

Using PowerPoint for Genealogy

Ilene Murray
publications@stlgs.org

PowerPoint is a powerful tool for genealogy. You can use it to:

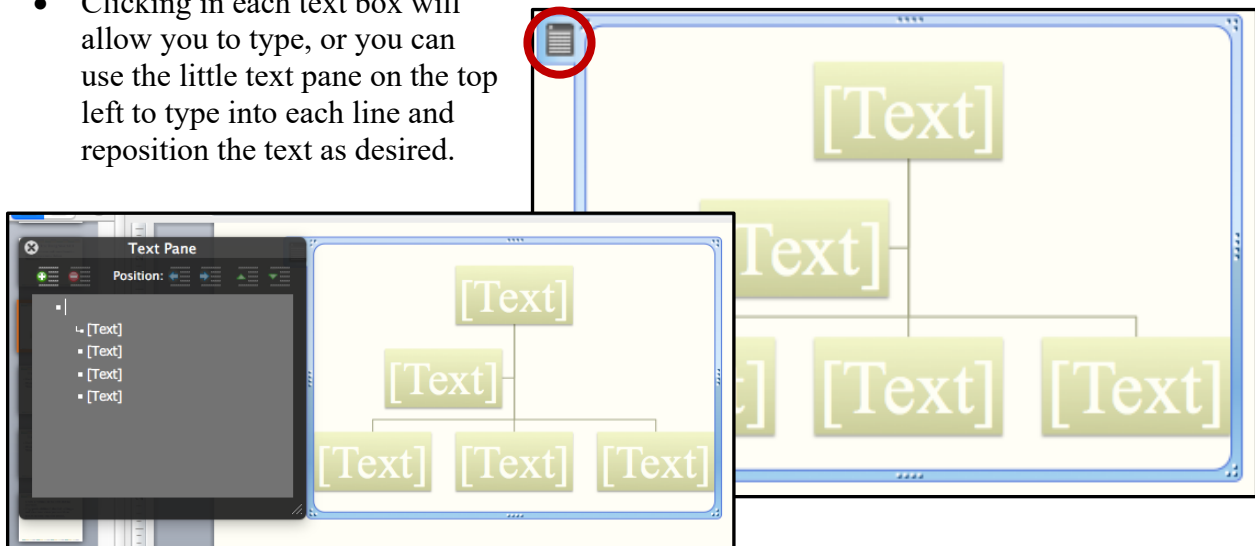
- Share family stories
- Create family trees and other charts
- Produce photo albums
- Organize and keep records of genealogy trips
- Teach new concepts to others

PowerPoint for Family Trees

Many templates are available for free. You can start at *Microsoft.com* where the templates use a feature built into PowerPoint called SmartArt. (**PLEASE NOTE: All directions are for the newest version of PowerPoint for PC and Mac and may not apply to older versions.**)

You also can create your own trees or charts with SmartArt.

- Use the **Insert** ribbon and choose “**SmartArt.**”
- When you see the dropdown menu, choose “**Hierarchy**” and then the basic chart.
- Clicking in each text box will allow you to type, or you can use the little text pane on the top left to type into each line and reposition the text as desired.

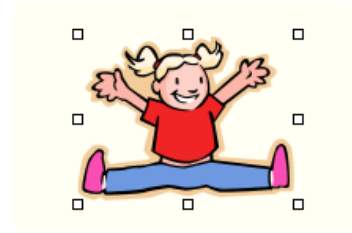


You can also create a family tree using shapes.

- From the **Home** ribbon, choose “**Shapes**” (or “**Basic Shapes**”).
- Select the rectangle and click and drag to make one the size you want.
 - Use the **Format** tab to select a fill color.
 - Choose a line color and adjust the thickness.
- In the **Home** ribbon, select “**Text Box**” to make a box in which to type.
 - Highlight the text to change the font, color, and/or size.
 - Resize the text box, if necessary, by using the white handles.

How to Resize and Place Graphics

- Every part of a slide is movable and resizable.
- You pick things up by clicking and dragging on their centers.
- You resize by clicking on an object so you can see the boxes, called **handles**, on its edges. Pull on a corner to keep proportionate sizing.



Pull diagonally to retain proportions.

Pick up and move by the center NOT by the handles.

PowerPoint for Photo Albums

PowerPoint can help you to:

- Celebrate a birthday or anniversary
- Honor the memory of a deceased relative
- Commemorate a special occasion
- Share family photos

Your photos should be resized for the computer screen. They do not need to be high resolution, since you won't be printing them.

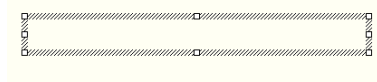
- Work with copies and not originals.
- Use a photo editing program to reduce resolution and to crop, if necessary.
- You only need a maximum of 96 dots per inch for viewing on a computer screen.

How to Insert Photos

- On the *Home* ribbon, go to “**Insert/Photo/From File.**”
- Navigate on your computer to the image you want and then click “**Insert.**”
- Move the photo where you want it, and resize it to fit your space.
- Alternatively, make copies of your photos and place them on your desktop. Once you can see them, you can simply drag them onto your slides.

How To Insert a Text Box

- Use the “**Insert**” section in the *Home* ribbon to find the “**Text Box**” icon.
- Click and drag to make a space in which to type.
- Once you have your words typed, choose your font, your font size, and font color. These are all on the *Home* ribbon.
- Resize the box to make it fit the space. Click on it so you can see its handles (white boxes) and then pull it to size.



Text box with handles

PowerPoint for . . .

You can use PowerPoint to:

- Share family vacations
- Tell stories in pictures
- Organize tombstones in cemeteries
- Narrate trips to hometowns or family reunions

PowerPoint Basics

- Your slides should be clear and easy to read.
- They should be checked and re-checked for spelling and grammar errors.
- They should be visually attractive.
- They should flow smoothly into each other without gimmicks.

Clear and Easy to Read

- Text needs to be large enough to read from a distance, typically 32 pt. or larger.
- Choose a font that is easy to read.
- Stay away from using *fancy scripts* or *too many italics*. Make sure any fonts you choose are basic ones in case you have to use a different computer for displaying.
- Never use more than two fonts in a slide show.
- TYPING IN ALL CAPS IS DISTRACTING AND DIFFICULT TO READ.
- Try to be consistent in form and style.
- Test your slides out from a distance to be sure the type is large enough.
- Resist the temptation to cram your slides full of text.
- Bottoms of slides are hard to read from the back of the room, no matter how careful you are.
- No slide should have more than three or four bullet points.
- You might want to put one fact on the screen at a time instead of the whole slide. Do this via **custom animation**.
- You should not have to read your information to your audience unless you are being taped.
- The main idea of creating your slides is so you have a jumping off point for discussion.
- If an example is too small to read, magnify it.

Remember that this is a visual program, so you want to use it to illustrate as much as possible.

How to Enlarge Images for Easier Reading

- Zoom the graphic on your screen until it's large enough to read easily on your slide.
- Use PowerPoint's cropping tool to select just the text you want to include.
- You can find the "Crop" button in the *Picture Format* tab *once you have selected the image*.

Attractive Slides

- Choose bright colors that can be seen in a dark room.
- White text on a dark background sometimes works well, but it can be harder to read.
- When adding graphics, use low-resolution images so you don't make your file too large.
- Many templates are available, or just choose a solid color for your background.
- Be consistent with your colors throughout the program.
- Be careful of red/green or blue/grey combinations, as those who are color blind may not be able to tell them apart.
- As with fonts, more is NOT better. Stick to just a few basic colors: one for backgrounds, one for text, one for highlighting.

Transitions

- The simplest way to get from slide to slide is with a mouse click.
- Things that bounce, blink, and fly are fun now and then, but they can get very distracting very fast. Save them for emphasis.
- You want people to concentrate on your content, not your special effects.

Housekeeping Issues for Teaching

- Count on between 40–60 slides for an hour’s lecture, depending on how much discussion you plan to include.
- Each slide should focus on only one basic idea.
- Run through your program on the computer you will use for your talk.
- If you use any unusual fonts, carry copies of the files with you and know how to install them.
- Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse! Go over your program so you know it back and forth and time yourself.
- Xeroxing copies of your slides is NOT an adequate handout. Prepare something that complements your lecture.

Save Your File in Multiple Places

- Always be prepared for “just in case.”
- Save copies of your files on your computer, on a flash drive, and to the cloud. In this case, more IS better!

Additional Resources

“50 Tips on How to Improve PowerPoint Presentations in 2021,” *Slidepeak*, blog dated 5 May 2021, <https://slidepeak.com/blog/50-tips-on-how-to-improve-powerpoint-presentations-in-2021>

“Apply a Template to a New Presentation,” PowerPoint for Microsoft 365, PowerPoint 2021, Microsoft.com, <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/apply-a-template-to-a-new-presentation-d3d4ece5-e965-45eb-9423-c34e61b34616>

Use **Google** to search for family tree templates and design ideas; there are dozens of them, and most are free. Also, search on **YouTube** for instructional videos on using templates and creating family trees and charts with PowerPoint. *Watch the dates, however, as some sites use newer versions and some older.*