

# The Power of Hiding Slides in PowerPoint (Jan 11)

By Robert Lane

When you “hide” a slide in PowerPoint, it doesn’t display while scrolling through the presentation in Slide Show mode. So why in the world would you ever want to do that ... have slides in your deck that the audience can’t see? In this article, we’ll look at several excellent reasons why that can greatly increase your flexibility and effectiveness as a speaker.

To set the stage, let’s start with common PowerPoint slide. It contains a lot of information—packed from top to bottom with topics to be discussed. A presenter normally walks through point after point, slide after slide until reaching final conclusion slides.

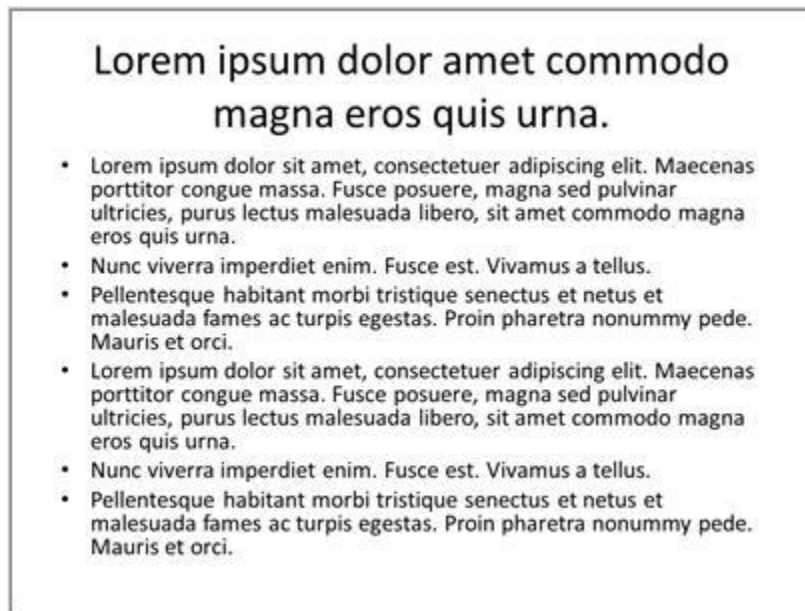


Figure 1

Well, that happens in a perfect world, anyway. All too often, our talks don’t go quite that smoothly. We start running out of time partway through and desperately wish some of those bullet points, or even entire slides, could be skipped along the way to reach more important content. Maybe you’ve been in situations like me where unexpected circumstances cut your speaking slot in half! Many of us also find ourselves facing uncertainty, realizing along the way that some of the carefully planned agenda is not relevant to our viewers—especially common in sales contexts.

In all cases, wouldn’t it be great to have a fast, easy way of making adjustments? Actually, you have that power at your fingertips right now, even with a standard PowerPoint deck. This is where hidden slides become your best friend. Here’s how.

## Using Hidden Slides

Earlier I mentioned that a hidden slide doesn’t display when normally scrolling through a show, but it DOES display if accessed via hyperlink. In other words, you can create a simple summary slide like the one shown in Figure 2 that links to additional detail on subsequent hidden slides, like that in Figure 3.



Figure 2

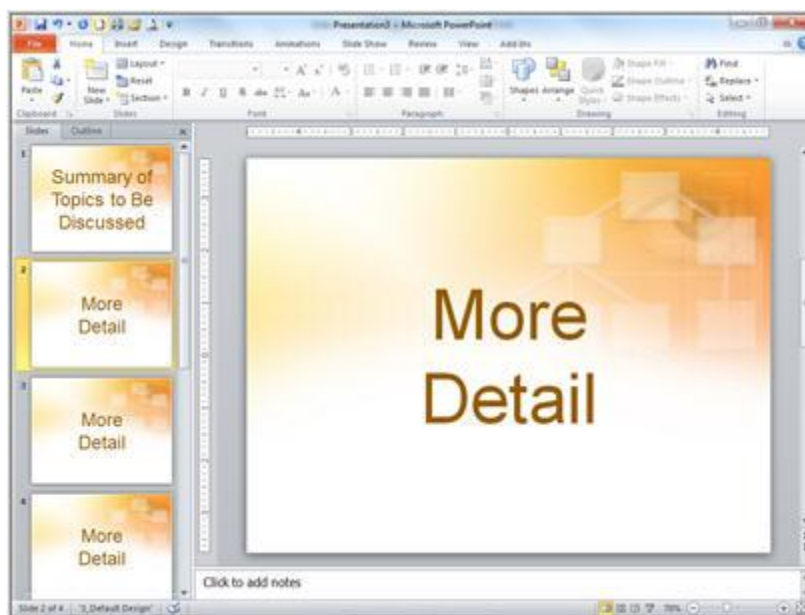


Figure 3

The presenter then has the option of displaying any amount of extra detail desired, or skipping that detail altogether with a normal scroll. Entire topics can be nestled away like this and shown only if, and when, needed. The added flexibility gives you enormous versatility to adjust timing and relevance in an instant.

For example, try these ideas. Use hidden slides for on-demand display of:

- A full research reference (in large type) if someone asks for the source of your information
- Example pictures that help explain difficult concepts or add information to what you say verbally

- Detailed specs that normally wouldn't be shown but that come in handy for answering specific audience questions or concerns
- Optional charts, diagrams, or tables
- Client-specific slides that only certain individuals or groups are allowed to see
- Audio, video, or imbedded documents that you pull up and play/show only if time and audience interest allow

You might even load a show with far more topics than will be needed during a particular talk, and have that content in reserve, just in case. Then it's easy to pick and choose what viewers see, customizing a message on-the-fly.

Want to try it? The steps below walk you through building a simple hidden-slide presentation, using techniques that can be easily adapted to your own materials.

### Hidden Slides Tutorial

Create a slide show containing four slides. Leave the first slide white, but format the backgrounds of the remaining slides to be red, blue, and yellow respectively by right-clicking each slide thumbnail, choosing Format Background from the options, and changing background colors accordingly (Figure 4). We're doing this simply to tell the slides apart.

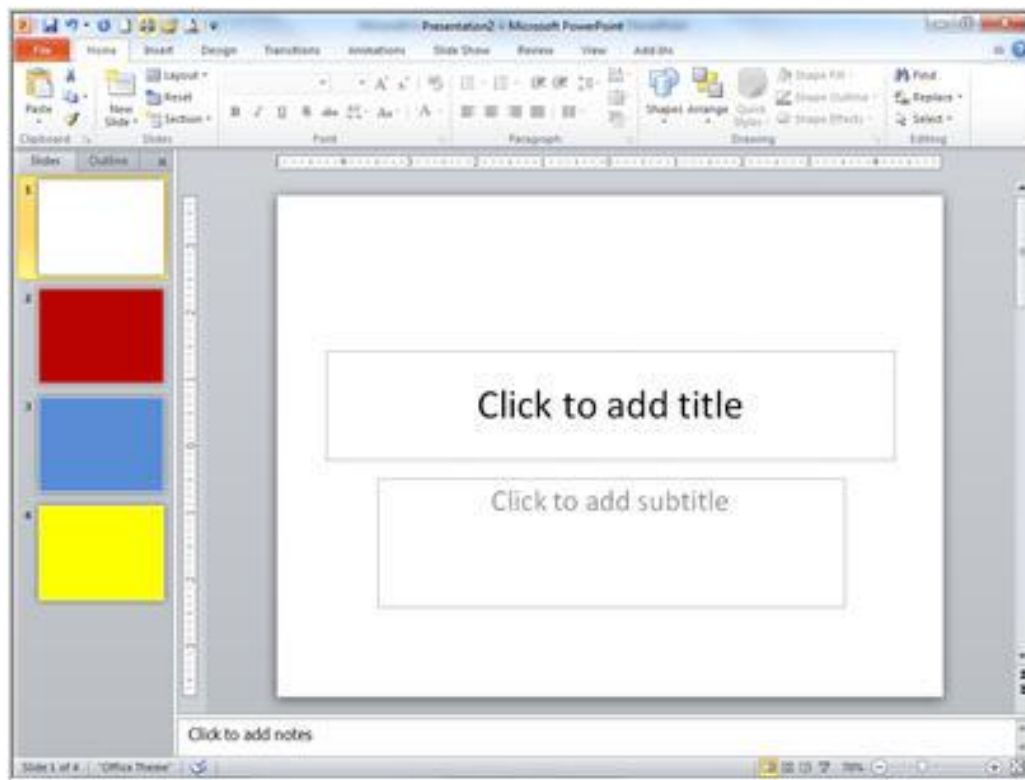


Figure 4

Let's hide the red and blue slides, slides 2 and 3. Do so by selecting the slide thumbnails and then clicking the **Hide Slide** button on the Ribbon's **Slide Show** tab (PowerPoint 2007 and 2010), or right click

the selected slide thumbnails and choose **Hide Slide** from the options (Figure 5).



Figure 5

When a slide is hidden, its slide number displays with a dashed line and the slide thumbnail displays lighter (PowerPoint 2010 and PowerPoint 2007—Figure 6). At any time, you can unhide a slide by repeating the steps just described.

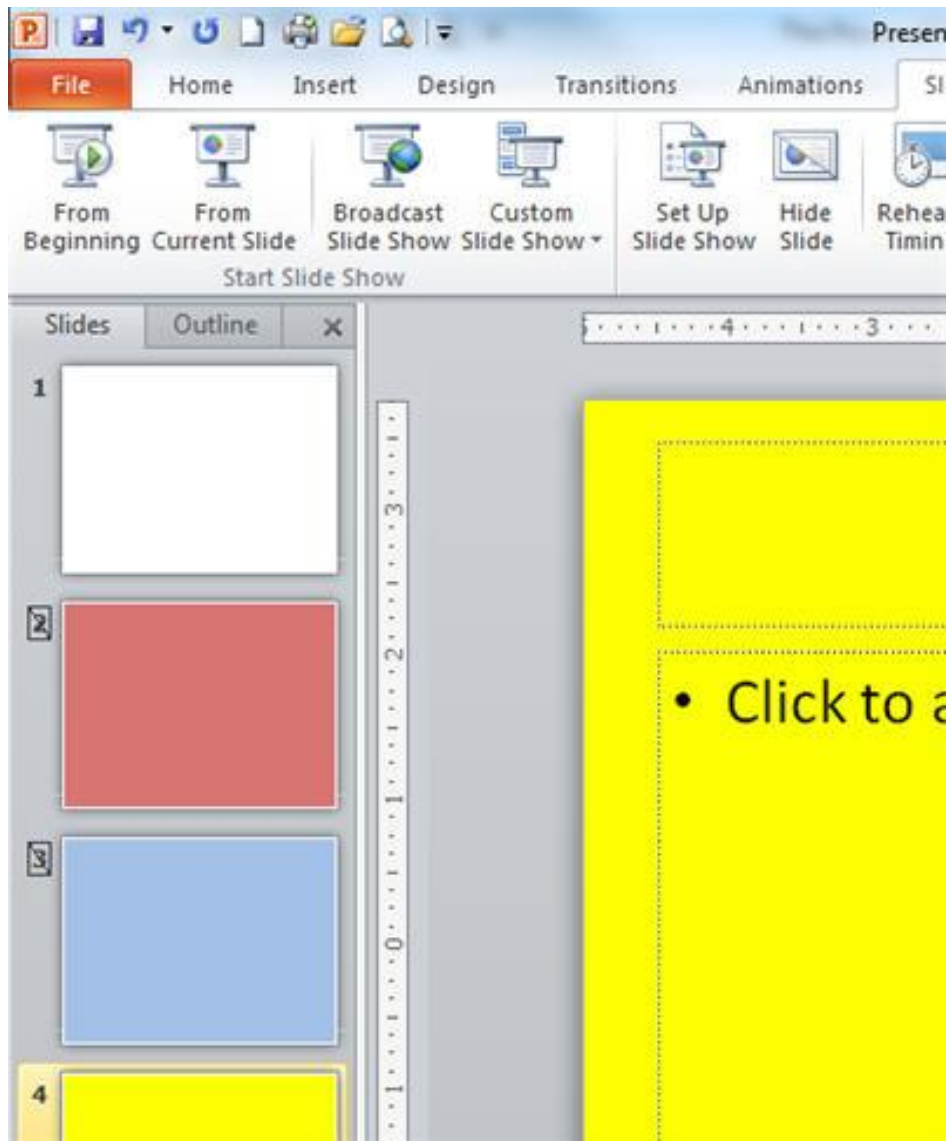


Figure 6

Next, click the slide 1 thumbnail to select slide 1. Let's start the slide show and scroll to see what happens. Notice that PowerPoint skips the red and blue slides entirely, immediately displaying the yellow slide instead.

Now, we'll add the hyperlinks. End the show and activate slide 1. Using the **Insert** menu, insert a shape onto its slide pane. Change the fill color of this shape to be red (we will link it to the red slide). Add a similar shape beside it and leave its fill color blue (we will link it to the blue slide). Right click the red shape and choose **Hyperlink** from the options. Next, click the **Place** in this document tab so that the four slides available in this show are visible in the Insert Hyperlink dialogue box.

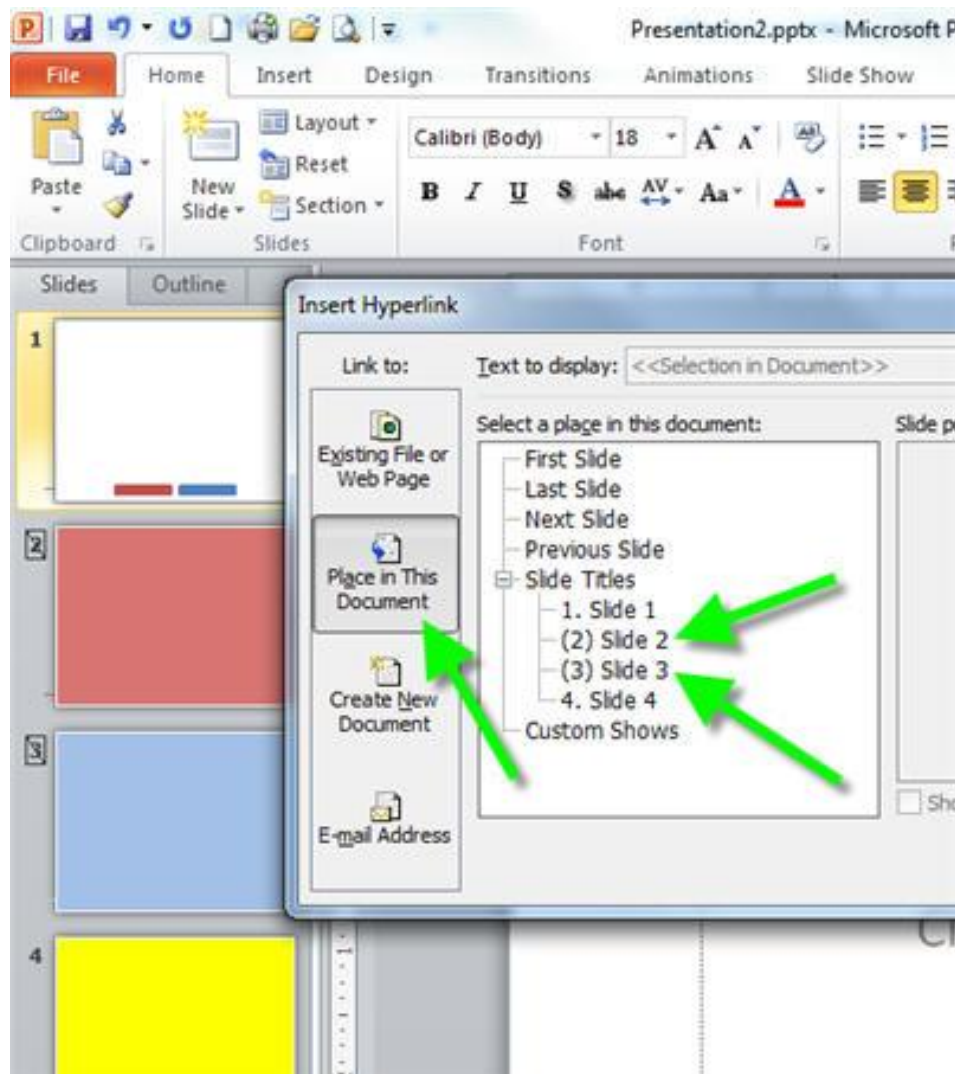


Figure 7

Click the slide 2 name and then click **OK** to close the dialogue box (Figure 7). Great! You just linked the red shape on slide 1 to the hidden red slide (slide 2). Do the same with the blue shape, linking it to slide 3, the hidden blue slide.

Let's see what happens now when running the slide show. Go back to slide 1 and start the show. Keep in mind that hyperlinks only work while the slide show is running. Click the red shape. The red slide should display immediately. If it doesn't go back and make sure your hyperlink is properly in place.

Now scroll through the show like normal. Notice PowerPoint still skips the blue slide because it is hidden. Go back to slide one (in Slide Show mode) and click the blue shape to verify that this link works properly as well.

We're almost done but let's add one more classy touch to improve these hidden slide techniques even more. Go to the red slide and add a new shape, and then change its background color to white. We're going to give this shape a special kind of hyperlink called an Action Setting.

Click the shape to make sure it is selected and then click the **Insert** tab on the Ribbon. Next, click the



**Action** button. In the **Action Settings** dialogue box that appears, toggle the **Hyperlink to** option and from its drop down menu, select **Last Slide Viewed**. Then click OK.



Figure 8

Clicking this shape during a slide show returns you to whatever slide you were on when accessing the red slide in the first place. In other words, you potentially could add 50 more slides to this show and put a link to the red slide on all 50 slides. In that case, during the performance you might click the red slide link while on slide 32. When finished viewing the slide, clicking the red slide's Last Slide Viewed link returns you to slide 32 automatically.

It's a graceful way of jumping out to show extra detail at any time and then returning exactly to where you left off in your presentation track to carry on.

Copy the new white shape and paste it onto the blue slide as well. Now you can start the slide show from the beginning and access either the red slide or the blue slide, and then return to the white slide to select another option or scroll to continue with the rest of your talk as usual.

Apply these same techniques now to your own slide shows. Here's an important suggestion. You'll gain even more flexibility and control if you spread topic details across multiple slides, rather than packing

them all onto single slides. Having separate pieces of information lets you jump to those points individually.

**About the Author:**

Robert Lane is a US-based presentation consultant specializing in visually interactive communication theory and is the author of *Relational Presentation, a Visually Interactive Approach*. His Web site [www.aspirecommunications.com](http://www.aspirecommunications.com) features free demonstration video clips, tutorials, guides, and other resources that further explain the concepts discussed in this article.

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