

Action settings and interactivity

Interactivity in Powerpoint

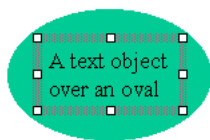
Powerpoint includes a small set of actions that can be set to occur when the user clicks, or simply moves the cursor over an object. These actions consist of links to other slides in the presentation, to other presentations or can even launch another application. These actions can provide a means for a presenter to engage an audience interactively or can be used to prepare a program where a user interacts with it on their own.

Any object in powerpoint—graphics, images or text—can have actions assigned.

There are two ways to assign actions to objects, with the **Action settings** command under the **Slide Show** menu, and with the **Hyperlink** command under the **Insert** menu. There are some critical differences in the way actions are assigned between these two options.

On the Autoshapes menu on the Drawing toolbar and under the Slide show menu are also a set of preset action buttons. They have icons, presumably indicating their function, and already have the action settings set. There are some differences in the way actions settings are dealt with, particularly when hyperlinking to files external to your presentation. *Remember, any object can be assigned action settings, so you aren't limited to using the preset action buttons.*

The actions only work in the Slide Show mode.



If the action setting was applied to the oval, it will only work where the text block doesn't cover the oval



An object can be transformed to a text object, but the text won't wrap inside the object. The limits of the graphic object define the area that will trigger the action



If actions have been assigned to any of these objects that have been grouped together, the action won't work in Powerpoint 97, 98, or 2001. It will work in 2000. If the group was created with Powerpoint 2002, the actions will work in any version.

Considerations on assigning actions to objects

Any object can be made an action button, but there are some limitations.

Groups cannot be made into action buttons.

If an object which has been assigned an action setting in is grouped with other objects it will not behave as an action button in Powerpoint 97, 98, and 2001, but will work properly in 2000. If the group was created in Powerpoint 2002, the actions will work in any version of Powerpoint. If ungrouped though, the objects will retain the assigned action settings. The safest scheme is to not group objects you wish to behave as action buttons.

If another object, such as a text object is on top of an action button, it will not behave as an action button. To label objects you wish to behave as action buttons, select the object, select a typeface or size from the font menus on the formatting toolbar, and the object will become a text object, yet retain its shape. Keep in mind that the text area will be a rectangle defined by the limits of the object and won't necessarily wrap inside the object if it is non-rectangular. Another option if you wish to have a separate text object and button object is to assign the action to both of them.

If you're in the text mode, with text selected, applying an action setting will change that text to blue and underlined, like a hyperlink in a web browser. This can affect the legibility of the type against a colored background. If the entire text block is intended to be the button, select the text block as an object and then assign the action

If you copy and paste an object which has action settings assigned, the new copy will retain those action settings. (That goes for custom animation too.)

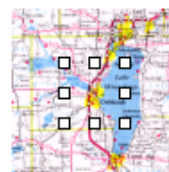
Another solution to making action buttons for groups and odd shapes is to draw a shape on top of the area you wish to behave as an action button and give it the properties of no line and no fill. This is a good way to make hot spots in images. Keep in mind that invisible objects are a little hard to keep track of.



A text object

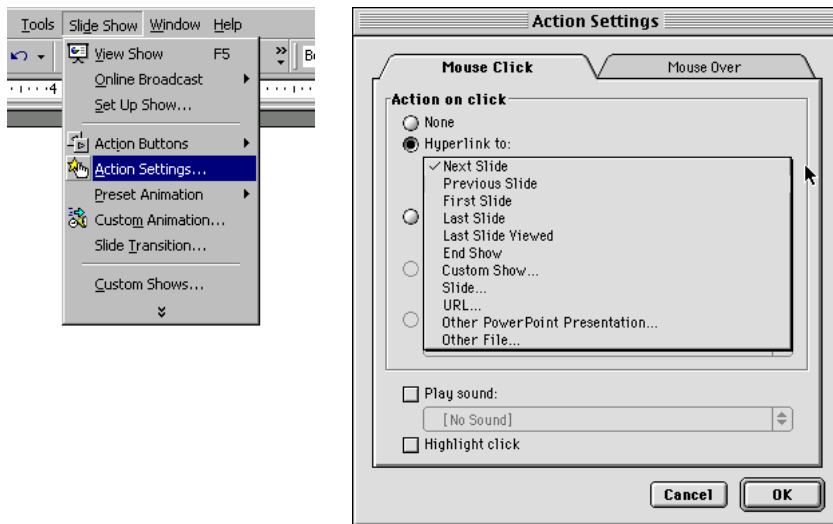


A text object which has an action setting assigned while in the text editing mode.



A rectangle with no fill and no line on top of an image

Action settings and interactivity



Action settings

With an object selected, choose **Action Settings** under the **Slide show** menu.

Notice the action can be triggered by either Mouse over or Mouse click..

You can set a sound to play or have the object highlighted when moused over to reinforce the it's nature as a button, and set highlighting and a sound on the mouse click to give the user feedback that they've affected an action.

The actions are basically just hyperlinks to other slides, presentations, internet sites, or files in other applications.

Next slide

Goes to the next slide in the normal order of the presentation

Previous slide

Goes to the previous slide in the normal order of the presentation.

First slide

Goes to the first slide in the normal order of the presentation.

Last slide

Goes to the last slide in the normal order of the presentation.

Last slide viewed

If the user had been moved to a slide from a button on another slide, this action returns them to that slide, no matter where it is in the normal order of the presentation. Often buttons on several slides may link to a single slide. Using this action always returns them to the slide they came from.

End show

Exits the show and returns to the mode the show was started in. If the presentation was saved as a Powerpoint show, in Windows it exits completely out of Powerpoint; on the Macintosh, it exits from the presentation, but leaves Powerpoint itself active.

Custom show

Takes the viewer to a special sequence of slides (other than the presentation's normal sequence) that may not include all the slides in the presentation. These can be set up with the Custom Show menu item under the Slide Show menu, or can be set up when you assign this action. In some cases you may have different audiences who might have to see slides in a different order or a different combination.

Slide

Takes the viewer to a specific slide, designated by it's title. If the order of the presentation changes, the link will still point to this slide, even if the slide was untitled.

URL

If the computer is properly set up for the internet and the URL is a web page, Powerpoint will launch the default browser and display that web page. To return to the current presentation, the user must exit or quit the browser, or select the presentation from the task bar (Windows) or the Application menu (Macintosh)

If the URL refers to a Powerpoint presentation that resides on a web server, the presentation launches and runs like any Powerpoint presentation, except it might respond a little slowly. Keep in mind that font compatibility problems may exist if the local computer doesn't have fonts installed that were used in the presentation. At the end of the presentation, the user will return to the original presentation.

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Addressing of files linked to Powerpoint presentations

Several actions that can be assigned, as well as inserted sounds and movies, refer to files that are not part of the Powerpoint file. When the action button linking to the file is clicked, or the movie or sound has to be played, Powerpoint has to be able to find the file in order to display or play it.

Powerpoint can record the location, or “address” of the file in one of two ways. It can record the complete pathname which includes the disk, any folders it might be in, and finally the file name. This is usually referred to as an absolute address. Or it can simply record the address as it relates to the original file. If they are both in the same folder, this relative address is simply the filename.

Absolute addressing

For example. If, from my presentation *mainfile.ppt*, I had linked to a file named *linkedfile.ppt* on my C: drive in a folder called *addressing* which was in a folder called *examples*, the entire path name or address would be *C:\examples\addressing\linkedfile.ppt*. With an absolute address, no matter where **on your computer** the file from which I am linking is, Powerpoint will be able to find *linkedfile.ppt*.

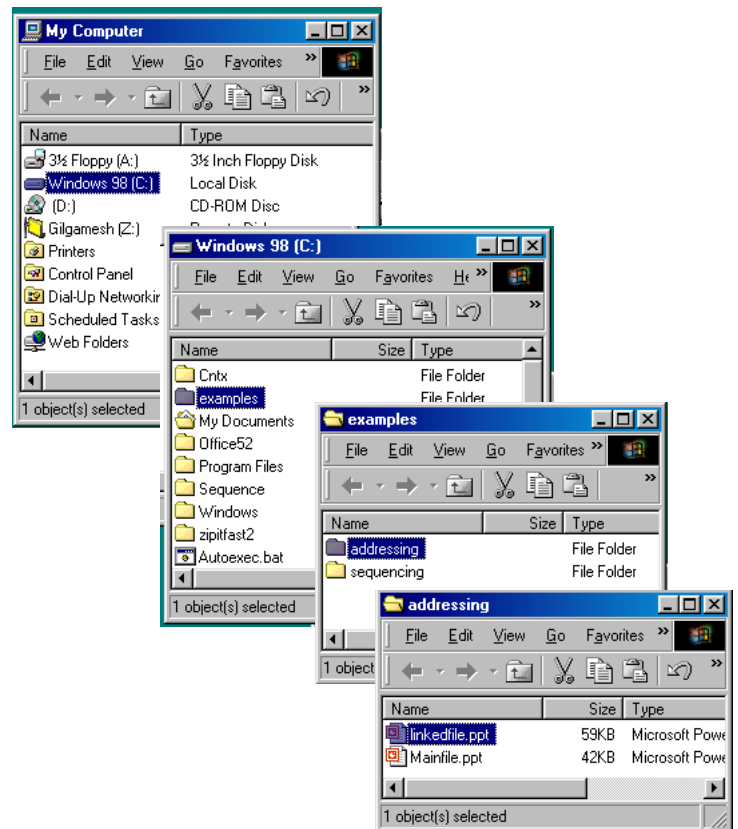
This works fine until I have to take my presentation to a **different** computer:

My original presentation, *mainfile.ppt* and the linked presentation, *linkedfile.ppt* are in the *examples* folder. If I copied that folder to a floppy drive, a zip disk, a CD or just copied over the network to another computer; Powerpoint wouldn't be able to find *linkedfile.ppt* when I clicked on my action button because the absolute address *C:\examples\addressing\linkedfile.ppt* is no longer correct.

Relative addressing

A relative address just refers to the linked file as it is located relative to the original file. If that original file is in the same folder as the linked, the relative address is simply the file name.

The solution to this problem is to put all the files involved in a presentation in a folder; use relative addressing—that is just the file name—and always copy the whole folder.



Action settings only allow absolute addresses, use Hyperlink command instead.

The problem arises when using the Action Settings command to link to external files. Powerpoint uses absolute addresses with the Action settings command.

Another similar command, **Hyperlink**, is available under the **Insert** menu that accomplishes the same thing and allows you to edit the address so Powerpoint can find the files if they are moved to a different location.

Addressing with preset action buttons

If you are trying to make the external link with one of the preset action buttons, even if you use the Hyperlink command under the Insert menu, Powerpoint will display the Action settings dialogue and will only allow absolute addresses. Remember any object can be assigned an action or hyperlink, so just create your own button to overcome this limitation.

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Linking to other Powerpoint presentations

You can create a link which displays another Powerpoint file.

You may want to use all or part of a previously prepared presentation without incorporating it into the new file, or use one Powerpoint file as an index to several other files, on a CD-ROM for example.

If you have an automatically running animated sequence in your presentation that you have linked to with the Slide action setting, the automatic sequence will only play the first time it is displayed by clicking on an action button. If the sequence was linked to from a button on another slide or a second time from the same button, it will appear as a static graphic. If, however, the automatic sequence is set up as another powerpoint file, it will play everytime it is invoked by an action button.

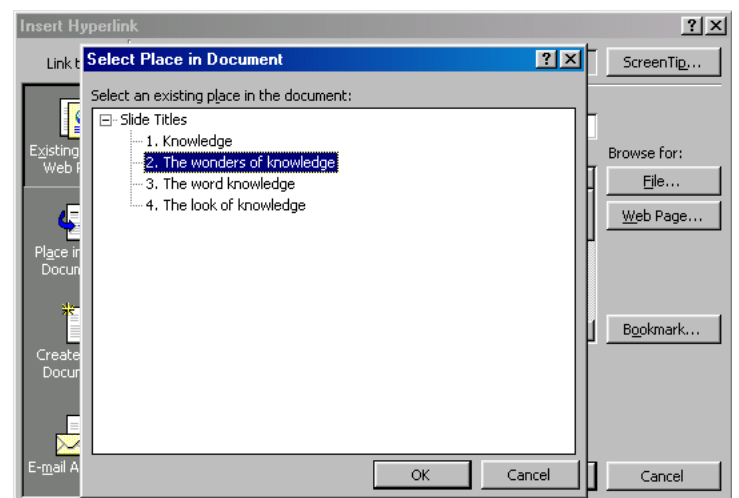
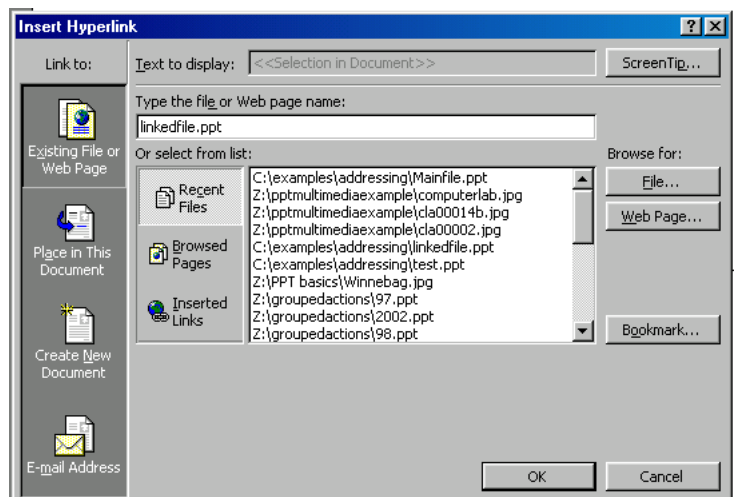
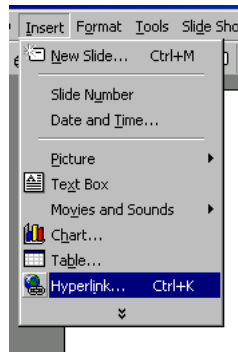
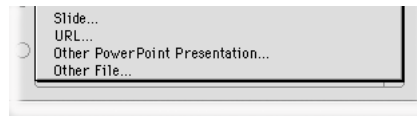
When you get to the end of the external file, it will return to the original presentation. If you hit the escape key when in the external file, it will return to the original file. It is also possible to put an end show action button in the external show, which will return you to the original file.

If you intend to use the presentation on another computer than the one on which it was developed, use the **Hyperlink** command under the **Insert** menu in order to be able to have a relative address that will still be valid. **Be sure to put both the original and the linked presentations in the same folder before you establish the link.**

Select **Hyperlink** under the **Insert** menu. To insert a file, click on the **Existing file or Web page** button at the top left of the dialogue. If you recently had the file open, click **Recent files** to display a list of recently used files and click on the file you wish to link to. If it is in the same folder as the current presentation, it will insert just the file name in the "Type the file of Web page name:" window so the file address will remain relative to the original presentation as long as they both stay in the same folder. If it's not a recently used file, click **Browse** and find the file in the normal manner.

If you wish to link to a particular slide in the new presentation, click **Bookmark**, and a list of slides in the new presentation will be displayed.

Sometimes it's preferable to enclose all the linked files inside a second folder. The addressing will still be relative if that folder is inside the one the original file is in.



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Linking to a file from a different application

You can create link to a file from a different application—an exercise in Excel or a reading in an Adobe Acrobat PDF file, for example. When the action button is clicked, the new application is launched and the file displayed.

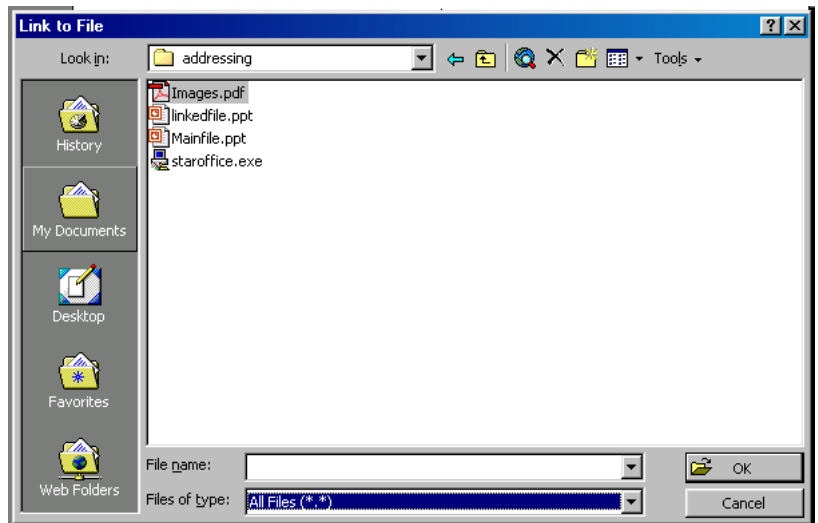
Use the Insert Hyperlink command rather than the action setting if you intend to move the presentation to a different computer. Make sure the linked file is in the same folder as the Powerpoint presentation.

It may be necessary to change the “Files of Type” window to “All files” in order them to appear on the list of available files when you browse to locate the file.

The new application has to be installed on the computer the presentation is run on. As long as the file has the correct three letter extension, Windows will be able to launch the application. The application that created the file is part of a Macintosh file, so no extension is needed on a Macintosh, but it's a good idea to include it if the presentation may be distributed cross platform, or on the web.

In order to return to the original presentation, either Exit (Windows) or Quit (Macintosh) the new application. Selecting Powerpoint from the Task bar (Windows) or the Application menu or Dock (Macintosh) will also return you to the original presentation and leave the new file open.

If this is a presentation to be viewed by another user, it's a good idea to provide instructions on how to return to the presentation when they're done with the new application file.

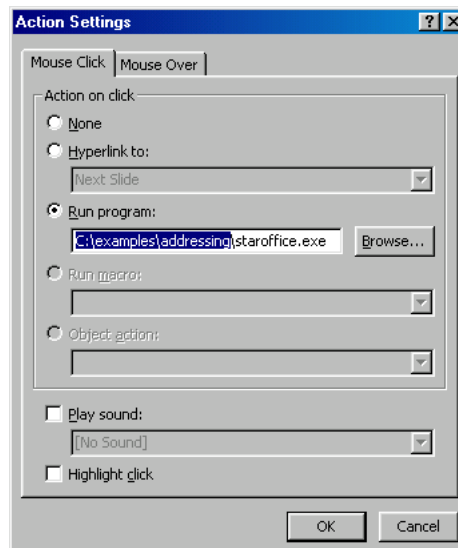


If the file doesn't appear on the list where you expect it to be, select All Files from the Files of type menu.

Linking to a program

Occasionally, multimedia files will be distributed as programs or applications rather than as files created by a program.

There is an action setting that allows you to choose programs. Although it inserts an absolute address, unlike the other action settings that reference external files, the address can be edited to remove the specific drive and higher level folders.



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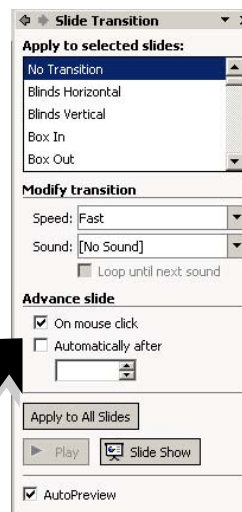
Controlling slide advance

When creating a program intended for interactive viewing, you may wish to prevent PowerPoint from advancing slides in its normal manner; that is, with a mouse click anywhere on the slide, or from advancing at all except via buttons you may place on the slide.

The **Slide Transitions** command under the **Slide Show** menu allows you to choose whether you want a slide to advance to on a mouse click (anywhere on the slide), or after a specified period of time.

If *neither* box is clicked the slide won't advance at all unless you have placed actions buttons on the slides.

If slide advance has been turned off in this manner, custom animations that animate on mouse clicks won't work, but animations that advance automatically on time will. If you really want the user to click through a sequence, create it as a series of slides with a Next slide button on each. Remember action settings are a property of an object, so once an action has been assigned to an object, you can just copy and paste it onto each slide in a series. Objects with action buttons that might be common to all slides can be placed on the master slide. If there are a few slides where you don't want the button, on the Background command under the Format menu is an option to Omit background graphics from Master:

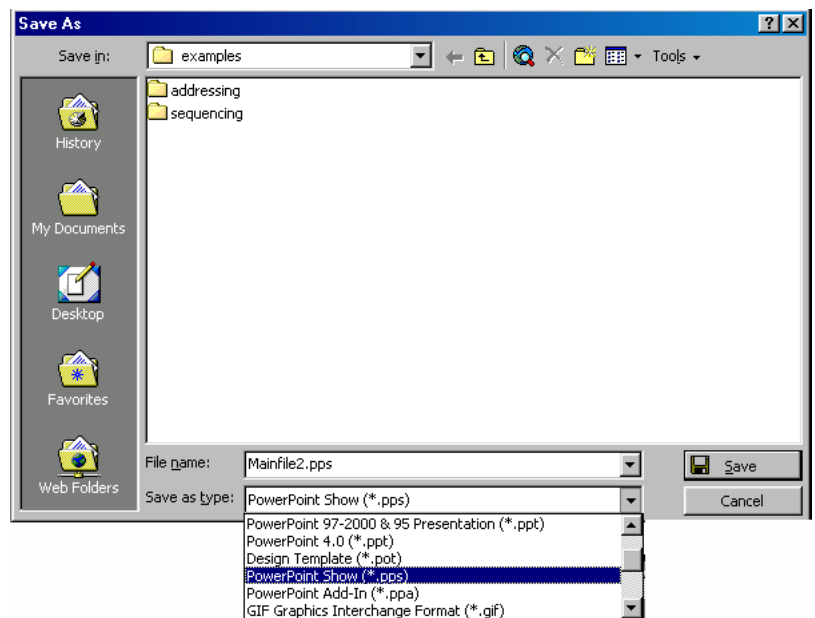


Saving as Powerpoint show format for interactive programs

When the file icon is double clicked, the Powerpoint Show format launches Powerpoint, but opens the presentation directly into the Slide Show view.

When the escape key is hit, the presentation reaches it's end, or the user clicks on an End show button, in Windows, Powerpoint closes the presentation and exits complete out of Powerpoint. On the Macintosh, the presentation is completely closed, but Powerpoint remains active.

In order to edit a presentation saved in the Show format, first launch Powerpoint, then use the open command. The presentation will open in the normal editing view.



Powerpoint viewer

Included on the installation CD's and downloadable from Microsoft's web site, is a free program which will show Powerpoint presentations if you wish to distribute your presentations to users who do not own Powerpoint. Some of the new animation features from Powerpoint 2002, the version in Office XP, will not play back in the free viewer.