

Step 3: Outline the Major Points

With a clear definition of a presentation's audience, topic, purpose, location, and delivery medium, a preparer can begin to outline the major points in a presentation. Each major point will probably translate into one or more slides.

Many first-time presenters try to include too much information in their slideshows. Remember that in most presentations, a slideshow is a visual presentation method that should augment and emphasize a presenter's verbal message. Rarely should a slideshow presentation contain all the information the audience members need. Except in stand-alone slideshows designed for presentation at a tradeshow kiosk or online, the presenter is the star of the show. Slides that contain too much text or that make excessive use of format features

Design the Presentation

Step 4: Select a Slide Design

Presentation software packages include a large number of predefined slide themes, sometimes called slide masters or templates, from which a preparer can choose. The purpose of a standard master slide design is to give a slideshow a consistent, professional appearance. Generally, simple master slide designs that do not distract from the information content are more effective than flashy or complex designs (unless the target audience is younger people who may prefer more colorful, creative designs). Many of the format features on a master slide can be modified to create a custom appearance that can be part of a presenter's unique signature.

Other slide design elements are optional, and are probably best omitted, unless specific reasons require their inclusion. Footers fall into this category—they should not be included in a slide master design just because the feature to create them is available in the presentation software. A slide number in the footer may be a useful tool to keep the presenter on track, and a copyright notice should be included when the presentation material is proprietary. Other footer features should be used judiciously.

Step 5: Select a Slide Background and Color Scheme

The background and color scheme, font selection, and other aspects of a slide's appearance can either contribute to or detract from the effectiveness of a presentation. Avoid using a photo or a pattern as a slide background because they tend to overshadow the information content on a slide. Plain backgrounds or ones with simple logos or designs are preferable. Muted colors are often more effective than bright hues that seem to jump off the screen at the viewer. Simple fonts (ones that avoid handwriting, scripts, and stylized fonts) keep the focus on the content.



The general design principle here is that anything that draws the attention of audience members away from the central message on a slide should be avoided. As a presenter, do you want the audience to remember how unusual or fancy or entertaining your slides were, or remember the message you want to communicate?

The selection of design and format elements is an important decision. When in doubt, get a second opinion. Show some design options to a few colleagues you trust and get their feedback.

Step 6: Choose a Slide Layout

Slide layouts give a presenter control over the arrangement of information on each slide. A slide layout is a combination of one or more of (1) a title, (2) contents, (3) objects, and (4) optional footer. Presentation software provides a variety of slide layout options. Each slide layout contains placeholders—a blank space such as a textbox to which a presenter will add content, as shown in Figure C-3. Some placeholders are designed to hold titles for the slideshow; others provide space for text information. Some placeholders are designed to present comparisons between two or more side-by-side content areas. Still other placeholders are arranged to include media objects, such as photos, tables, charts, sound, video clips, diagrams, and maps.

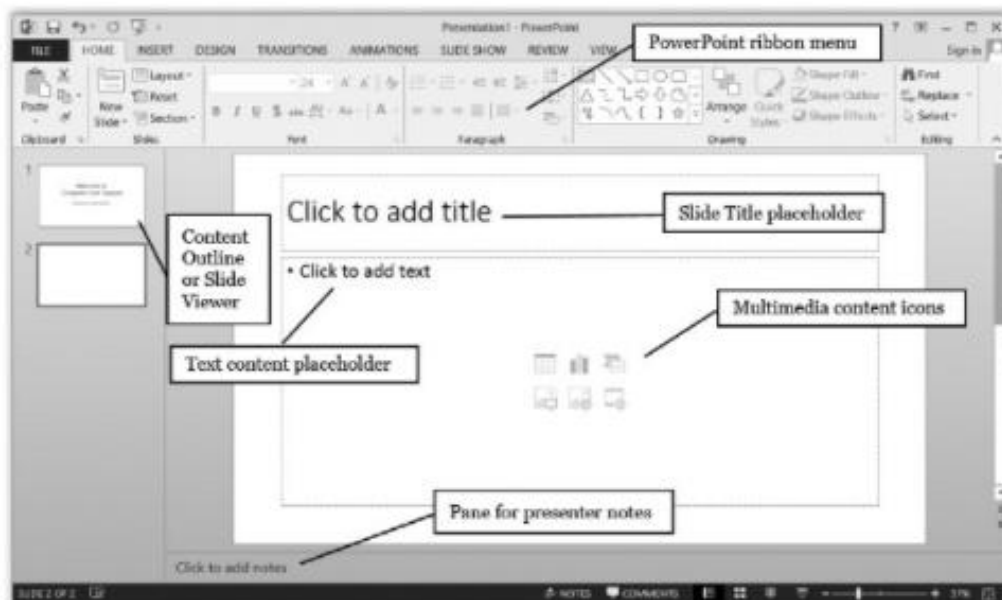


Figure C-3 PowerPoint 2013 slide layout with content placeholders

Source: Microsoft

Slide layouts that use several of these layout elements (or placeholders) should be used with care. When several design elements are included on a single slide, audience members must take time to read a title and text contents, and view other media objects. During the time an audience member is absorbing all of the information content on a slide, they are not focusing their attention on you, the presenter.

Step 7: Prepare the Text for Each Slide

Most slides consist of at least some text information. Here are some guidelines for the preparation of text on a slide:

- Keep text information short; avoid lengthy passages. Information items can be a word or a phrase, rather than a complete sentence. Let white space be the dominant feature of each slide. (A presenter should speak in complete sentences, but the slides don't necessarily have to include full sentences.)



If you find yourself continually reducing the font size on a slide in order to make the information fit, you have probably included too much content. Split a slide when the information becomes too large to fit.

- If a title or phrase extends over more than a single line, help the viewer by using natural breaking points between the lines. Use the title of this appendix as an example and consider various ways to break a title into two or more meaningful lines.
- Keep the number of bullets on a slide to a reasonable number (three to four points is plenty—never more than seven).
- When they view a slide, audience members notice *differences*. Changes in font sizes, different font colors, changes from normal to bold or italic, and differences in alignment or spacing all invite the audience to ask why the differences appear and what the differences mean. Avoid differences for variety's sake, or changes just to make the text fit in the content space.
- To highlight important content on a slide, use a different font size or color, or use the drawing toolbar to add a callout or textbox. But don't overdo the use of these elements to call attention to important content—an audience will tire of looking at information, all of which appears to be of special importance. In other words, use differences in design elements to help your audience figure out what is really important.
- Vary the length of each slide's information content. Avoid creating several slides in a sequence with the same slide layout and with the same number and length of bulleted items.
- Always check the spelling of slideshow content, and if possible, ask a colleague to proofread the content. A proofreader who is not a subject matter expert can often help identify gaps in content as well as mechanical problems.

Step 8: Add Other Objects to Selected Slides, Such as Sound, Photos, Charts, Tables, Movies, Maps, and Diagrams


Multimedia objects can certainly add interest to a slideshow. However, many beginning presenters make the mistake of thinking that each slide must contain something of interest beyond its text content. When used sparingly, multimedia objects embedded in a slideshow presentation can highlight important information or supplement that provided by the presenter. Photos, graphics, sound, color, clip art, maps, and other attention-getting devices are most effective at the beginning of a presentation to grab attention; they may become a distraction if used extensively throughout a presentation.



An exception to this guideline applies to slideshows that are specifically designed to be stand-alone presentations, such as those intended for the web. Stand-alone slideshows can often benefit from more multimedia material because, without a presenter, the slideshow must carry the entire weight of the presentation.

Especially when adding sound, photos, movie clips, and other multimedia materials to a slideshow, a presenter must observe copyright laws and cite the source of materials that are not the presenter's own work.

ON THE WEB

 Guy Kawasaki, a venture capitalist, formulated a 10-20-30 rule for slide design. You can view a short video clip of Guy discussing his rule (www.youtube.com/watch?v=liQLdRkOZiw).

Organize the Slides into a Slideshow

Step 9: Decide on the Sequence of Slides

Presentation software permits a designer to copy, move, and delete slides easily using a slide sorter or other tools. As part of the normal presentation editing process, slides can be moved around, split into more than one slide, or combined with others.