

## Get Professional Results When Printing Presentations (Jan 09)

By Ellen Finkelstein

Many people print presentations as handouts but the results are often poor. Slides are usually designed for projecting on a screen, not for printing. And straight-up printing of a presentation doesn't make a very good handout. In this article, I'll discuss some of the opportunities and challenges of printing presentations.

### Why print a presentation?

I've had two clients who created presentations only for print: This means that they were never planning to display the presentation on a screen. In both cases, I was unprepared for the issues involved.

One was a manufacturer creating a brochure for sales reps. The company used PowerPoint to lay out the pages of the brochure, which allowed sales reps to easily switch photographs and text. Thus the sales reps could quickly make daily changes as they travelled from store to store.

I usually recommend compressing images to reduce the size of a presentation file. But in this instance, the client wanted high quality results. For example, the logo of the company included an uppercase "N." It was important that the diagonal line in the "N" was smooth, not jagged. That required high-resolution graphics.

The other client was presenting to potential investors at a meeting around a table. Here too, the idea was to use PowerPoint as a basic graphics program that was easy to edit. In fact, the data wasn't going to be ready until hours before the presentation, requiring a linked connection to an Excel spreadsheet.

And of course, there are handouts.

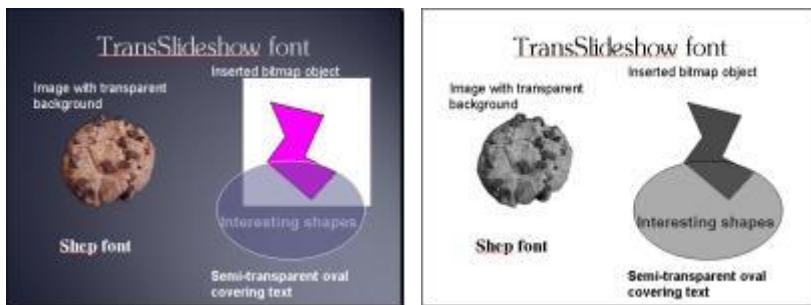
### Printing

If you'll be printing, the procedure is simple. Choose File> Print to open the Print dialog box. (In 2007, choose Office button> Print.) The display in the Print What drop-down list determines what will print; the default is Slides.

### Grayscale printing

Often, the presentation is printed in grayscale, rather than in color. It's cheaper, and many businesses use black & white laser printers. Your presentation may look entirely different when printed in grayscale. To test out the result, click the Color/Grayscale button on the Standard toolbar, and choose Grayscale. (In 2007, go to View tab> Color/Grayscale group> Grayscale.) You may be surprised at the results!

Here, I've created a test slide, based on reports of printing problems with transparency, non-standard fonts, inserted images, and backgrounds. On the left you see the original; on the right you see the slide in grayscale.



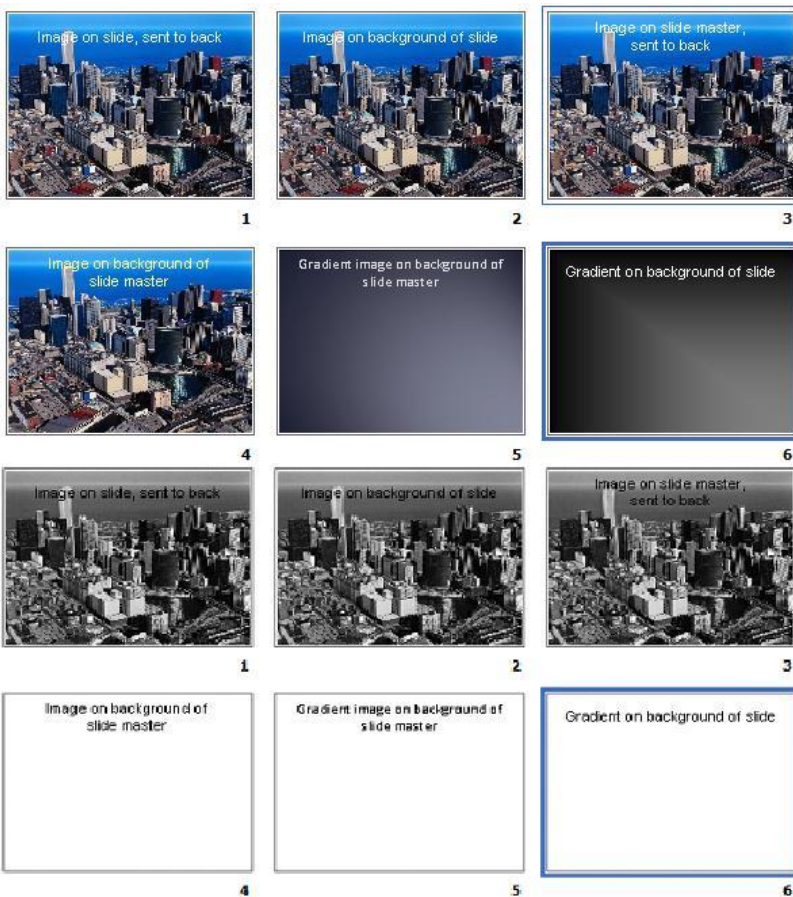
Notice that PowerPoint removed the background and switched the color of the text. Even if you format the background with a bitmap image, that image will disappear in grayscale. Removing the background makes a

certain amount sense, as it ensures legibility and saves lots of ink.

But PowerPoint doesn't always remove the background. In fact, it usually doesn't. When you print in grayscale:

- If you insert an image on an individual slide and send it to the back of the display order, that image remains
- If you insert an image on the background of an individual slide, that image remains. However, a gradient on the background of an individual slide disappears.
- If you insert an image on the slide master and send it to the back of the display order, that image remains
- Only if you insert an image on the background of the slide master does it disappear. A gradient also disappears.

Here you see the various situations in color, and then again in grayscale. Note that although the text is white in the color version and shows up well, it's black in the grayscale version and is not legible.

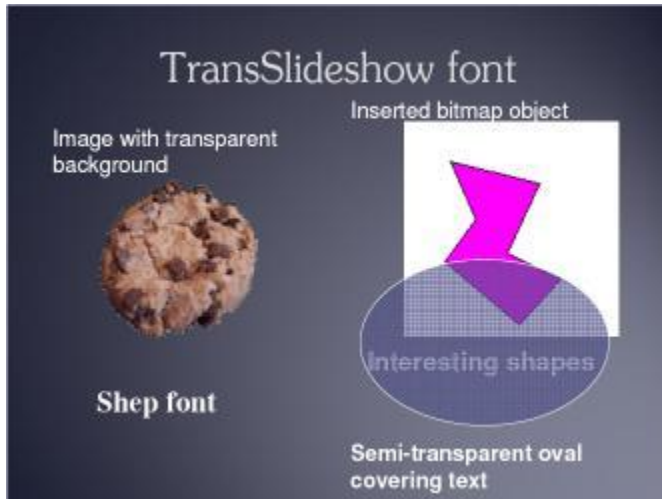


You probably won't remember all of these situations. So the point is to know that your slide may look so different in grayscale, that you may be unhappy with the result. Objects that seem to look very different in color may be indistinguishable in grayscale. So look before you leap! The Print dialog box has a Preview button. Be sure to use that Preview button!

### Converting to PDF

An important consideration is that many people convert a presentation to Adobe PDF format before printing. For example, conference organizers do this for the book they give attendees. Therefore you need to consider how the

presentation will translate to PDF format. Not all PDF converters get the same results. If your presentation may end up as a PDF file, you should test the results. The PDF format especially has problems with semi-transparent objects, which may become solid or hatched. Note the checks (hatching) on the semi-transparent oval, where it overlaps the text and white image background.

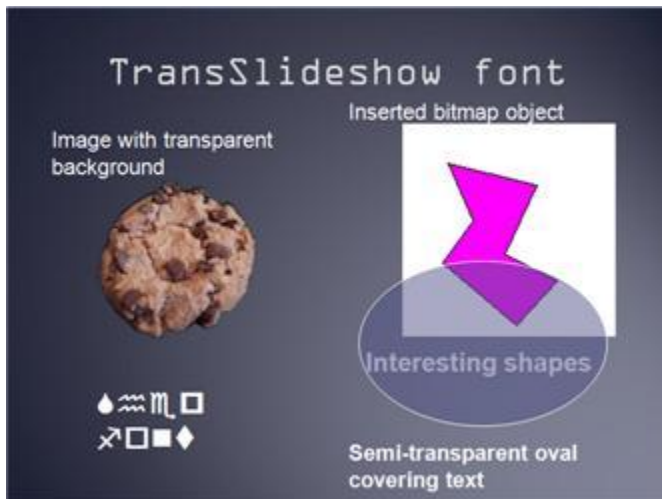


In this case, you'll get the best results if you use avoid semi-transparency altogether.

### Avoiding fonts mishaps

If you use fonts that are not universally available, you should embed them. If you send the presentation to someone else for printing, your fonts will not appear properly. To embed fonts, choose Tools> Options and click the Save tab. (In 2007, choose Office button> PowerPoint Options and click the Save category.) Check the Embed TrueType Fonts check box. Then choose the first option, which embeds only characters in use, to reduce the size of the file.

Here you see font problems with the title and the text box at the lower left.



### Other possible problems

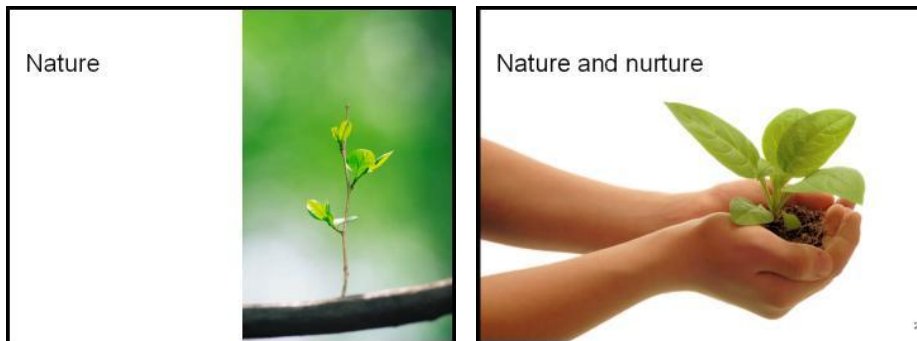
Some people have reported problems with graphics that have a transparent background, such as the chocolate chip cookie on the left. However, my cookie came through with its transparency intact.

Another problem sometimes reported is that inserted objects don't appear. The pink shape with the white square around it was created in Paint and then inserted using the Insert>Object feature. However, it came through fine, even on another computer.

### Considering animation

Printing shows all the objects on your slides. If your slides contain entrance and exit animations, the printed version simply includes everything. That makes for a confusing mess.

Here you see an animated slide with two phases. The animation fades out the first image and fades in the second.



Printed, you see both images, one on top of the other.

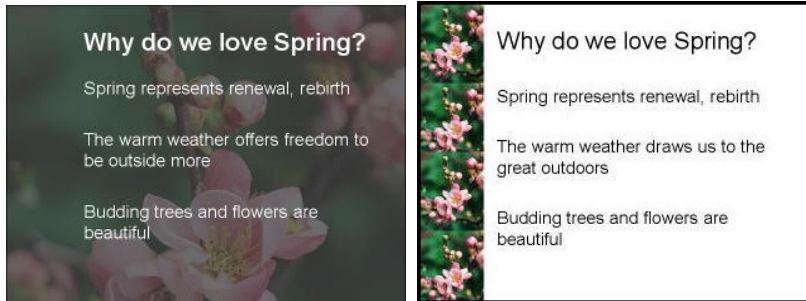


The only good solution would be to create a special version just for printing. You could separate this slide into two slides. This process can be a lot of work for complex animation!

## Create a background for printed handouts

If the background is a problem, you can easily create a special background for printing. If you use strong colors in your background, especially dark colors with light text, colors may bleed, or wick, when you print them, especially on an ink jet printer, reducing legibility. Also, light text is hard to read on a dark background when printed; we're simply used to black or blue text on white paper. Finally, you'll use a huge amount of ink.

Instead of a full-slide image, you can create a sidebar image, and leave the rest of the slide white.



## Creating useful handouts

Remember that printing a presentation is no substitute for the presentation itself, because your spoken words are missing. Remember that the slides themselves don't contain everything you said - at least they shouldn't. In fact, the "slides as handout" approach can be frustrating and misleading, and can lead to misinformed decisions.

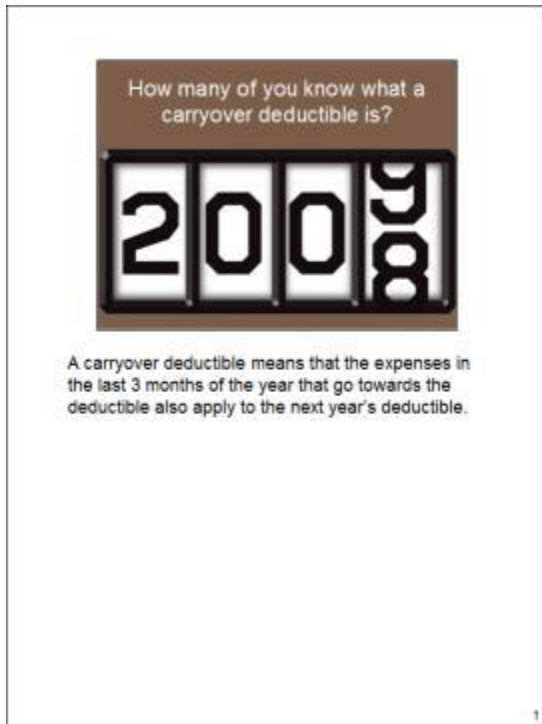
You may want the handout to substitute for the presentation in two situations:

- You want the audience to review the handout later and take away the same message you gave in person
- You send the presentation to people who missed the live talk  
A similar situation may occur when you want to repurpose the presentation for the Web or a kiosk. In all cases, you need to find some way to include the spoken words.

If you want audience members to take notes, you can hand out just the slides with space to take notes. This works well when the audience members are students, who should be taking notes anyway. However, if you're speaking to persuade, handing out slides that contain text can lead the audience to read slide text during your presentation, rather than listen to you. In other words, you'll lose their precious attention.

For handouts, a better option is Notes Pages. In the Print dialog box, choose Notes Pages from the Print What drop-down list. That's because this option lets you include information in addition to just the slides. Notes pages will include an image of the slide plus content that you enter in the Notes pane at the bottom of each slide in the presentation. By putting everything you plan to say in the Notes panes, you can ensure that recipients get the entire message. You can format Notes pages by going to the Notes Master; choose View > Master > Notes Page. (In 2007, choose View tab > Notes Master.) For example, you can add headers/footers and change the font and font size.

**You can even add a logo or supplemental images.**



The Handout Master offers less flexibility because it just shows the slides; you can add headers/footers and change the number of slides that appear on the page. Ironically, this means that the Handout Master is less useful for handouts than the Notes Master.

You can also choose File>Send To >Microsoft Office Word to import the presentation into Word. (In 2007, choose Office button> Publish> Create Handouts in Microsoft Office Word.) This gives you much more flexibility with your format. You can add contact information, supplementary text and graphics, and so on, because you're in a Word document.

If you'll be repurposing the presentation for a kiosk or the Web, consider adding narration as a way to include your spoken words. Perhaps you've seen PowerPoint presentations on the Internet and found them confusing; that's because they didn't include the entire message. You can write a presentation for a kiosk or the Web, without narration. You need to add more text (without resorting to all text, no images) and use complete, or almost complete, sentences. This type of presentation would be "Death by PowerPoint" in a live delivery, but might be necessary when no live presenter is available.

#### **About the Author:**

Ellen Finkelstein is the author of How to Do Everything with PowerPoint 2007 (and 2003), 101 Tips Every PowerPoint User Should Know, and PowerPoint for Teachers: Dynamic Presentations and Interactive Classroom Projects. She has written numerous articles on PowerPoint for printed magazines and Web sites.

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