

Making Slide Shows in Acrobat

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PowerPoint has traditionally been the software of choice for slide shows at conferences and meetings. Its ease of use has made the program ideal, along with its universality among scientists and engineers.

The program does have its drawbacks, however. Most notably, it is saved in a format that essentially makes it unusable for any other purpose than that of a slide show. It cannot be used for publication, and, as many discover all too late, it is not the software of choice for making posters (both these phenomena go back to Microsoft's refusal to pay a license to Adobe for PostScript®, the universally used “page description language” among publishers). The remainder of the drawbacks exist when the slide show needs to be distributed. Newer versions of PowerPoint can make HTML files for posting on a web site by using *Save As* under *File*, but saving in the PowerPoint format has not evolved as a way to view slide shows on the web. And while it's true that PowerPoint slide shows can be encrypted to limit public viewing by subscribing to a service provided by Microsoft, no other lower level of protection from public viewing is available. Additionally, PowerPoint is not a perfectly seamless cross-platform (PC to Macintosh and vice versa) format, nor are the files backwards compatible (later versions don't always open correctly in early versions of PowerPoint).

The solution to these drawbacks can be found in the full version of Acrobat (and not the free, downloadable version of Acrobat Reader). Acrobat can be used just like PowerPoint for presenting slide shows, with additional settings for password security. This file format is transferable to TIFF (tagged information file format) and to EPS (encapsulated postscript) files (easily done via Photoshop), and it supported by popular web browsers. Once a file is saved in Acrobat, the issues of cross-platform and backwards compatibility are, for the most part, solved.

Acrobat also has its limitations: animation features (like lettering that flies in) are not included, other than that of making a stand alone slide show that automatically advances slides (often called a kiosk presentation). Also, very limited editing exists within Acrobat, making its use frustrating when desiring last minute changes.

Transfer PowerPoint to Acrobat. The best of both worlds can come together by transferring PowerPoint presentations to Acrobat, taking advantage of PowerPoint's ease of use and Acrobat's security and distribution features. Once the full version of Acrobat is loaded on your computer, then PowerPoint files can be printed (not saved) to Acrobat. To save to Acrobat do the following on the Windows platform: under *File*, choose *Print* and then select either Acrobat Distiller or Acrobat PDF Writer (whatever appears as a choice, depending on your operating system). Be sure to select *Properties*, then look for *Adobe PDF Settings* (or *Settings*, or *Options*, or *Advanced*). Look for an arrowhead and click to reveal a drop down list. Choose *Screen* or *On Screen* as the setting, a reference to the fact that the slides will be viewed from a computer screen.

On a Macintosh, OSX: Under *File*, choose *Print*. In that dialogue box, look for *Output Options*, or search through options to find a *Print to File* checkbox and a *PDF (Portable Document Format)* setting, or look for a *Print to PDF* option. You may not find a way to choose the resolution settings for Acrobat, but the resultant slides appear to have the same resolution as in PowerPoint. Note that Macintosh systems show

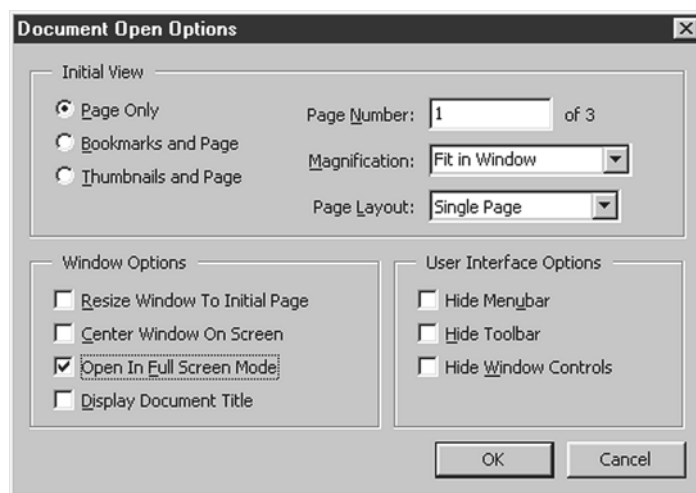
that Acrobat pdf files have been created long before it actually happens, so patience is required. Also, the switch from Macintosh OS9 to OSX has created a wellspring of complaints about Acrobat's performance, much of that fixed (apparently) with the release of Acrobat 6.0.

Problems with scrambling of lettering and missing files/lettering might arise if documents are linked in PowerPoint to another application, such as Excel. If that has occurred, select everything in individual PowerPoint slides using *Select All* (under *Edit*), look for the *Draw* icon and click to reveal drop down list and select *Group*. PowerPoint may open a dialogue box to ask whether you want all objects made into PowerPoint objects: you do. If that doesn't solve transfer problems, it is probably best to abandon the transfer, and to be alerted that these files will very likely present future problems when printing.

PowerPoint may hang up, or the computer can crash, depending on the file size of the slide show. File sizes over ~4 megabytes may cause problems. In that instance, print PowerPoint slides to Acrobat files one by one, or in smaller subsets. Or, copy half of the slide show to a new presentation.

Once the slide show is in the Acrobat format, then security and encryption changes can be instituted. Acrobat offers the kind of security that limits access to the file either by password protection, or by limiting access to a list of “trusted” people. In both instances, the person sending the document can limit by password those who are able to open the document. Unfortunately, simply because the document is downloaded, the *Save As* function cannot be disabled, and those who open the document with the full version of Acrobat can simply save it with another file name (the *Save* function does not exist, however, in Acrobat Reader). That makes it no better than protection against materials distributed on paper, since these, too, can be copied, and so the level of protection is still not bullet proof. However, it does limit just anyone from opening the document.

Setting Security. To set security, under *File* select *Document Security* in Acrobat 5.0. Click the arrowhead in the *Document Security* dialogue box and highlight *Acrobat Standard Security* (this article does not cover the other selection, “Self Sign Security”). You will be given two passwords: one for those who open the document, and a master password for making further changes to the document. Save the passwords, because these cannot be retrieved. Options in this dialogue box can be checked to limit functionality, each of which will cause these functions to be grayed out in the recipient's version of Acrobat.



Caption for Figure 1: The Document Open dialogue box needs to be reset from its default settings so that the slides Fit in Window, and Single Pages are displayed in Full Screen Mode.

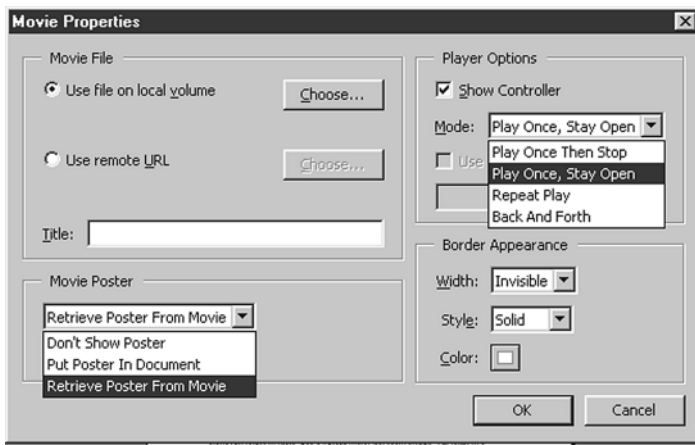


Figure 2: The Movie Properties dialogue box, what appears after outlining a rectangle with the Movie tool icon, can be set to display a still (poster) from the linked movie file. The way in which the movie is played can also be selected, along with a border and its appearance.

Open options. For a slide show, the entire screen needs to be darkened with only the slide of interest displayed. That can be accomplished in Acrobat 5.0 by specifying the *Open* options under *Document Properties* (in the *File* drop down menu). Set *Magnification* to *Fit in Window*. Set *Page Layout* to *Single Page* and check *Open in Full Screen Mode*. Be sure to save your changes and then check your settings by closing the slide show and opening it again. To go from full screen mode to being able to see the toolbars, simply press the escape key (or control/command + L) on your keyboard. To advance the slides, click with the mouse left mouse button, turn the wheel if you have that kind of mouse, or use arrow keys on the keyboard. To go back, use the back arrow key (Page Up). To go to a specific page, press Control/Command + N and enter the page number. To see all the slides as thumbnails, leave the Full Screen Mode and click on a tab at the left side entitled *Thumbnails*, then scroll down to find the slide of interest.

Inserting Movies. The transfer of files from the PowerPoint format to Acrobat will not include the transfer of movies. This must be done manually within Acrobat. The format of movies that can be played in Acrobat are limited to 2: .avi (Windows) and .mov (typically Macintosh) formats. These are further limited by the compression/decompression (CODEC) utilities used to make the .avi and .mov files. To be safe, be sure the .avi has been compressed with Cinepak and the .mov with Sorenson. Movie files can be checked by double clicking on the .avi or .mov file, and then checking *Properties* or *Details* in the movie player program that auto-plays the file. If the CODEC utility was not Cinepak or Sorenson, you might yet want to test its playback in Acrobat, but don't expect it to work.

This limitation to the movie files accepted by Acrobat can be troublesome, but these CODECs and file formats go back farthest historically, and, because of that, these are sure to playback on nearly every computer. As a rule of thumb, if the files are distributed to both Macintosh and PC users, it works best to use .avi files, compressed either with Cinepak or MPEG, since that works in the Windows environment, and on the Macintosh (QuickTime replays .avi files). Unfortunately, files saved in the historical .mpg format do not replay in Acrobat (in opposition to the 'best' format to use from the last article I wrote: the best so long as it's not linked in Acrobat!).

Find the slide(s) in which movies were embedded in the PowerPoint slide show. Choose the movie icon, click and drag to mark the position in which the movie will appear. Please note that the size of the rectangle you create will also define the dimensions at which the

movie is displayed. If the rectangle is shaped incorrectly, the movie may appear elongated in the x or y direction, though Acrobat attempts to preserve the aspect ratio.

The *Movie* dialogue box will appear. In that box, specify the location of the movie file. Note that the movie file is not embedded into Acrobat: the movie file exists as a separate file that is linked to Acrobat. Thus, the movie file must be sent along with the Acrobat file when distributing. It appears that the location of the file is relative: Acrobat does not appear to look for the file in the same location when the PDF/movie files are placed on another computer and then opened in Acrobat Reader. The same is true when the Acrobat file and the movie file are burned to a CD and then distributed.

Also in the *Movie* dialogue box, click on arrowhead to reveal drop down for *Movie Poster* and choose *Retrieve Poster from Movie*. In that instance a still image of the movie will not need to be created. Instead, Acrobat will take the first frame of the movie and display that as a still until the movie is played, but not immediately, and not always in my own experience. Choose *Don't Show Poster* if you do not wish to display the first still frame of the movie.

Finally, if you wish to show a toolbar to control stopping, starting and using the arrow to find a part in the movie (what is called "scrubbing" in video editing), click on *Show Controller*. If you click on the arrowhead below that selection, it reveals several choices for how the movie runs. Make a choice and then choose whether or not you want Acrobat to make a border around your movie in the *Border Appearance* section of the dialogue box. *Border Appearance* drop down arrows reveal choices for line thickness, style and color. Do not click on the *Floating Window* unless you do not wish to have the movie autoscale and appear inside the rectangle you have drawn.

To test whether the movie plays, click on the hand tool. The hand cursor will change to a movie icon when it is moved inside the movie rectangle. Click or double click and the movie will play.

More about Movies. The ability to link movies to an acrobat file provides a means for creating captions that include copyright, owner, and movie information. While a viewable movie on the web can be made with the tried and true technology of a gif stack and the HTML page can contain movie information, the movie is not secure from being copied by the general public. Password protection can be created for viewing an acrobat file that contains a linked movie. Movie files can be included with PDF files in one of two ways. Either both can be included as a single zip file for downloading off the web, or the movie can be played on the web when the acrobat file is opened. The latter instance is not recommended because the movie file must be highly compressed to replay *sans* glitches on the web with a consequent loss of resolution and tiny dimensions, and the browser that is used must "support" the display of PDF files within the browser itself (current versions of Netscape do not). If the movie is distributed via CD, Acrobat files can also include password protection as an added advantage over the distribution of .mpg files.

Many more functions can be discovered in Acrobat through the use of their help file. These include the ability to include comments, make fields for interactive documents (such as quiz responses in a classroom), options to bookmark and link files, to add javascript for custom functions, and to make web pages into Acrobat files. The program has many uses; among these its capacity for slide presentations, password protection and confidence in its playback on any operating system. In a world in which images and movies are demanded for proof of findings, this file format also rises as the format of choice. ■