

Inserting a Flash movie into a PowerPoint presentation

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Macromedia Flash is a multimedia authoring software that is used to create dynamic presentations for the World Wide Web. Flash allows you to mix sound, animation, and graphics into a single file that can be added to a PowerPoint presentation for dynamic effect. (Am J Orthod Dentofacial Orthop 2007;131:285-7)

Macromedia Flash (Adobe, San Jose, Calif) is a multimedia authoring software that is used to create dynamic presentations for the World Wide Web. Flash animations (Shockwave files) can also be added to PowerPoint (Microsoft, Redmond, Wash) for dramatic effect. Flash allows you to mix sounds, animations, and graphics in a single file. It can be purchased by itself or bundled in a suite of software called *Macromedia Studio* (Dreamweaver, Flash, Fireworks, and Freehand Flash). This article is based on a version of the program called Flash MX.

When using Flash, you create Flash files (*.FLA). You can export these files as animated GIF (Graphics Interchange Format), QuickTime, AVI (Audio Video Interleave) in bitmapped format, and more. You can also export movies as Shockwave files (*.SWF). Shockwave files are vector-based; this means they can be scaled cleanly to any size. Unlike their bitmap equivalents, Shockwave files look good at any size. These files are also smaller than GIFs, which makes a difference if you are worried about file size.

PowerPoint supports many import types, including AVI movies and GIFs. However, these imports are fairly static, and files can become quite large. Using a Flash movie inside PowerPoint adds interactivity and vector animations with little increase in file size. Embedding a Flash movie allows all the functionality of Flash: buttons will function, URL actions will open the default browser, and animation will *tween*.

Prerequisites

Before inserting a Flash or Shockwave file into a PowerPoint presentation, you will need to have the

following installed on your computer: (1) any version of PowerPoint for Windows (97, 2000, 2002, 2003 . . .), (2) Internet Explorer, and (3) Shockwave Flash Active X control.¹

ActiveX is a Microsoft technology consisting of “controls” that sit on top of a Windows system called COM (Component Object Model). Active X controls are used to extend the abilities of Windows and Internet Explorer, adding features such as video playback, audio, and Flash playback. The advantage of Active X controls is that, although they are generally downloaded and used in Internet Explorer, once they are on your system, any Windows application that understands COM can use the controls to extend its applications. A popular use for this technology is embedding a functional Active X controlled Flash movie in a PowerPoint presentation. If you have Internet Explorer 4 or higher and can view Flash contents, then the Active X control is already installed. The Shockwave Flash Active X control can be installed from <http://www.macromedia.com/shockwave/download/alternates/>.

Inserting flash into PowerPoint

There are 2 ways of including Flash in PowerPoint. You can either insert the file as an Active X Control, using PowerPoint’s Control Toolbox, or insert it as an object, which calls the Flash player to play the file.

The first procedure is time-tested, and certain free and commercial add-ins are available for PowerPoint that reduce the complicated procedure to just a few clicks. Shyam’s Toolbox (<http://skp.mvps.org/toolbox/index.htm>), for example, adds a set of procedures to PowerPoint including an option to insert Shockwave movies in PowerPoint.² The free Swiff Point Player add-in for PowerPoint (<http://www.globfx.com/products/swfpoint/>) simplifies the inclusion of Flash Shockwave in PowerPoint.²

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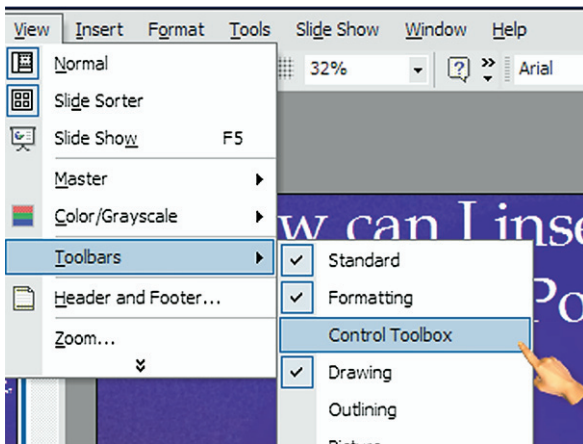


Fig 1. Screenshot showing first step.

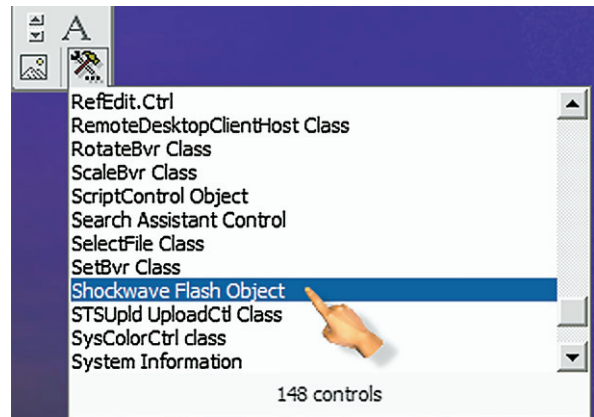


Fig 3. From drop-down menu, choose *Shockwave Flash Object*.

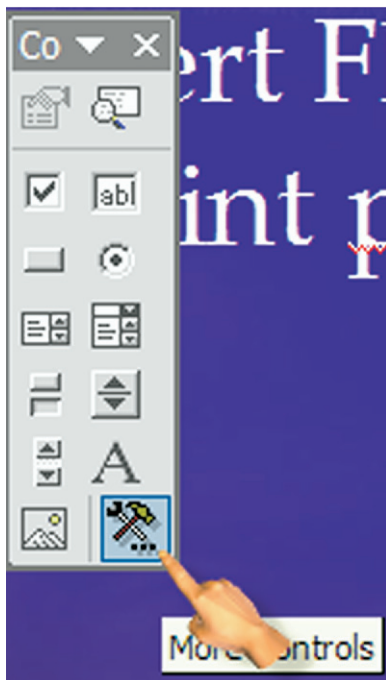


Fig 2. More controls represented by "hammer."

If you choose to do it yourself, here is the procedure:

1. Copy your Shockwave file to the same folder as your saved blank or existing presentation.
2. In PowerPoint, navigate to the slide where you want to insert the Shockwave file movie.
3. If the Control Toolbox is not already visible in your PowerPoint interface, point to Toolbars on the view menu and then click *Control Toolbox* (Fig 1). In the Control Toolbox, click *More Controls* (Fig 2).

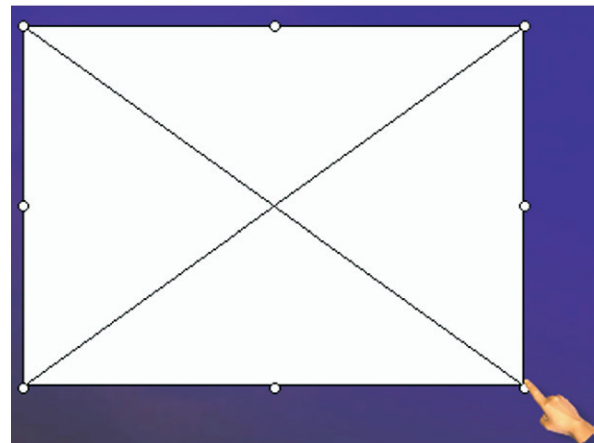


Fig 4. Draw rectangle on screen; do not worry about dimensions; you can enlarge movie as you like.

4. This will open a drop-down menu; choose *Shockwave Flash Object* (Fig 3).
5. Your cursor will change into a cross-hair. Draw a rectangle anywhere on the screen (Fig 4). The Flash object will always remain on top; you cannot place text or image on top of a Flash object.
6. Right click the inserted Shockwave Flash Control and then click *Properties* in the resultant fly-out menu.
7. You will find ". . ." in the cell next to the "Custom" option (usually the topmost option) (Fig 5).
8. Clicking this ". . ." will open the Property Page dialog box. In the movie option, type the name of the movie without a path (because it is saved in the same folder as the presentation). Alternatively, you can type an entire URL in the box to access a Shockwave file live from the Internet (remember

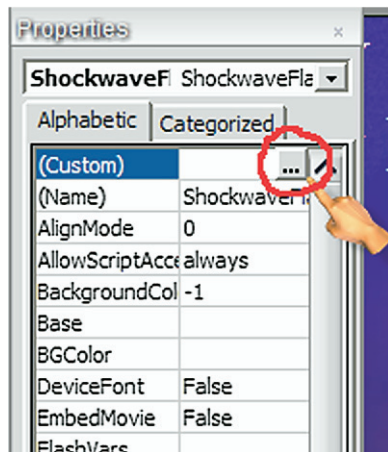


Fig 5. "... cell allows you to customize your Flash movie's insertion.

the file extension *.SWF*). It is always a good idea to check the "embed movie" box as well. This way, no matter where the presentation goes, the movie will remain with it in a PowerPoint presentation file. There will be no multiple files (*.PPT; *.SWF) to track (Fig 6).

9. Save and run your slide show in presentation view. Sometimes the object box will not show the movie until you have done this.^{2,3}

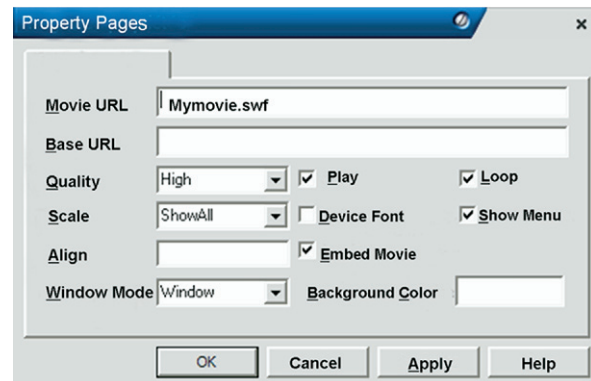


Fig 6. Property pages dialog box; try to check options as on snapshot for optimal embedding.

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