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To keep things interesting, try varying slide elements

How many presentations have you sat through that use the same background and text position for every slide? Pretty boring, aren't they?

To break this monotony, you can use varying backgrounds for different types of slides in your presentation. I'm not suggesting radical color changes or new fonts on every slide. However, using the same graphic elements, colors and fonts, but rearranging them a little differently on various types of slides, is effective. To begin with, you can create a variation of your master-slide background to use for your title master. And if you are going to have different sections in your presentation, you can create another variation to use as a section divider or a slightly different version to introduce a new speaker.

Subtle changes, big differences

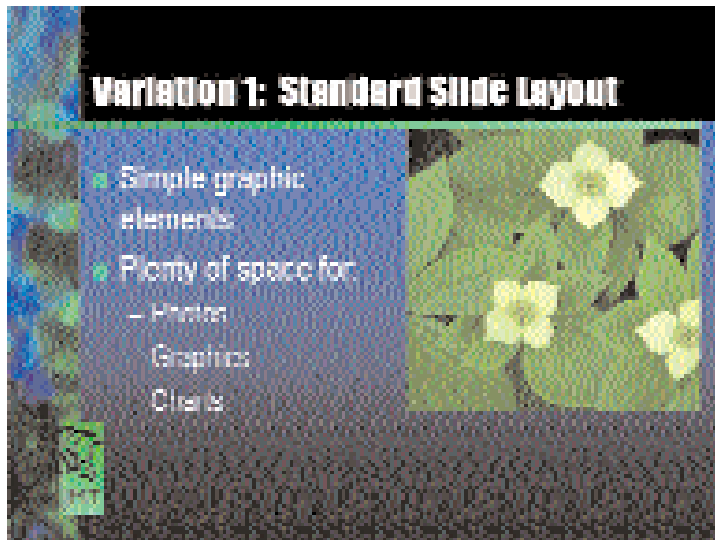
If you are going to create a variety of slides using the same color scheme, background and master slide, the variations should look as though they come from the same family. To accomplish this, try using the same elements in different ways. For instance, you can vary objects' sizes, text placement or headline position to draw your audience's attention to a new subject or speaker.

VARIATION 1

Using an abstract photo

This example starts with a blank PowerPoint presentation. To duplicate this standard slide layout, go to the slide master and fill the background with a blue-to-black gradation. Next, draw a black rectangle across the top of the slide.

Tip: Turn on the SNAP TO GRID feature to more quickly draw and align objects.



The standard slide gives you a collection of graphic elements, fonts, colors and logos that you will later use to build variations.

Along the slide's left side, insert an abstract picture. Choose an image that is larger than the area you are going to cover, and crop the right side of the picture. (You will use more of this picture on other variations.) Draw a thin, gradient-filled rectangle under the title position. The last object is a logo, placed in the lower left corner of the slide. Try to keep the design elements simple and within the same color scheme so they can be easily rearranged and resized.

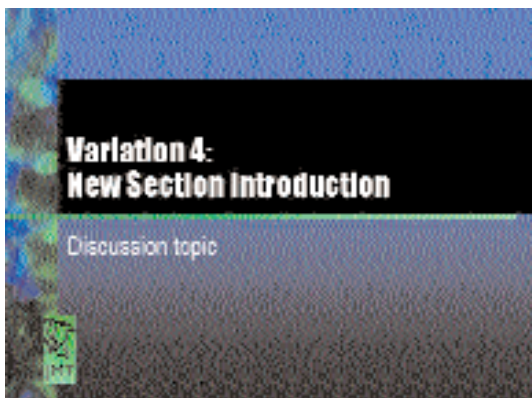
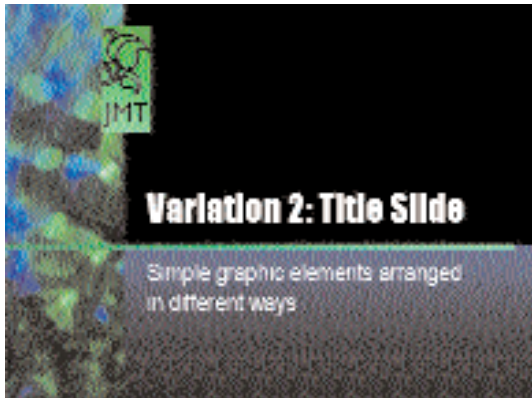
Select the title placeholder and change the font to Impact, the color to white, and the justification to left. In this example, the line spacing is set to 0.9. Change the text anchor point to bottom; this will prevent two-line titles from wrapping below the black rectangle.

Tip: Right-click on the title placeholder, FORMAT AUTOSHAPE → TEXT BOX to change the text anchor point to BOTTOM.

Change the text placeholder as well, to white Arial Narrow at a first-line size of 34. I recommend changing the line spacing on the text placeholder, too. In this case, line spacing is 0.9 with 0.3 lines before paragraph. (These types of adjustments can be tweaked on the master later to custom fit the majority of your slides.) Change the bullets to green squares using the Monotype Sorts font; size them at 60 percent of text size. Keep your bullets a simple shape so they don't become your slides' focal point.

Simplify the color palette

A simple color palette works well with this design: blue, black, green and white. In contrast to the dark background, bold white titles and sans-serif white text are the best solution for legibility. Additional graphics should be kept in the same color family. I suggest customizing the color scheme on the master slide and sticking with this



VARIATION 2

Varying the title master

The title master uses the same elements as the slide master. From the slide master, click on **INSERT** → **NEW TITLE MASTER**. Stretch the black rectangle to just under the halfway point. Move the gradient-filled, thin rectangle under the black rectangle. Next, recrop the abstract picture to reveal more of the image to the right. Note that the photo has not been stretched, just recropped so more of the original image shows. This effect looks great during a presentation as you transition from one type of slide to the next.

Tip: Right-click on the picture and choose **SHOW PICTURE TOOL BAR** to bring up the picture-editing menu.

Move the title placeholder down and make the text size larger. Resize the subtitle placeholder and place it under the thin rectangle. In this example, the logo was made larger and moved up near the top of the frame.

VARIATION 3

Introducing a new speaker

This variation is designed to introduce a new speaker. To accomplish this variation, you will have to **COPY** the objects off the master, and **PASTE** them onto a new slide. Create a new slide using the title slide layout. Select **FORMAT** → **BACKGROUND** and check the box to omit background graphics from the master. Click **APPLY**. Click **VIEW** and then **TITLE MASTER**. Select the black rectangle, the abstract photo and the thin rectangle and **COPY** them to the new slide.

Tip: Hold the control key and click the C key to copy the selected objects to the clipboard, control-P to paste them.

Go back to the new slide and **PASTE** the objects. Move the black rectangle down to the bottom half of the slide, and move the thin, gradient-filled rectangle right above it. Crop the top half of the abstract picture to just under the thin rectangle (at the screen's left side). Then **COPY** the abstract picture, recrop it to reveal another

portion of the image and place it in the screen's upper right corner. Reposition the title placeholder and the subtitle placeholder. You can duplicate this new slide when necessary and edit the text to reflect additional speaker names.

VARIATION 4

Introducing new subjects

The last variation can introduce a new section or subject. Once again, start with a new slide based on the slide master layout. Select **FORMAT** → **BACKGROUND** and check the box to omit background graphics from the master. Click to **APPLY**. Next, **COPY** the objects from the slide master and **PASTE** them onto the new slide. Slide the black rectangle down and stretch the top to make it a little larger. Move the thin, gradient-filled rectangle down just under this black field. Move the title placeholder down and make sure the anchor point is still at the bottom. Select the text placeholder and click **FORMAT** → **BULLET** and uncheck the **USE A BULLET BOX**. Once again, duplicate this slide and edit the text for additional sections.

Keep it bold and simple

I suggest using a few simple transitions throughout your presentation. I've found that **SPLIT HORIZONTAL IN**, **SPLIT HORIZONTAL OUT** and **SPLIT VERTICAL IN**, **SPLIT VERTICAL OUT** work well with this type of graphic layout. Keep the transition types to a minimum, and run through the slideshow to make sure you like the transitions you've chosen. Remember to keep the slide content clean and uncluttered, too. It only takes a few overdone slides to spoil the batch.

Adding variety to your presentation is easy when you keep the elements simple. High contrast, bold shapes, a clean color palette and some variety are all you need for an effective solution. ■

Keeping the same graphic element on the left side, creates a feeling of slide unit while adding variety to your slides.

color family throughout your presentation.

Notice that on this first variation, the photo is placed directly under and aligned to the right edge of the thin rectangle. For a more polished presentation, you can make your photo placement consistent. For instance, if you have a series of slides with photos on them, place the pictures in the same starting position (in this case, the upper right corner.) This looks much more pleasing than having photos randomly jump around from slide to slide.