

CPSP 218G Earth, Life & Time Colloquium Semester III

September 21, 2009

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO MAKING POSTERS WITH POWERPOINT

First, launch PowerPoint. Most of the instructions below are based on PowerPoint 2003 for Windows and 2004 for Mac; however, the options are largely the same in other versions of the software package.

I. Sizing Your Poster

- Begin a new file in PowerPoint by Choosing “File” → “New” or “New Presentation”. Save it now. A good name might be “name_project.ppt”, where “name” = the first part of your “@umd.edu” email address; this will be unique to you, and it should be easy for you to find if it gets put on someone else’s machine. For example, Dr. Holtz file would be called “tholtz_project.ppt”
- On your blank page, PowerPoint will automatically show you a landscape (wider than tall) 10 x 7.5” sheet (the preferred size for online slides). That’s not going to help us here. You’ll need to reorient the Image:
 - Go to “File” → “Page Setup...”. A box of options should show up. Under “Size”, choose “Letter Paper” or “US Letter Paper”.
 - You can choose whether you want it landscape or portrait.
 - Click “OK”. (If the computer tells you this is a non-standard size, and asks to fix it, tell it “OK” rather than “Fix”). The image should now reflect the new size.

II. Text

Attractive posters generally incorporate blocks of text of a size that might normally appear on a regular printed page. Therefore, plan to organize your text into three columns. You might find it is easier to prepare your text in a word processing program, then import it into PowerPoint, than to work on it in PowerPoint directly.

In MS word or some similar application, compose your text.

- **Importing Text:**
 - Once a block of text is written, select and copy it in the word processing application.
 - Go to PowerPoint, and select the Text Box tool. Draw a box, and paste your text into it.
- **Composing Text:**
 - If you wish, you can compose directly in PowerPoint. Select the Text Box tool. Draw a box, and begin writing in it.
- While in PowerPoint, you can modify the text as you see fit, including Font, Size, Color, Bold, Italics, Sub- or Superscript, etc. See our recommendations from the beginning of the packet in terms of text sizes and fonts.
- **Aligning Text:**
 - You can align blocks of text relative to each other, relative to the slide as a whole, and relative to different graphics. Select the blocks of text you want to work with. From the “Draw” menu on the bottom left corner, find the “Align or Distribute” option, and choose the particular method of alignment you want to use.

- You can move around your blocks of text within PowerPoint, and modify their height, weight, etc. As you design your poster, we recommend making each major section and each caption a separate text block. That will make them easier to manipulate individually.

III. Images

Images are easy to use in PowerPoint, once you get used to them.

Use “Insert” → “Picture” → “From File...” and find the image you want to use. It will be placed at 100% size on your screen. You can move it around, resize it, rotate it, duplicate it, and otherwise manipulate it.

Once you have the image where you want it, you’ll want to see if it is the size you would like. In order to change its size, select the picture, and “Format” → “Picture...” to get a list of options. Under “Size” you can specify exact dimensions, or scale it by a specified percentage.

Two important things:

- **Don’t mess up your image’s aspect ratio, or you’ll look like a doofus!** Make sure “Lock aspect ratio” is clicked.
- **Don’t resize you image so much that you loose resolution.** If your original was only 72 dpi and 3 inches across, then expanding it to 12 inches in width is going to make it 18 dpi: it will definitely look pixilated!

IV. Drawing

- **Drawing Objects:** You’ll want to have some drawing tools handy. Either use “View” → “Toolbars” → “Drawing” or “View” → “Formatting Palette”.
- From the toolbar or palette, find your various line-drawing tools. Select one that allows you to draw both straight and curved objects, and draw one.
- Select that object, and duplicate it multiple times. You are asked to modify it in several ways:
 - Change its size (either click and drag or use “Format” → “Autoshape” → “Size”).
 - Reflect one vertically; also, reflect one horizontally.
 - Change the color of the stroke (the line itself) and the fill.
 - Change the stroke weight.
- **Also,** you need to create the background rectangle.
 - Go to wherever your Drawing Autoshapes options are. That is, you can go to “View” → “Toolbars” and select “Drawing”: this will give you a lot of useful tools, including a rectangle-drawing tool. In my version, you can also use “View” → “Formatting Palette” to get even more tools. If you choose the latter, click on “Add Objects”, select the icon with a circle and a rectangle: this gives you your Autoshape options.
 - Select the Rectangle tool. Draw a large rectangle. You don’t have to worry about it’s exact size when you draw it.

- Click on the rectangle, then select “Format” → “Autoshape.” Under “Size” input a Width of 7.25” and a Height of 9.5”. You can change the Fill Color, Line Color, and Line Thickness now or later, either in the “Format” → “Autoshape” box or from the various palettes.
 - Note, if you did this properly, it should have obscured **EVERYTHING**. Obviously, you don’t want that. Select the box, then right-click (in Mac, ctrl-click) and under “Order” (older versions) or “Arrange” (newer versions) select “Send to Back”.
- Center your rectangle. Select the box. If using the Formatting Palette, click on “Size, Rotation, and Ordering”; otherwise, go to the “Draw” menu. Under the “Align or Distribute” or “Align” option, first select “Relative to Slide”. Then select “Align Center” and “Align Middle”. This will center the box.

V. Other Formatting Issues

- **Layer your images, text, and objects:** In PowerPoint, it is possible to have objects overlap. If you want image A to lap over image B, select image A, then right-click (in Mac, ctrl-click) and under “Order” (older versions) or “Arrange” (newer versions) select “Bring to Front”.
- **Grouping Objects:** Often, it is convenient to link objects together to treat them as one object. This is especially true if you want to layer text over an image. In such a case, you might draw a white rectangle over the text, and then pull the text to the front. Having done this, select both rectangle and text, and choose the “Group” command from the “Draw” menu (or from the Formatting Palette, under “Size, Rotation, and Ordering” menu). Now, the text and its backing can be moved, sized, and layered as one object.

V. Save Your Work

You’ll want to save your work in PowerPoint (“.ppt”) format. Do it early, and do it often; this way you won’t lose changes.

HOWEVER, when you are satisfied with the poster, you will want to turn in a pdf (“.pdf”) format version of the file as well. Depending on your system, this might be under “File” → “Save As...”, or it might be under “File” → “Print”, or you might have to use additional software to convert it. PLEASE NOTE: just changing the extension of the file name from “.ppt” to “.pdf” does not magically transform a PowerPoint file into a pdf!!

VI. Put Your PDF Version Online!

Don’t forget that you have to turn in an online version of your poster as well. Just:

- **Mount your pdf file online.** It is easiest to just put it in the same folder as your ELT webpage html file. If not, make certain that the HREF link in the next bullet includes the complete URL for your pdf file.
- Insert the following link onto your main ELT webpage:
`ELT Graphics Poster`
 where “myfilename” is (not surprisingly) your file’s name.