very soon becomes quick, easy and efficient as you get used to it.

Stop here for now: we'll explore some more useful sites and techniques in Task 2 **after the coffee break!**

Activity B: Exploring more flexible slide-making styles

For this task we're going to experiment with the blank canvas approach, for which there *are* no step-by-step because every presentation is constructed differently. **The idea is to express each message on each slide in the most clear and engaging way possible**, creating a theme for your presentation by repetition of the font colour and size. This part of the hand-out focuses on sites which are useful here – then there's a bonus part which focuses on techniques. Either extend your earlier presentation, or start a new one if you'd prefer: but make sure you have a theme or topic in mind for this one rather than just creating random slides! It helps to have a purpose when experimenting.

- Another great image site is rawpixel.com – run a search first then limit to FREE. There aren't as many images as on the other sites but they're often more interesting and less hackneyed in style…

- Have a quick peak at Photofunia - www.photofunia.com – you can upload your own images into interesting contexts, giving you Photoshop-esque images without needing to actually master Photoshop. There are a few different types of Photofunia images.

The most immediately useable is the **Your Text** type (e.g. the Typewriter shown here). You don't need your own picture to insert: just type in your words and it will put them in the image. Anything with the little purple face image (e.g. Chef's Hat above) needs a good image of a face to work: this the least useful. The rest will work with any image you have saved to your PC. Those that say HD will be of good enough quality to use as full-screen images on slides – the rest may look a bit rough around the edges when stretched that large…
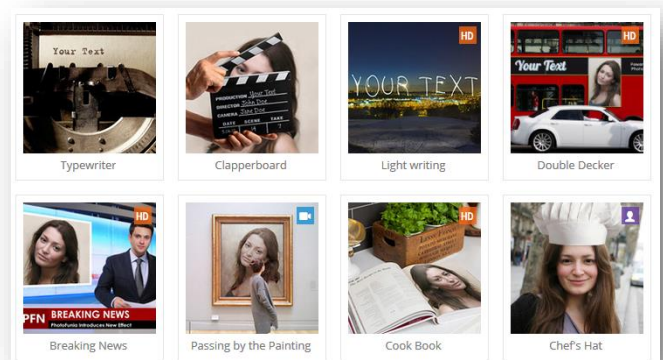
Keep in mind an image can be *of text* – so if you have some dry text that you need to include all of, but want to liven it up, you can do the following: on a new slide, create a large text box, and write in your text. Then right-click on the text box and choose **Save as Picture** – you now have an image of some text. Find a suitable image on Photofunia into which to insert your text, select it, then locate your image (of your text) in the usual way. You may need to play with the width and shape of your text box to fit some Photofunia images.

- See www.iconfinder.com for transparent GIFs to place on slides. These are small created images to round off a basic slide. First search for an image, then choose 'Free' from the menu that appears down the left hand side of the screen alongside your results.

- And finally, if you've never discovered the **Snipping Tool**, prepare to have your mind blown! Type 'Snip' into the search box in the Start menu and you'll see it listed: click to open. The Snipping Tool allows you to draw a box over any section of your screen – it then gives you a screen-grab of that exact part, to either copy and

paste or save to your PC. This is SO much quicker than pressing the PrtScrn button then cropping full-screen screen-grabs. It's very useful for slides which contain examples of software, processes, intranets or websites. All the illustrations in this handout were made with the Snipping Tool.

Finished already? Bonus Tasks: Writing directly on to the slides, and more

If you've completed everything above and there's still time before lunch, here's some more stuff to do. Whilst semi-transparent text boxes work well, the most stylish presentations often have text written directly onto the background image (in other words you can't see the text-box, only the text itself). You can do this in a number of ways – the most obvious is to find an image with a nice clear section on which to write (a cloudless sky for example, or a blank notepad). This is known as copy-space. But you don't have to spend ages tracking down the perfect image – you can adapt any image so you can write on it.
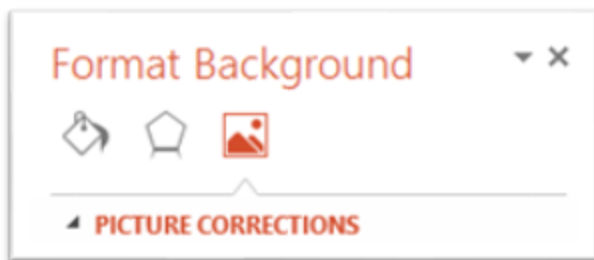
Darkening

Find an image you like, then Right-click and *Format Picture*. Choose *Picture Corrections*, then slide the *Contrast* slider down 20% to 40% (or more if necessary). Your image should now be dark enough to write on in white.
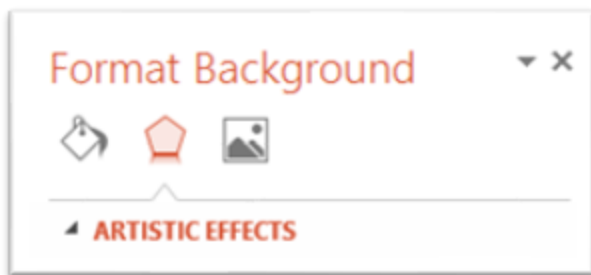
Blurring

Find an image you like, then Right-click and *Format Picture*. Choose *Artistic Effects*, then *Blur*, which is the option on the far right of the second row. Once you've clicked this your image will blur – it may be enough to be able clearly read writing directly onto the slide right away. If it isn't, you can adjust the *Radius* slider – the higher it goes, the blurrier the picture becomes, allowing text to stand out more easily.

In the slides I'm using today, a lot of the images are both darkened and blurred so I can write on them – if the image is important I often show it in its default first, then on a new slide show the darkened / blurred version with text on.

Recolouring

Try recolouring an image to suit your theme – this often makes it easier to write on in a contrasting colour. Find an image you like, then Right-click and *Format Picture*. Choose *Picture Corrections* then *Picture Color*, then *ReColor* and experiment with different options. By default the results may look slightly tepid, in which case experiment with decreasing the balance and increasing the contrast (or vice versa) to make a more dramatic edit.

Cropping

Sometimes you find the perfect image, but it's Portrait rather than Landscape in orientation. You can still use it – Copy it or download it as before, then Insert or Paste it onto your slide (rather than setting it as the background). You may want to go to **Format Image** then **Crop** away everything but the most important part of the image. Then place the image at the extreme left or right of the screen, and write on the rest of the slide. This can either be the default white (with a text colour to match the picture in some way) or you can Right-Click the slide, choose Format Background, and fill it black.
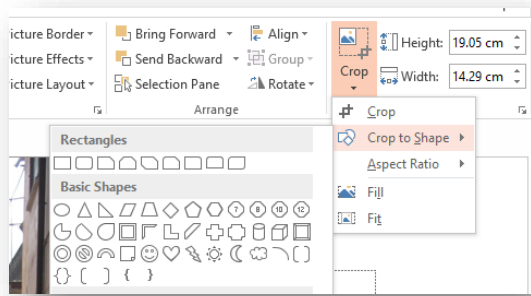
A more ninja-level use of the Crop tool is to crop by shape – for example to crop an image to a circle shape. You can use this to create really nice effects. To do this select your image, go to **Format Image** as before, but click the arrow under the **Crop** button – then select a shape and crop as normal. OR, rather than cropping, you can try Inserting a Shape and then using an image to fill it instead of a colour.

Changing all the fonts

If you're experimenting with fonts, it can be a chore to change each slide individually. Thankfully you can do a find and replace on fonts! The **Replace** menu is on the far right of the ribbon along the top of PowerPoint - click the arrow to get the drop-down menu and choose **Replace Fonts…**
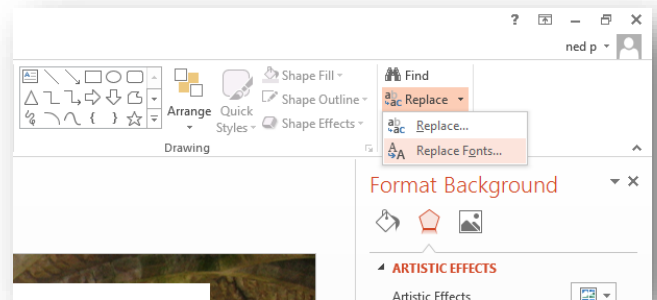
The menu which appears will search for all instances of, for example, Arial, and replace it with the font of your choice. This is great for breathing new life into old presentations – especially if you've installed new fonts from www.fontsquirrel.com. Different fonts take up different amounts of space, so check your text boxes still fit as you want them.

Adding links to slides

Sometimes you want an entire image or block of text to be a link. You can format any object in PowerPoint to be a clickable link, by right-clicking on it and pressing '*Hyperlink…*'. If you wish to make part of a slide clickable, just draw a text box over the relevant section, don't write any text in it, then right-click and add the hyperlink.

Useful features on Office 2016 onwards…
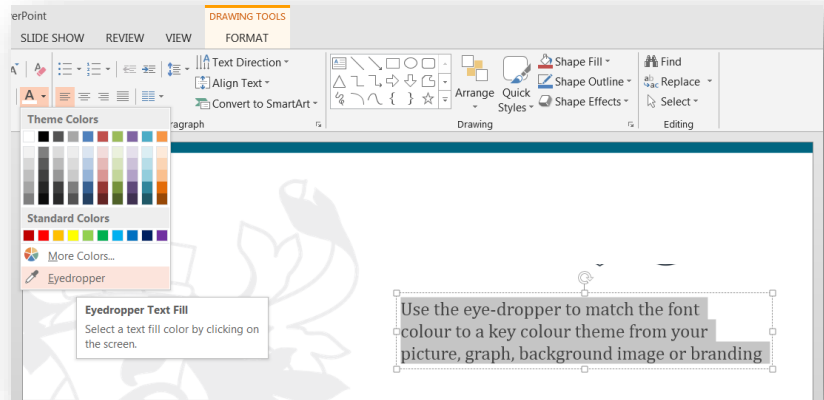
Removing the background to an image

If you have access to the most recent Office Suite at home or via work, you'll be able to use this function. It's an advanced technique that's a bit hit-and-miss but can be really effective. Let's say you want to use a picture of an ipad on a blank white slide, and you don't want to the background of the ipad picture. First insert the image onto a slide, then select it and click **Format.** On the far left of the ribbon you'll see **Remove Background** – click this. The easiest way of using this tool is to drag the box it gives you by default around the object on your image that you want to remove from its background - then click **Keep Changes**. If successful you'll now have an iPad on its own, which you can put into your slide wherever suits.

The Morph Transition

This is a brilliant transition introduced in a recent update for Office 2016. It's worth experimenting with to see how it works: the easiest way to start is with an image with its background removed (assuming you've tried this using the instructions above). Create a slide with your backgroundless image on and some text. Then on the preview pane to the left, right-click and **Duplicate** – you will now have two copies of the same slide. Now on the 2nd one, move the image around a bit, maybe expand or shrink it, and change the text. Finally choose **Transition** from the ribbon along the top, and select **Morph**. Now when you move between the two slides it will 'morph' between them…

Eye-dropping colour

You don't have to try and find the best-match colours for fonts or shapes – you can use the eye-dropper tool to make them the same colour as anything already on your slide. Just click the usual button to change the colour of the font, but instead of clicking a colour, click **Eyedropper** at the bottom – then whatever you next click on (on the slide) will the colour of your selected font.

Use the eye-dropper to match the font colour to a key colour theme from your picture, graph, background image or branding

Follow up queries etc:

I'm on Twitter: @ned_potter. Plus there's more advice and loads of stuff on Presentation Skills on my website: www.ned-potter.com and on Slideshare: www.slideshare.net/thewikiman.