

Guidelines for Preparing PowerPoint Presentations.

The most common problems for both authors and conference organizers are incorrectly displayed symbols, movies not playing properly and the often huge size of PowerPoint (PPT) files. Large files take a long time to load and the larger the file the bigger probability of its corruption. Large file sizes usually originate from inserting graphics and movie clips using improper file format. The following simplified guidelines address the most common problems.

Guideline One: Use common fonts for your presentation, check for correct display of symbols and embed TrueType fonts if your computer supports any non-English language.

Problems with Fonts

Computers may have different sets of fonts installed. Using a common font, like Arial or Times New Roman is a good strategy. However, many computers have fonts supporting different languages installed, e.g., Asian, Cyrillic, etc. These may affect how math symbols are displayed. If you have any non-English language support installed, use the following saving routine: When your presentation is finished, save it using "File -> Save as -> Tools -> Embed TrueType Fonts" and even better, check your presentation on a different computer with only English installed for correct representation of symbols.

Guideline Two: use only JPEG format for inserting photos into PPT

Inserting Photos and Other Graphics

When Microsoft Office imports a graphic file, the file is uncompressed in memory before it is imported into an application (like PPT) with the exception of JPEG files. Therefore, one can import an image of a high quality and maintain small file size using JPEG format.

How to do that?

Photos are often stored at high resolution, e.g., in a bitmap or TIFF format. They should be cropped to their final size, using a photo-editing program like MS Photo Editor (Start -> Programs -> Microsoft Applications -> Microsoft Office Tools -> Microsoft Photo Editor) or Adobe Photoshop or other photo-editing software. Open the photo in a photo editor to size it to its final size using the crop tool. Typical resolution of a projector used in most lecture rooms is 1280x1024 pixels (XGA). Thus, if the photo is to be $\frac{1}{4}$ of the screen size set the picture size to 640x512 pixels in the photo editor crop tool. Then, save the picture as a .jpg file into a folder. Finally, in PPT, insert the photo by using "Insert -> Picture -> From file ..." pointing to the just created file. It is important to crop the picture to its final size in a photo editor to assure the best photo quality at a minimum file size.

When copying graphics from one Office application to another, e.g., while inserting an Excel graph to PPT, Microsoft preserves additional information including links and original spread sheets allowing the graph to be connected to its source. Using "Copy" and "Edit -> Paste Special" instead of simply "Copy" and "Paste", breaks this link resulting in much smaller files.

Guideline Three: use "Copy" and "Edit -> Paste Special" to bring Excel or Sigma Plots Charts to PPT

Inserting movie clips.

There are no general rules for making movies to play correctly on a different computer than the one where it was originally created. A movie is compressed using a codec (a software to compress/decompress or code/decode a movie). There are hundreds of such codices available and there is no simple way to find out which codec was used to create a movie clip. While inserting a movie to a presentation using "Insert -> Movies and Sound ... -> Movie from File", PPT relies on its on own very old movie player with only few codices available. It is therefore usually

better to insert a movie using "Insert -> Object", select create from file, click OK, browse to the location of the movie clip, select it and click OK. Now, PPT will use Windows Media Player, which is newer, has substantially more codecs installed and makes stopping and replaying a movie easier. It should be added that when a movie is 'inserted', only the information on where the movie is located is transferred to the application. As the computer in a lecture room has a different directory structure from your home computer it is strongly recommended to place the presentation and all movie clips in the same folder before inserting the clips.

Guideline 4: Place your PPT presentation and all movie clips in the same folder before inserting the movies. Then, have your presentation and the movies in a single folder for your lecture. Although there are no foolproof rules with movies, using this method decreases the chance that something will go wrong with your movies.