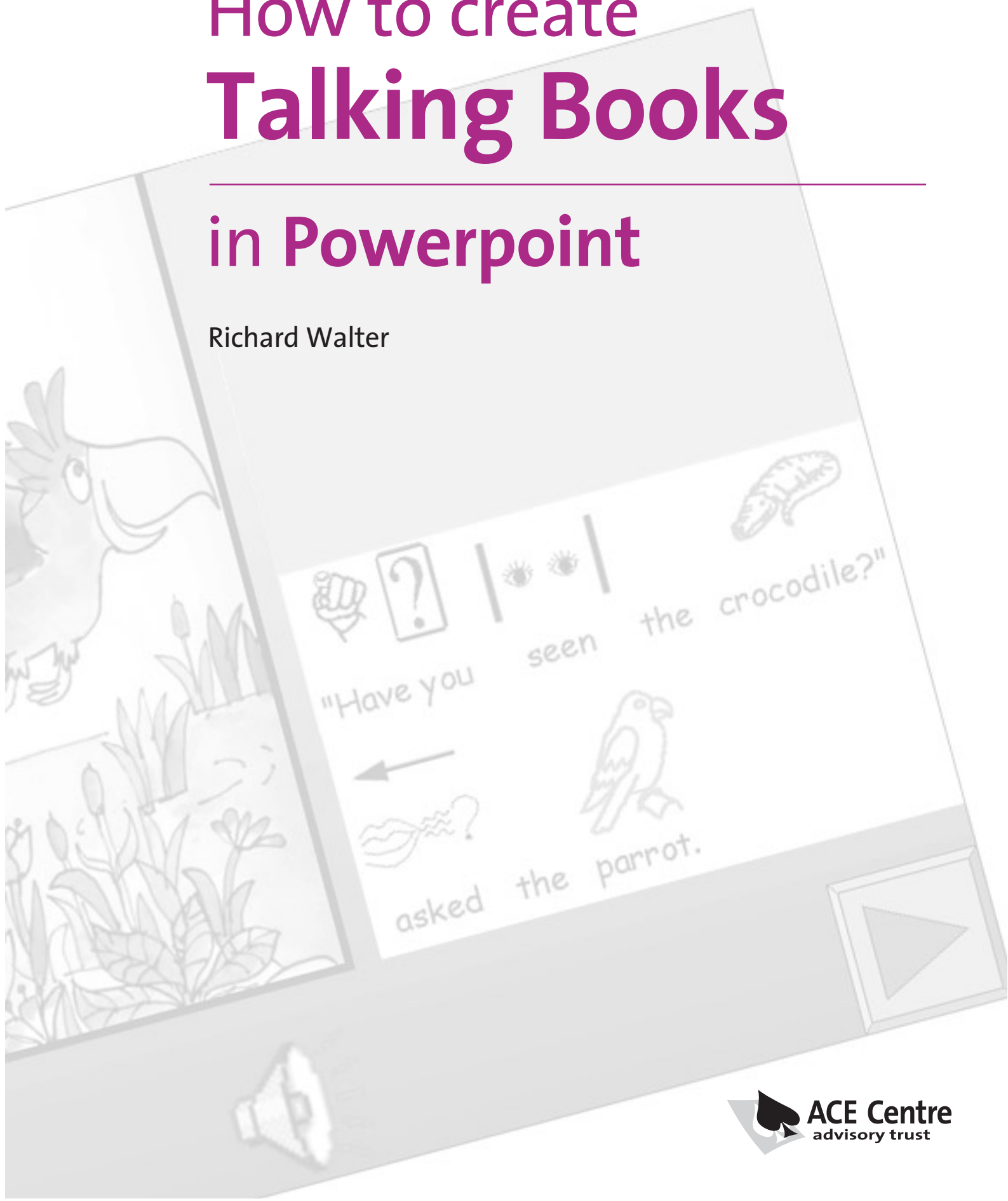


How to create Talking Books

in Powerpoint

Richard Walter



Second version, December 2001

The updates from the first version, published in November 2001, are as follows:

- Stronger emphasis has been put on the need to keep all resource files in one folder, despite the fact that Powerpoint files are self-contained.
- Cropping and resizing of symbol images can be carried out directly in Powerpoint itself, so there is no need to use intermediary graphics software.
- The Custom Animation dialogue boxes differ significantly in Powerpoint 97 and 2000, so both have been shown.

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He has written and contributed to several books and articles on teaching pupils with special educational needs including *IT for All* and *The Internet for All* published by David Fulton.



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Contents

1: Introduction	1
What is the purpose of this guide?	1
Why do we need talking books?	1
Before you start	2
Getting your resources together	2
Assembling your books	2
2: Important! The copyright issue	3
Joint Industry Guidelines	3
Introduction	3
Guidelines	4
3: Getting your resources together	5
Creating a folder for your resources	5
Creating pictures for your talking book	6
Scanning pictures	6
Using digital camera pictures	9
Using clipart or pictures from the computer	9
4: Creating a talking book template	11
Creating a template	11
5: Using the template to create a talking book ..	15
Creating blank pages from the template	15
Adding pictures and symbols onto a page	16
Inserting the scans	16
Creating and pasting the symbol sentences	17
Cropping and resizing the symbol sentence images	18
Adding speech to a slide	19
Wait! Before you start adding speech or sounds	19
So, now to add the speech	20
Completing your talking book	21
Adding extra sound effects	22
To add extra sounds from your computer	22
Combining a page turn with speech	23
Adding a time delay to a page turn	23
6: Enabling access with a single switch	25
7: Getting creative with talking stories	27

Part 1:

Introduction

What is the purpose of this guide?

Like its title suggests, this guide gives you step-by-step instructions on how to use Microsoft's **Powerpoint** to create mouse-operated talking books using pictures scanned in from real books. It will also look at accessing these talking books using a single switch.

Why do we need talking books?

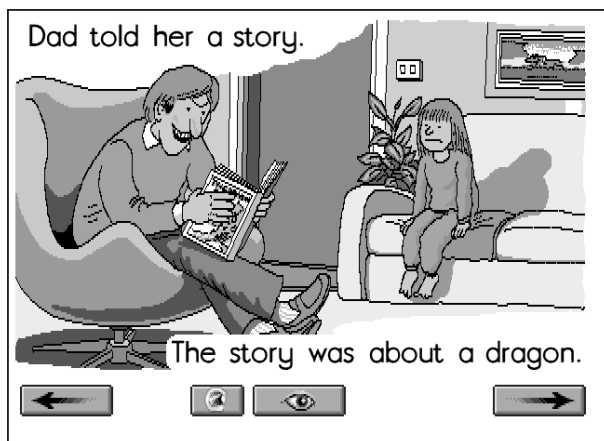
Access to literature is of crucial importance in the education of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. There has been a great expansion in the use of storybooks in schools with a large number of reading books linked to the National Literacy Strategy. The proliferation of big books for group reading and the opening up of literacy into more stimulating and colourful reading books have especially helped in this expansion into special education.

There are, however, a number of pupils who cannot read independently because of their physical difficulties. They cannot turn to the next page of a book, skip ahead to find 'the exciting bits' or turn back to re-read a page. They always have to ask someone else to hold their books and turn the pages for them. Their reading development is often delayed, even if they are of normal intelligence.

Most of the children visiting the ACE centre can, like our patron Professor Stephen Hawking, *independently* access reading materials or books via one or two switches attached to a computer. Children can access electronically published books using a variety of computer access aids including activating a switch with whatever part of their body has the best voluntary control. Unfortunately, the range of electronically available books for children is very limited and for disabled children to develop as readers, they need access to the same range of books as other children.

It is, however, now possible to create your own books on the computer using hardware and software that is generally available in schools and many homes. These 'talking books' can be tailor-made to the interests and abilities of the pupils, text can be symbol-supported, and sounds and speech can be included to enable access to those with reading difficulties.

Children can actively help to make their own accessible talking books, and this opens up more possibilities of creative and imaginative writing for pupils with learning difficulties.



A well-known example of talking books is produced by Sherston Software as the *Oxford Reading Tree* series (an example is shown on the right). The page layout is simple and consistent, and the controls are clear and straightforward. We shall be using a similar layout to construct our own talking books.

Our books will be set up initially for operation by positional mouse switching, where the left mouse button has

to be pressed when the mouse arrow is over the active icon and the mouse has to be moved precisely to each of the active areas. This presents difficulties to pupils who can't control a mouse or move a pointer accurately, so later on we will be looking at modifying our talking book to allow access from a keyboard, switches or an overlay board.

Before you start...

Before you start gathering together piles of books to convert, be aware that putting together even a single talking book will take time. Creating a template (a master page that contains the page format and the buttons for turning the pages and listening to the words) at the outset will save hours of time when making a number of books, but even if you only intend to make one, do create a template first.

We are splitting the process of making books into two stages:

Getting your resources together (Part 3)

- How to create or scan pictures for your talking book
- How to save your resources in one folder on the computer.

Assembling your books (Parts 4, 5 and 6)

Here you will learn how to create and load templates, how to put together the actual talking book by adding pictures, symbols, text and sound, and how to enable access to the talking book using switches or an overlay board.

Part 2:

Important!

The copyright issue

There are obviously copyright considerations involved in reproducing pages from printed books. The publishers of the books used to illustrate this guide have all given express permission for them to be converted into multimedia by the addition of symbols, as long as copies are not sold, and the copyright line on the book's cover is included in the talking book.

There are some guidelines (as of Sept 2001) on copyright issues on the World Wide Web at:

www.pls.org.uk

These are reproduced below. Take particular note of the text in bold (our emboldening), which sanctions the creation of multimedia copies of books for the *personal* use of individuals with visual or physical difficulties. The creation and use of multimedia copies of books for school and class use by people with special educational needs in schools still seems open to interpretation. If you are in doubt, contact the publisher, but check that they are aware of the new guidelines as they may well help your case.

Joint Industry Guidelines

These guidelines cover access to books, magazines and journals by visually impaired people. They do not constitute legal advice but are for guidance only:

Introduction

- a These Guidelines are the result of a wide-ranging consultation among rightsholders and organisations helping visually impaired people in an effort to strike a balance between the requirements of visually impaired people and the special problems surrounding uncontrolled copying, transcription and distribution.
- b Rightsholders including authors, their agents and publishers wish to make their works accessible to all members of the public.
- c Where visually impaired people cannot read works in formats commercially available they will in some cases wish to copy, record or transcribe the works into a format accessible to them. The issue of who may create and distribute copies in different formats, in particular electronic copies, is important for rightsholders.
- d These Guidelines have been drawn up to assist visually impaired users and those acting

on their behalf to understand current trade practice with regard to acts of copying they can assume they are allowed to do without requesting prior permission from the rightsholder, provided the conditions described below are met. In case of doubt users should always consult the rightsholder.

- e Rightsholders support the work of charities and volunteer organisations in making books and journals accessible to visually impaired people. The permissions they require to distribute such works are outside the scope of these Guidelines.
- f **For the purposes of these Guidelines visually impaired people are taken to include blind and partially sighted persons, those whose sight cannot be improved by the use of corrective lenses, those who are unable through physical disability to hold or manipulate books or to focus or move their eyes or who are otherwise physically unable to use available published formats.**

Guidelines

- 1 Visually impaired people who have lawfully obtained a copy of a published work, whether bought or borrowed, may make whatever transcription, copy or format changes they require to enable personal access to the work, including speech synthesis, Braille, Moon, large print, single voice recording (speech), electronic file, provided the work is not readily commercially available in a suitable format.
- 2 **Visually impaired people may ask another person or organisation, including schools, libraries and charities, to create an accessible copy on their behalf, provided that any such copy is made for the personal use of the visually impaired person concerned only. This includes use for the purpose of work or study.**
- 3 A non-electronic copy e.g. single voice recording (speech) or a Braille copy may be borrowed or exchanged among visually impaired people as if it were the print original itself.
- 4 Electronic copies may be created and stored on a computer system for as long as required to enable personal use of the work while the original is retained. They may not be made accessible or passed on to a third party or posted on an Intranet, in newsgroups or on the World Wide Web. If the original is lent, sold or given away, then any accessible copies and associated electronic files must be deleted or transferred with the original.
- 5 Visually impaired people must respect the literary and artistic integrity of the work including any copyright notices and any moral rights the author may have in the work. They must not in any way adapt, edit, alter, amend or distort the work, other than as required to enable full access, without the prior permission of the author or his or her designated representative.
- 6 The copyright remains with the copyright owner. Rightsholders retain the right to exclude the use of certain formats in special circumstances and permission must be sought for such use from the relevant rightsholders.

The development of these guidelines has been supported by:

Association of Authors' Agents, Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers, Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society, Copyright Licensing Agency, Music Publishers Association, National Union of Journalists, Publishers' Association, Publishers Licensing Society, Periodical Publishers Association, Scottish Publishers Association, Society of Authors, Writers' Guild of Great Britain.

Part 3:

Getting your resources together

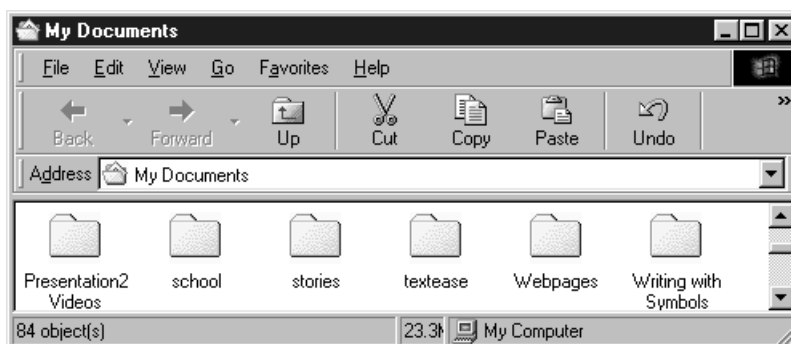
You will first need to prepare most of the resources for your talking book. This entails:

- 1 Creating a folder on the computer in which to save all your resources
- 2 Creating pictures for your talking book

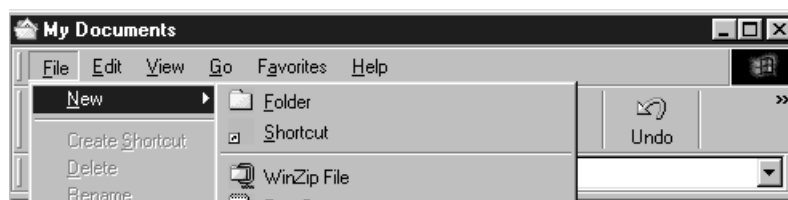
Creating a folder for your resources

Each completed Powerpoint talking book file stores all its resources (ie pictures and sounds) within itself. This has the advantage that you will only need to copy this single file if you want to transfer it to CD or another computer. However, we **strongly** recommend that you keep all your separate picture and sound files, along with the talking book file itself, together in one **folder**. They can then be located easily should you need to reuse any of them or create the same talking book using different software. You need first to decide where you want to create a new folder to put your resources. Two good options are in *My documents*, a folder that is already on most computers, or by creating a new folder on the Windows desktop.

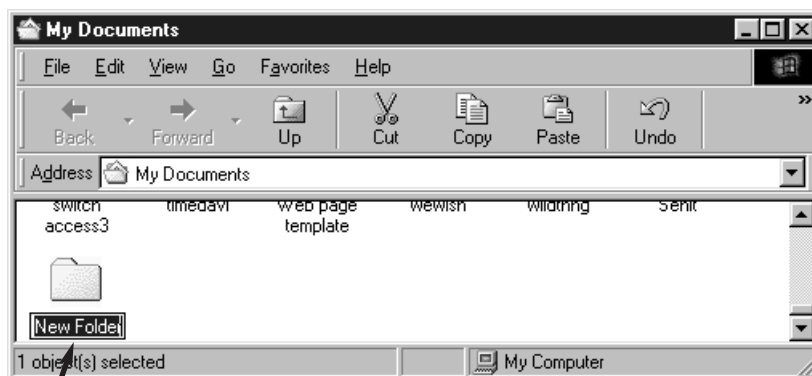
- 1 Open the *My documents* folder from the Windows desktop screen:



- 2 On the *File* menu, Click on *New*, and then click *Folder*:

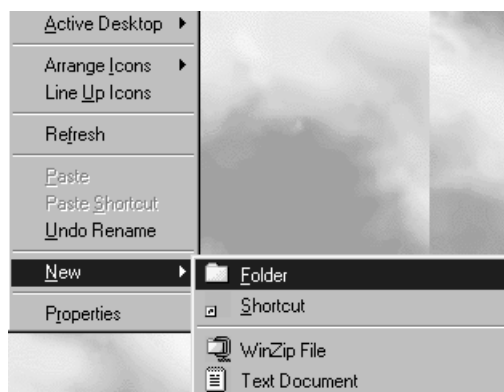


The new folder appears with the temporary name "New Folder":



- 3 Type a name for the new folder, and then press *Return* on the keyboard.

Alternatively you could create a folder on the Windows desktop screen by clicking anywhere on the screen with the right-hand mouse button and then clicking on *New*, then *Folder*:



Rename the folder in a similar way to the first method.

Creating pictures for your talking book

There are a number of sources for your pictures. You can scan them from a book using a flatbed scanner, use digital camera photographs, or use clipart and graphics from the computer. We will look at using these three sources in turn:

Scanning pictures

Scanners can be purchased for as little as £50 and some computer systems already come with one. They work by moving a row of light receptors slowly down the page or picture to be scanned. A certain proportion of the light is reflected back from the picture which then produces an electrical signal, building up an electronic image of the page. All scanners use the same standard software to interact with the computer in Windows called **Twain**.



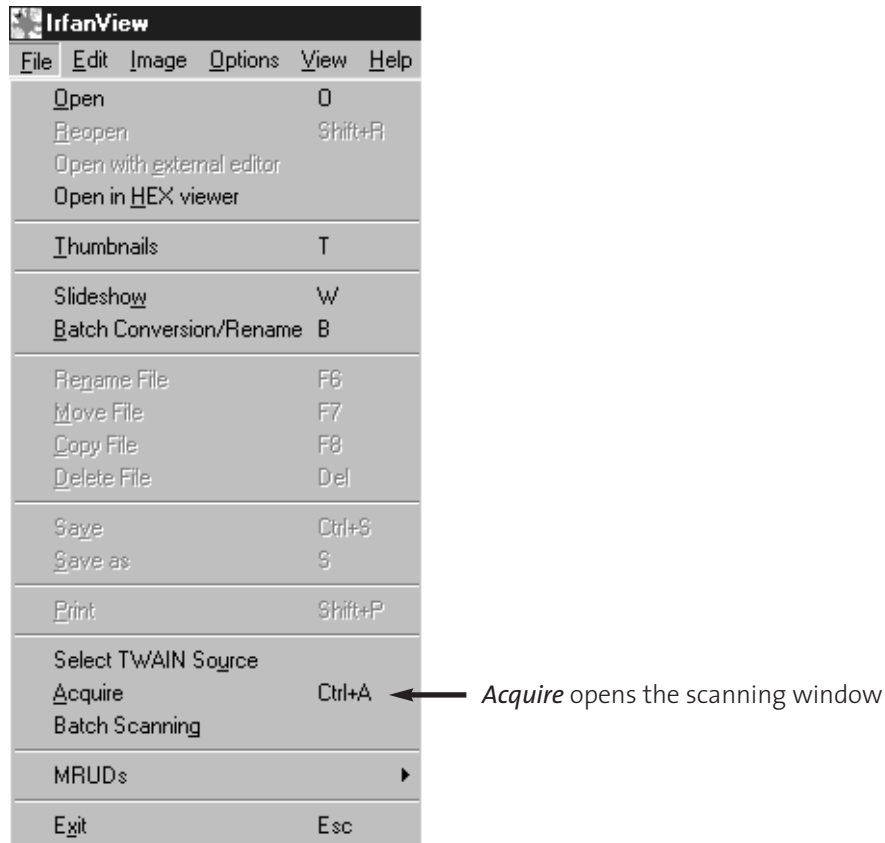
A desktop scanner

You can scan in pictures using software such as **PaintShop Pro**, **Adobe PhotoDeluxe** and **Irfanview**. In the *File* menu there will be an option to *Acquire* an image from a Twain picture

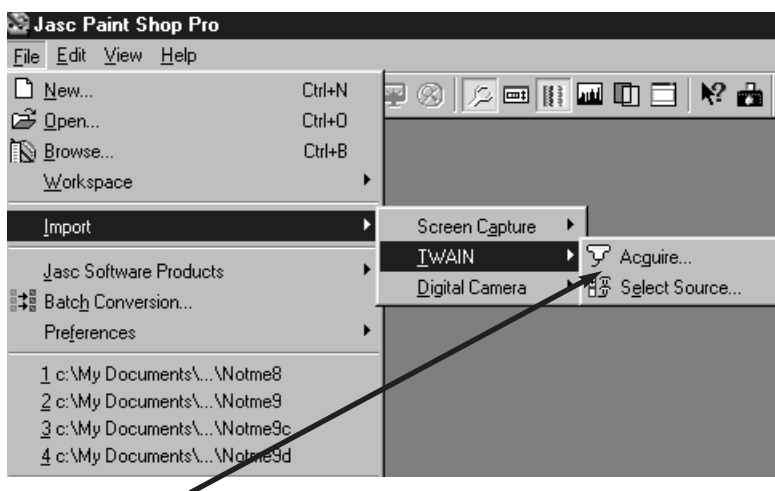
source such as a scanner. Choosing this option will start your scanner's software, and you can then preview and scan parts of a picture. **Irfanview** is an freeware program that can be downloaded from <http://www.irfanview.com>

1 Opening your scanning software

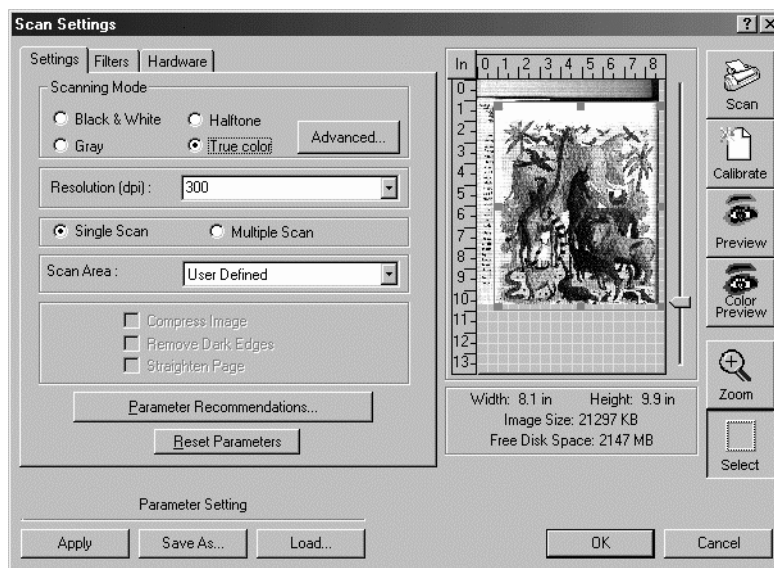
To operate a scanner in Irfanview, click on *File* and then *Acquire*:



To find *Acquire* in PaintShop Pro, click on *File, Import, Twain* and then *Acquire*:



Choosing *Acquire* will open up the scanning window. This will be slightly different for different models of scanner and their software.



All scanner software will have **Preview** and **Scan** buttons. When you press the Preview button, you get a quick mini-scan of entire scanner bed. Using the mouse you can drag out a rectangle on the preview image and mark the area you want to scan. You can further adjust the size and shape of this area by clicking on and dragging any of the six small blocks on the edge of the rectangle. Don't click the Scan button just yet.

2 Picking the best resolution for your scanned pictures

Somewhere on the settings screen of all scanning software there will be an area where you can specify the **Resolution** (sometimes called Output Resolution) for your final scan. The higher the resolution, the larger the file size of the scanned picture, so generally the scanner's resolution should be set at **72dpi**, unless you are scanning a particularly small picture that may have to be greatly enlarged when it appears within your talking book. In this case, specify **150dpi**. Scanning at a higher resolution only creates extra information that the screen display will ignore, and slows down the displaying of the images.

There are lots of other controls you can change in the scanning software to alter the quality of the image. You can alter the Gamma, Saturation and Hue of your scanned images, but unless you have a great deal of time, I would recommend that you leave these controls alone and just use the default settings.

3 Scanning your pictures

Click **Scan** to scan your image. After the scanner has finished, your image will appear on the screen.

4 Picking the best file format for saving your scanned pictures

When you save your scanned picture on the computer, it is important to choose the right format for them. The format can have a very significant effect on the amount of space your scanned picture file takes up on the computer. You can usually find the list of format options by clicking **Save As** in your scanner software. If not, try **Export** if it exists.

- For scans of illustrations or photographs, choose **JPEG**.

- For scans of symbols, black and white line drawings, or cartoons containing solid blocks of colour (like the Mr Men books), choose **GIF**, although JPEG would be OK as an alternative.

Your software may offer you a default option of **Windows bitmap (BMP)**, but this is not generally recommended for talking books, as scans in this format will produce much larger files. Powerpoint will display jpegs, gifs and bmp pictures.

If you want to name your scans numerically, use 01, 02, 03 09 for the first nine files rather than 1, 2, 3. They will all then be listed *before* file 10 in your file windows.

I would recommend scanning in all the pictures from any book all in one session, and save them as picture01, picture02, etc. Scanners are temperamental machines and once started, I have found it better to go through to the end.

Using digital camera pictures

The use of digital cameras in schools has recently increased considerably due to the advances in digital camera technologies (they have become much cheaper, with better picture quality and faster downloading of the photos onto the computer). Digital camera pictures can be incorporated into talking books in the same manner as scanned images. After downloading your pictures onto the computer using your camera's software, they can be treated the same as any other computer graphic.

Using clipart or pictures from the computer

You will probably find a large number of pictures already installed on your computer (Microsoft Office, for example, comes with a good number of clipart pictures) and you can get many more pictures and graphics (of varying quality) on commercial CD-ROMS. All can also be incorporated into your talking books. The Internet can also be a source of picture files (for example **www.clipart.co.uk** or **images.google.com**), and the CALL Centre (**callcentre.education.ed.ac.uk**) produce a useful list of clipart websites.

Creating symbols for your talking book

Symbols can be added to support the text of your talking books. Sources of symbols include the **Writing with Symbols** CD (from Widgit Software), **Inclusive Writer** (from Inclusive Technology), **Clicker** (from Crick Software), and **Intellipics** (from Intellitools or Inclusive Technology).

Although you can create and store graphic files of symbols sentences in the same way as the main pictures, it's easier to paste the symbol sentences directly into the Powerpoint pages while you are putting together the talking book itself. So leave this for now - the process will be outlined later.

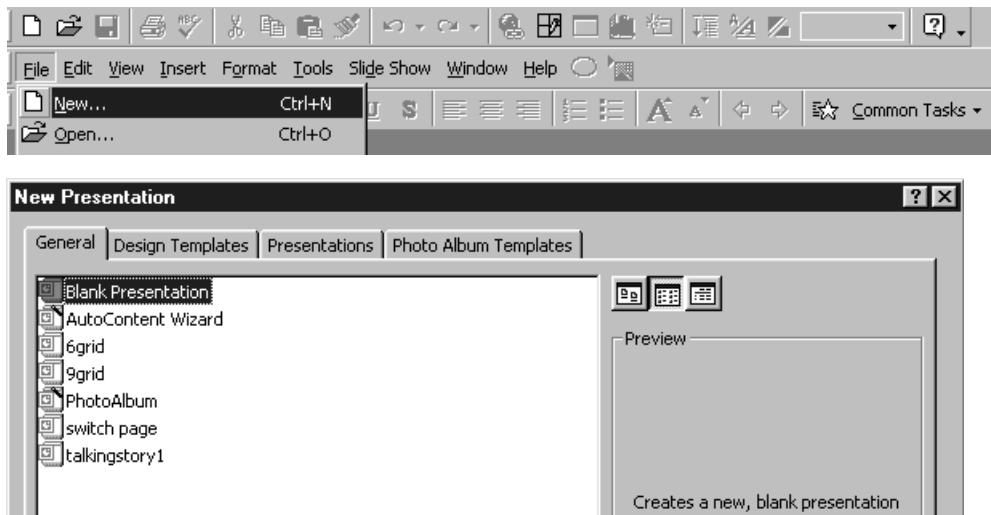
Part 4:

Creating a talking book template

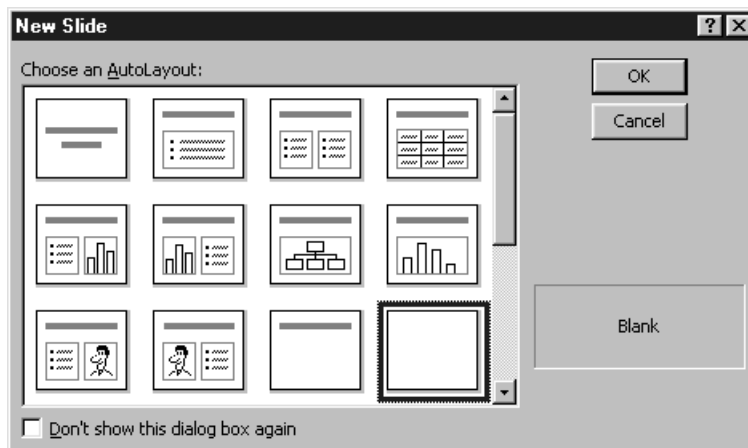
The first stage in the construction of a talking book within Powerpoint is to create a page template that you can use for all your books. The instructions given here are based on Powerpoint 2000 but Powerpoint 97 has broadly similar controls and capabilities.

1 Create a blank page

From the *File* menu in Powerpoint, click *New* and double click on *Blank Presentation*:

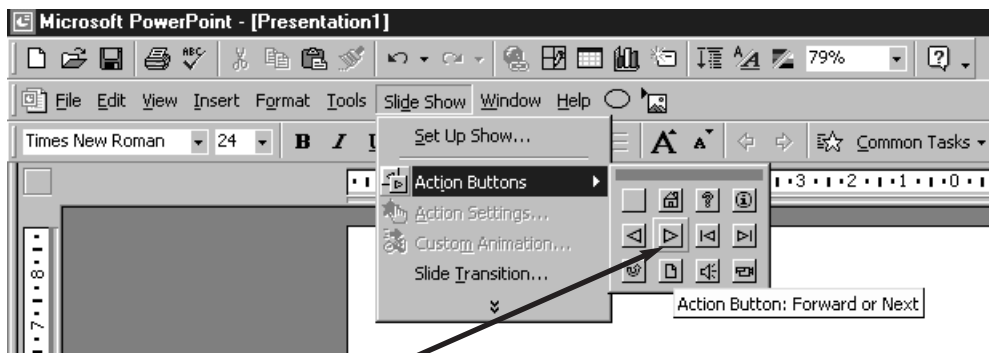


Choose the blank page in the bottom right hand corner and click on *OK*:



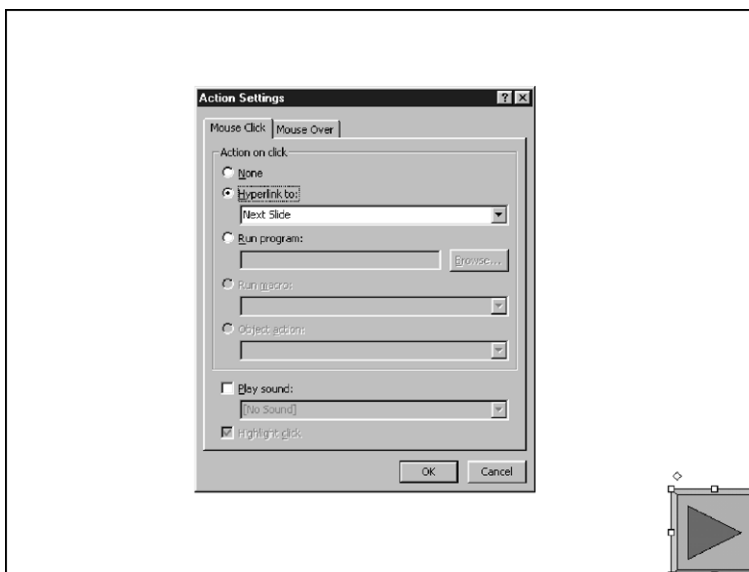
2 Add the page turning arrows

To add a forward page turning arrow to the blank page, select the *SlideShow* menu and click on *Action Buttons*:



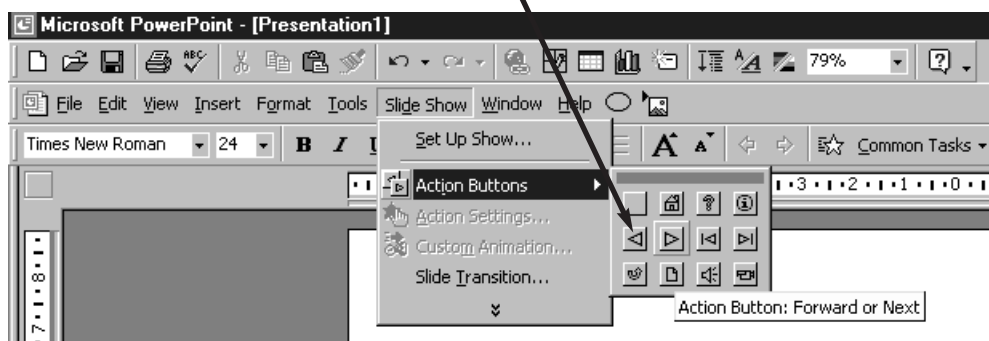
Click on the forwards arrow ...

... and a small cross will appear in the blank page instead of the mouse arrow. Position this cross with the mouse at the bottom right hand corner of the page and click the mouse. The forward arrow button will appear where the cross was positioned and the *Action Settings* box will appear:

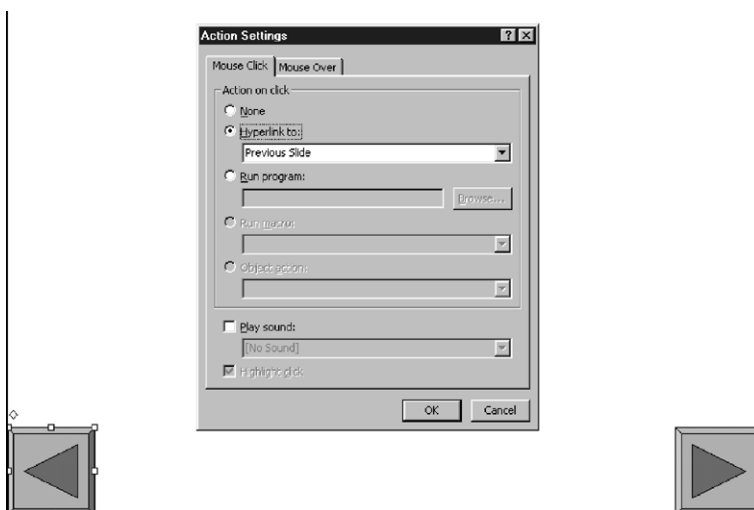


Click on *OK*. You can adjust the size and position of the arrow button using the mouse.

Add the back arrow button in a similar manner by choosing *Action Buttons* from the *Slide Show* menu and selecting a backwards arrow:

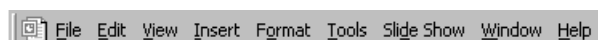


Position the arrow on the page as before. When the *Action Settings* box appears, click *OK*:



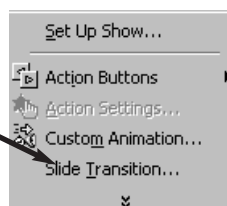
3 Adding a page turning effect

You can make the next page slide in from the right...

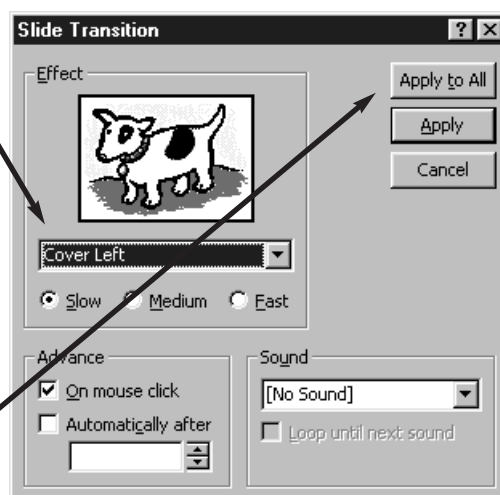


... by clicking on *Slide Show*...

... and clicking on *Slide Transition*...



... then choose a transition effect (eg *Cover Left*)...



... and click on *Apply to All*:

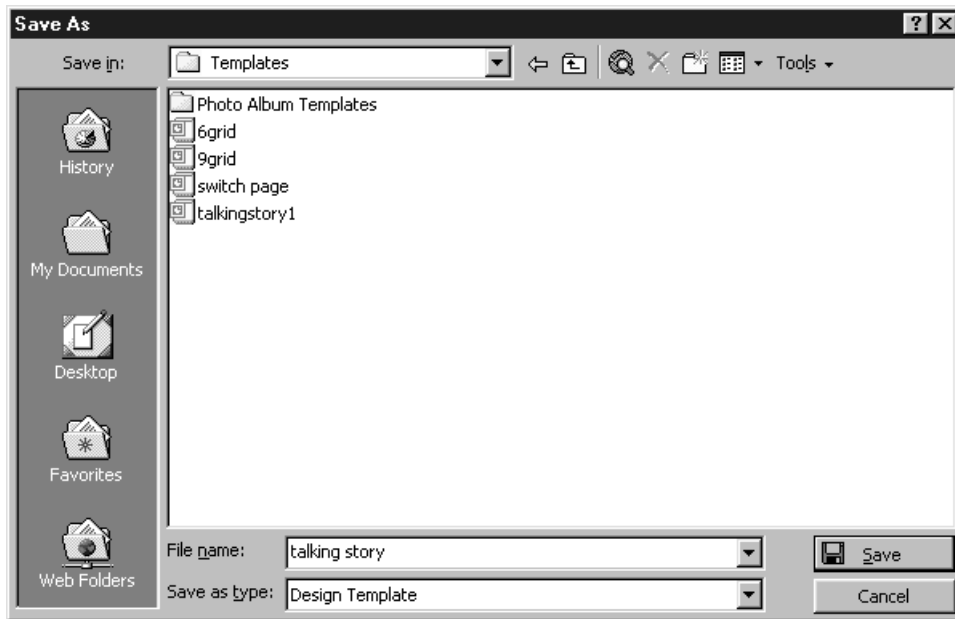
4 Don't add the speaker button yet

The speaker/sound control button is best set up afresh on each page as you create your talking book. It is better not to create it in the template file.

You now have a slide that can be made into a template file for each page of your talking book.

5 Save the slide as a template

To make this slide into a template file, click on *File*, then *Save As* and then on *Design Template*. Click in the *File name* box and give it a name, eg 'talking story1':



The template, in this case called 'talking story1', will now be available from the *New Presentation* menu whenever you start a new file in Powerpoint. You can use the template to create your talking book.

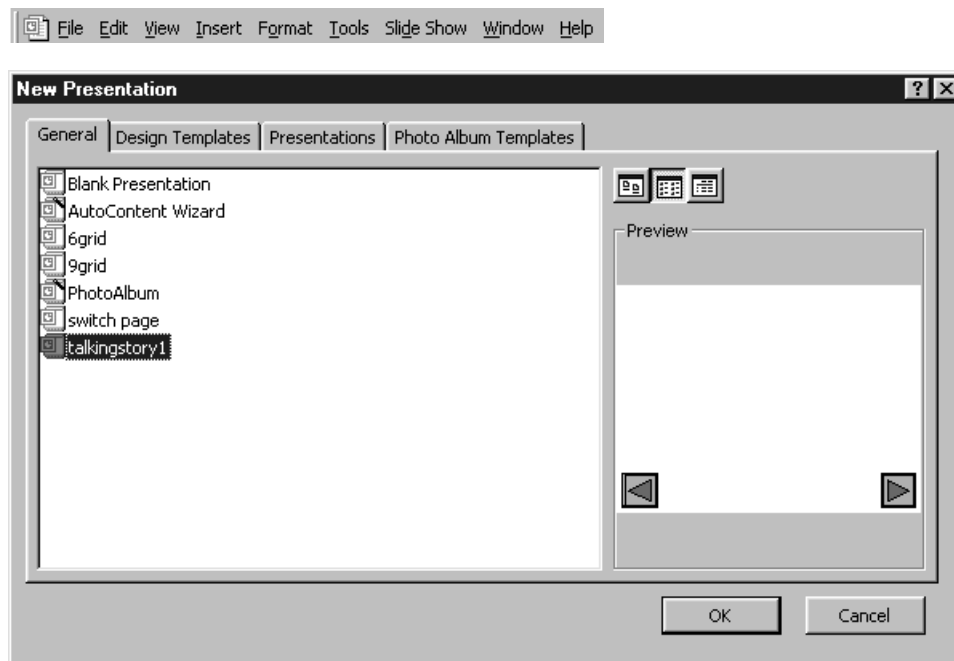


The talking story1 template

Part 5:

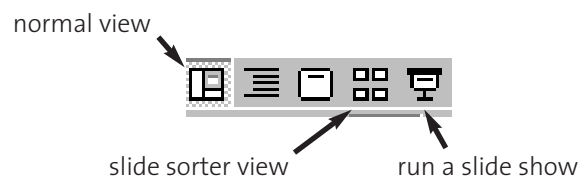
Using the template to make a talking book

We will now create a talking book using the template page (called a **slide** in Powerpoint). If it is not already open, start Powerpoint, click on *File*, then *New* and open your template.



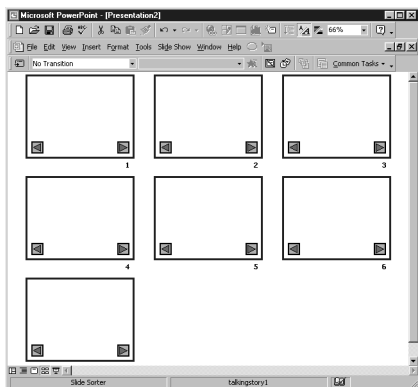
Creating blank pages from the template

Powerpoint has a number of control icons at the bottom of the screen that allow different views of all the slides.

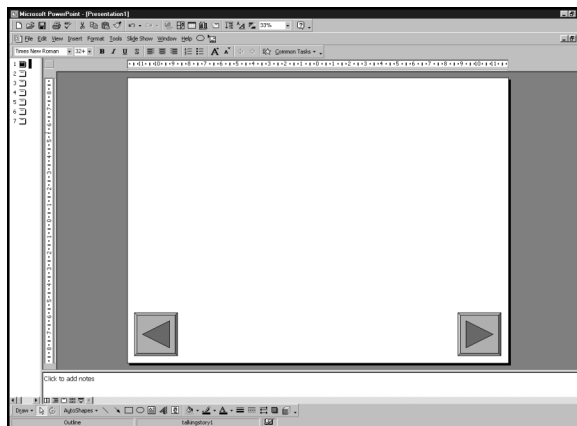


We will use the *Slide Sorter View* and *Normal View* to show all the slides (or pages) in your talking book as you create them.

To create the correct number of blank pages required for your book, highlight the blank slide in the slide sorter window by clicking on it once. Then press **CTRL** and **D** together as many times as you want blank pages for your book. It is easy to add or delete pages at any time. These slides will automatically be linked to each other by the forwards and backwards arrows on the blank pages.



Slide sorter view



Normal view

Adding pictures and symbols onto a page

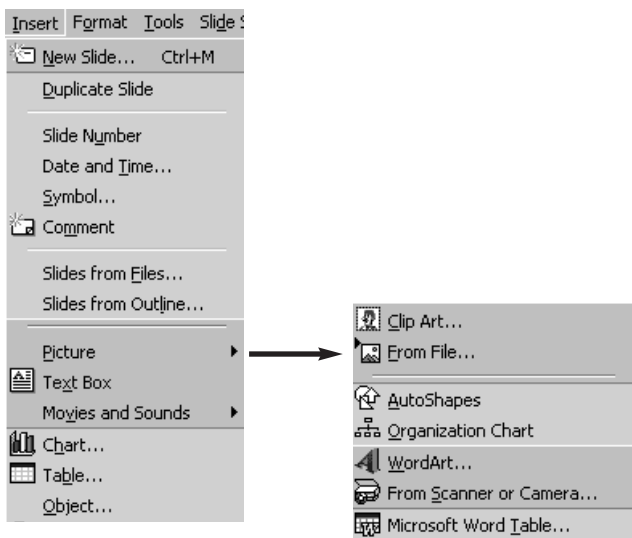
There are two ways of adding graphics to Powerpoint pages: **Inserting** and **Pasting**. We will be *inserting* the page scans, then creating, *pasting*, and cropping the accompanying symbol sentences.

Inserting the scans

To add the picture files containing the scanned page images, do the following:

1 Choose the picture to insert

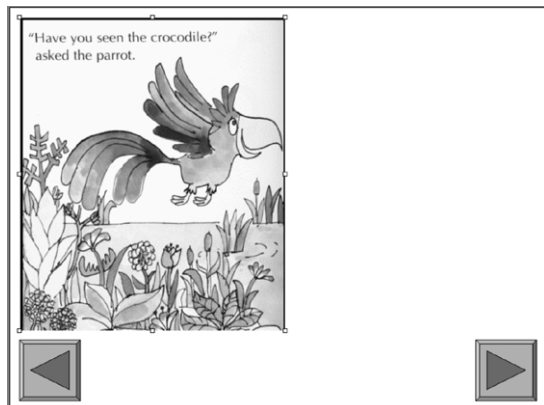
Click on the *Insert* menu, then *Picture*, then *From File* and choose a picture that you have previously scanned into your computer:



Clicking on *From File* opens a window on your computer where you can choose a picture.

2 Place the picture on the page

Click on the picture you want for your first page and then click on *Insert*. This will put the picture onto the first blank page. You can resize it and position it on the page by clicking and dragging on the corners of the picture frame.

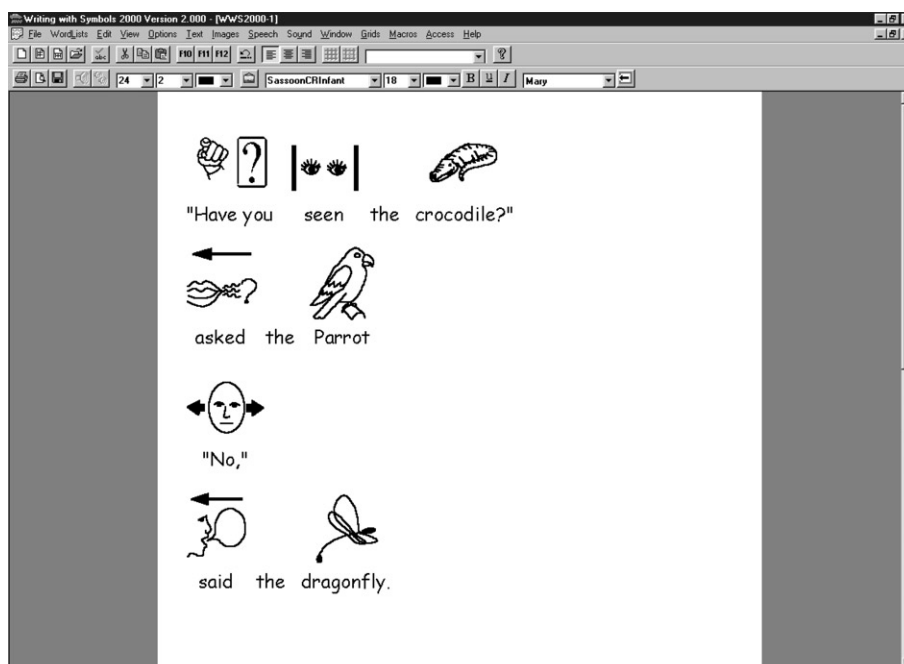


Creating and pasting the symbol sentences

Symbols can easily be added to support the text of your talking books. Sources of symbols include the **Writing with Symbols** CD (from Widgit Software), **Inclusive Writer** (from Inclusive Technology), **Clicker** (from Crick Software), and **Intellipics** (from Intellitools or Inclusive Technology). To add symbol sentences you will need a copy of the symbol writing software.

1 Write your sentences into the symbol processor

Amend or choose the symbols as you want using the controls within the Symbol processor and thicken the lines to at least size 2. It's best to make your sentence fairly large, but not so large that the end of it extends beyond the bottom of the screen.



2 Capture the image that's on the screen

Move the cursor off the screen by pressing the *Return* key a couple of times. Then hold down the *ALT* key whilst pressing the *Print Screen* key to capture an image of the screen (the Print Screen key is usually towards the top right-hand side of the keyboard before the numeric keys; it may be called *Print Scrn* or *PrtScr*). Although nothing will appear to happen when the keys are pressed, an image of part of the screen (called a **Screen Dump**) is stored temporarily into the computer's memory, ready for pasting.

3 Paste the screen image into Powerpoint

Go to the page in your Powerpoint talking book where you want the symbol sentence to be, and choose *Paste* from the *Edit* menu (or press **CTRL** and **V** together on the keyboard). The screen image that you captured in step 2 should appear on the page, probably at the wrong size, and in need of trimming.

Cropping and resizing the symbol sentence images

1 Crop the image

Clicking on your pasted image should bring the the *Picture* toolbar onto the screen, but if it doesn't, choose *Toolbars* from the *View* menu and select *Picture*. Make sure the image is selected by clicking on it, then choose the *Crop* tool from the toolbar:

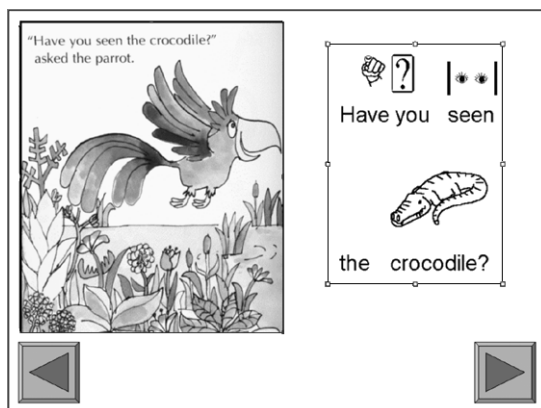


The Crop tool in the Picture toolbar

When you move your cursor over any of the small white boxes on the frame of your image, it will become a crop symbol. Hold down your mouse button on the relevant frame box and crop the image by dragging a relevant corner or side inwards, then release the mouse button. You will need to reselect the Crop tool each time you want to carry out a further crop.

2 Resize the image

You can resize your image if necessary by clicking and dragging on its corner frame boxes. You can reposition the image by clicking anywhere within it and dragging it to the new position.



Adding speech to a slide

You can record speech to add to your talking book using a microphone plugged into the computer's soundcard (all multimedia computers will have a soundcard). Plug the microphone into the microphone socket in the sound card at the back of the computer. Although Windows comes with its own sound recorder in the *Entertainment* folder, accessed from *Accessories* in the *Start* menu, there are sound recording controls within Powerpoint. We will be using these.

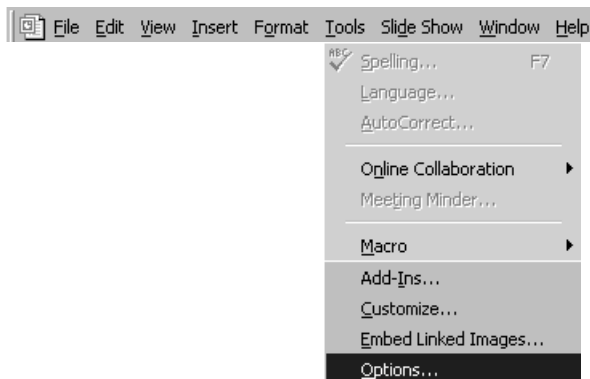
Wait! Before you start adding speech or sounds...

There is one **very important change** you must make to Powerpoint before you start to add sounds to your talking book. This is because Powerpoint stores sounds in two different ways:

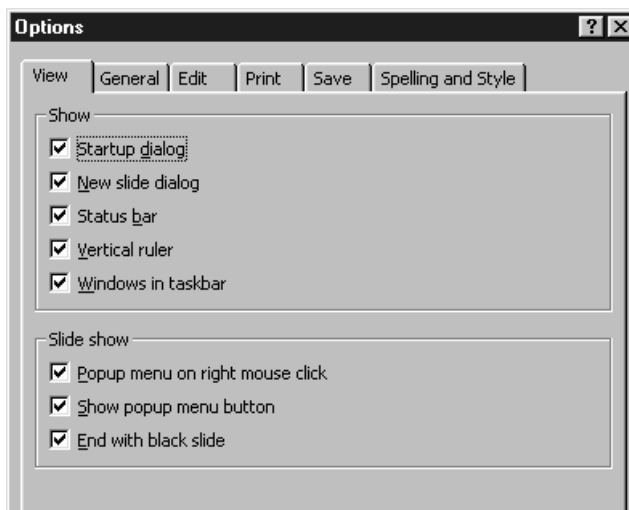
- 1 If the sound file is *small* (ie there is not much speech), the complete sound will be stored *within* the Powerpoint pages.
- 2 When the sound file is *large* (ie contains a lot of speech and/or music), only a *link* to the sound file is stored, and not the sound file itself. This can cause problems transferring the talking book between computers. You will get a silent talking book!

What we need to do is alter the settings within Powerpoint to allow larger sound files to be stored within the Powerpoint pages, thus avoiding these problems.

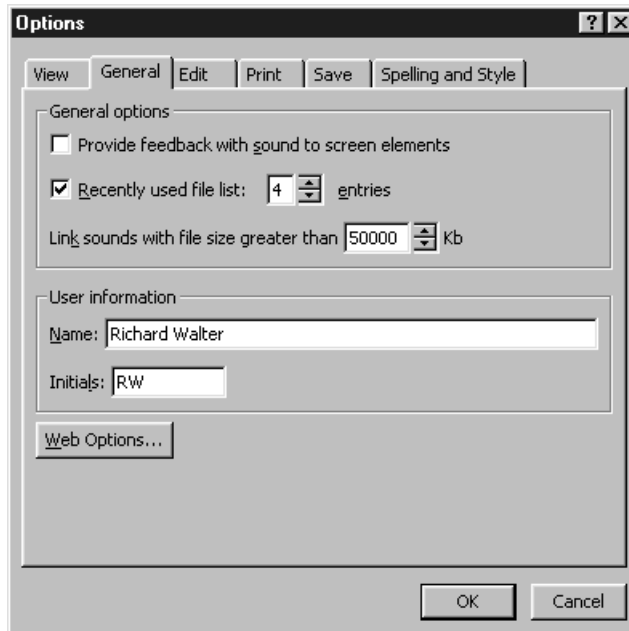
- 1 Click on *Tools*, then *Options*:



- 2 In the dialogue box, click on *General*:



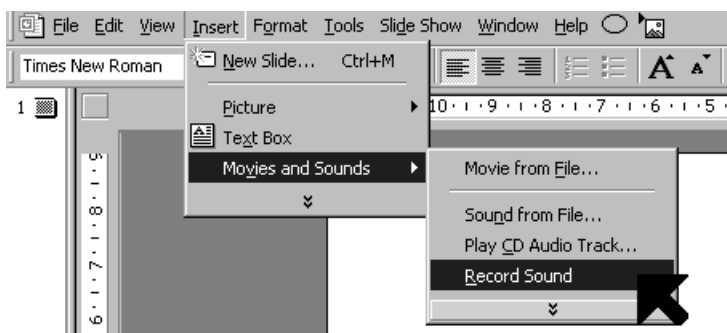
- 3 Click in the *Link sounds box with files greater than* and type in **50000** (which is the biggest number Powerpoint will accept):



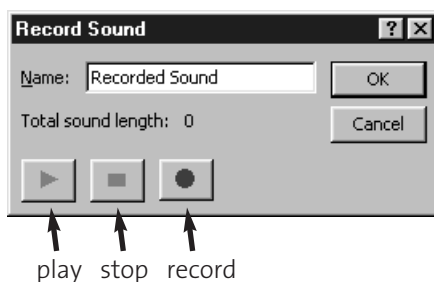
This will ensure that all sound files smaller than 50000Kb (5Mb) are included within each of the pages when you save your talking book. If it is then used on a different computer, the sounds will play correctly. Five Mb is large enough for all your recorded speech files to be included.

So, now to add the speech...

- 1 Click on the *Insert* menu, click on *Movies and Sounds* and then click on *Record Sound*:



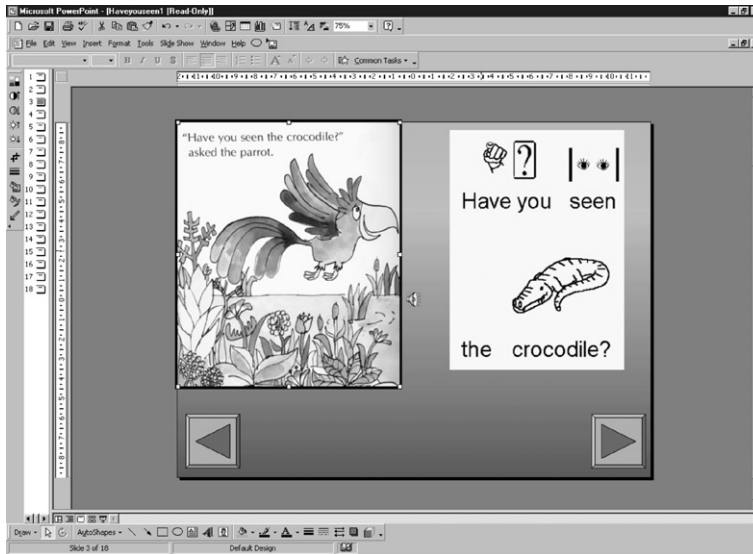
- 2 This window will appear:



Click on the red *record* button and speak into the microphone. Click on *stop* at the end and then click in the Name box. Delete the words "Recorded Sound" and give the speech a meaningful name ("Not me said the parrot" rather than just "sound1", or "speech2").

Then click on *OK*.

- 3 A loudspeaker picture will then appear in the middle of your page:



This can be positioned wherever you want on the slide using the mouse, and resized by clicking on and dragging the corners of the frame:



This is the first page of your talking book.

Completing your talking book

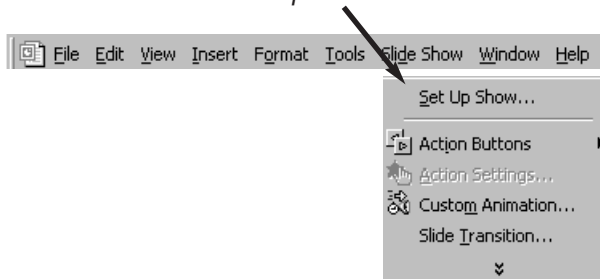
Click on the next blank slide either to the left of the screen (if you are in Normal view) or in the slide sorter window and add the graphic, symbols and sound to create the second page of the story. Follow the same procedure to make the rest of the pages.

Continue for all the pages in the story and check them frequently by running the slideshow:



run a slide show

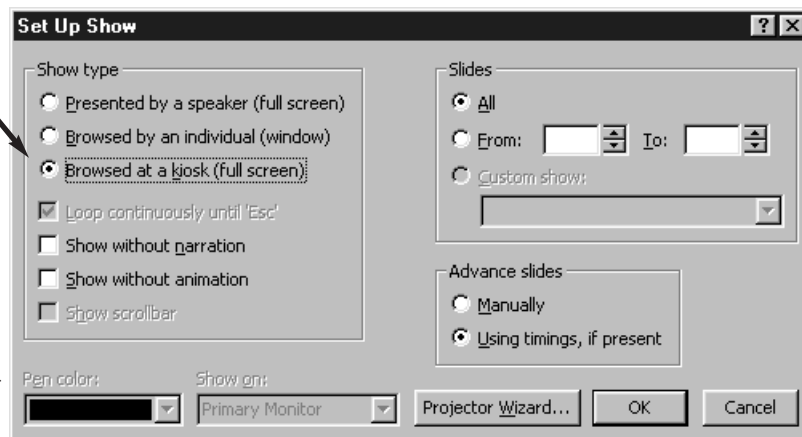
Finally, set up the show to work only from the forward and backwards arrow buttons. Click on the *Slide Show* menu then *Set Up Show*:



Then click in *Browsed at a kiosk (full screen)*:

Then click on *OK*.

This setting ensures that the pages only advance when the arrow keys are clicked and the slideshow doesn't respond to any other keyboard or mouse input.



Adding extra sound effects

Sound effects can also be added to liven up the talking books. These can be found from a number of sources, including the internet. Windows comes with a variety of sounds, as do a number of other programs. A simple search on your computer will probably reveal a large number of sound effects (look for files ending in *.wav*). You can also buy CDs that contain sound effects - they are often included with clipart and picture CDs.

To add extra sounds from your computer

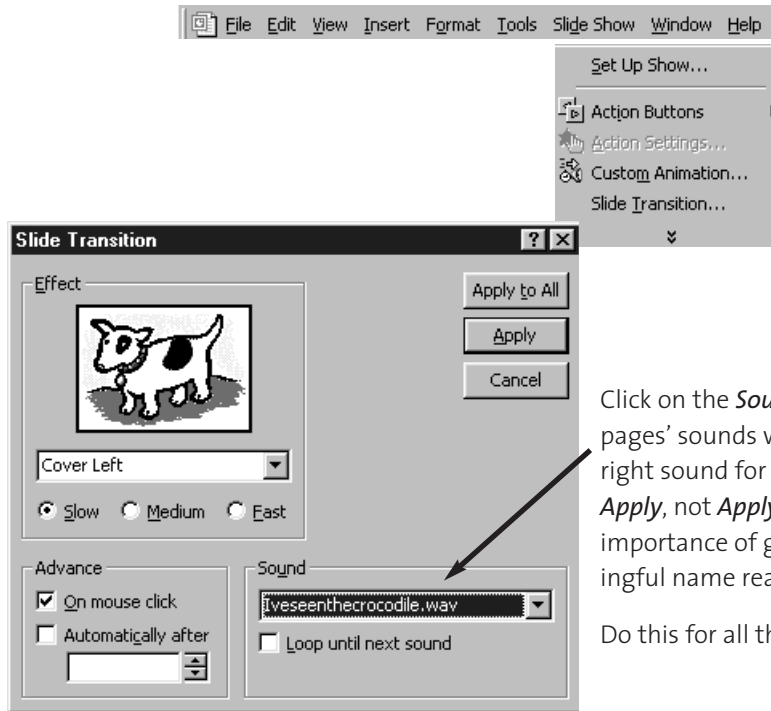
Click on *Insert*, then *Movies and Sounds* and then *Sound from File*.



Combining a page turn with speech

It is possible to set up your Powerpoint talking book so that a single mouse or switch press will turn the page and speak the text. To do this, the speech and page turn need to be combined on one button.

Go to the *Slide Show* menu and click on *Slide Transition*:



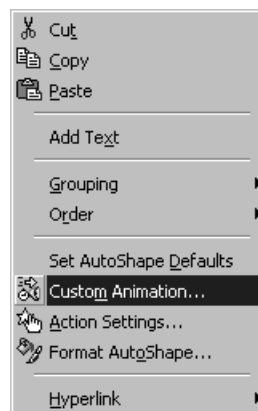
Click on the *Sound* box where all your pages' sounds will be listed. Choose the right sound for the page and click on *Apply*, not *Apply To All*. Once again the importance of giving the sounds a meaningful name really pays dividends here.

Do this for all the pages.

Adding a time delay to a page turn

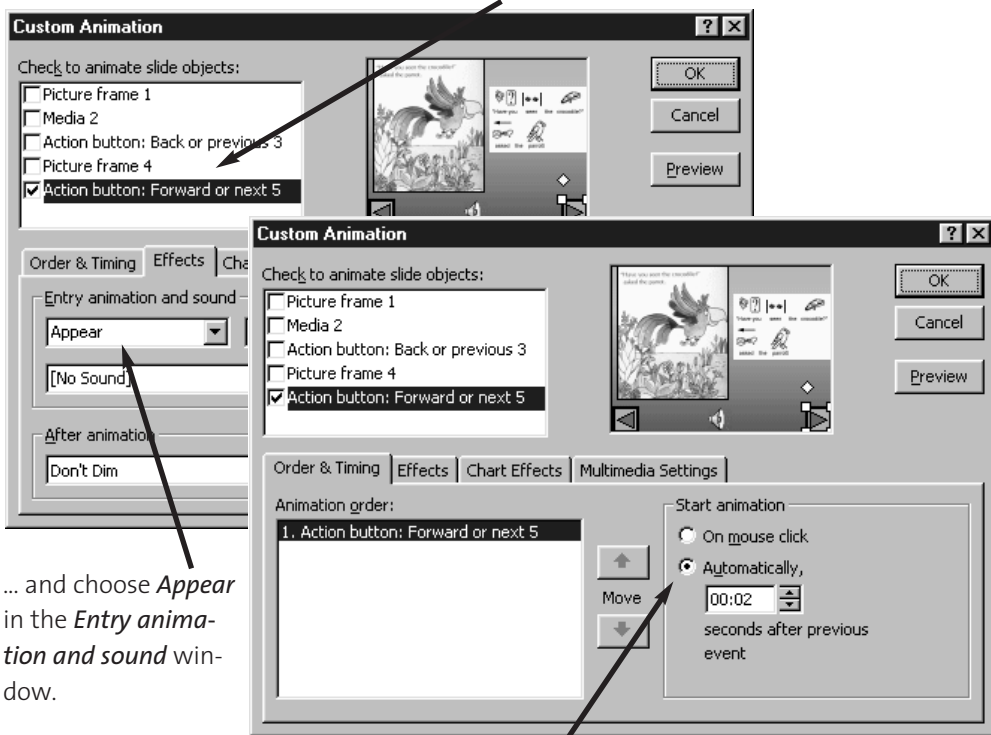
A further very useful addition to the single press modification described above is to give the forward arrow a timed delay. This prevent users with a tremor making rapid switch or mouse presses that would otherwise cause the pages to fly past.

- 1 Click on the arrow button on the page with the right mouse button.
- 2 Click on *Slide Show*, then *Custom Animation*:



The dialogue boxes for the final steps differ significantly between Powerpoint 2000 and Powerpoint 97, so we've shown both over the page:

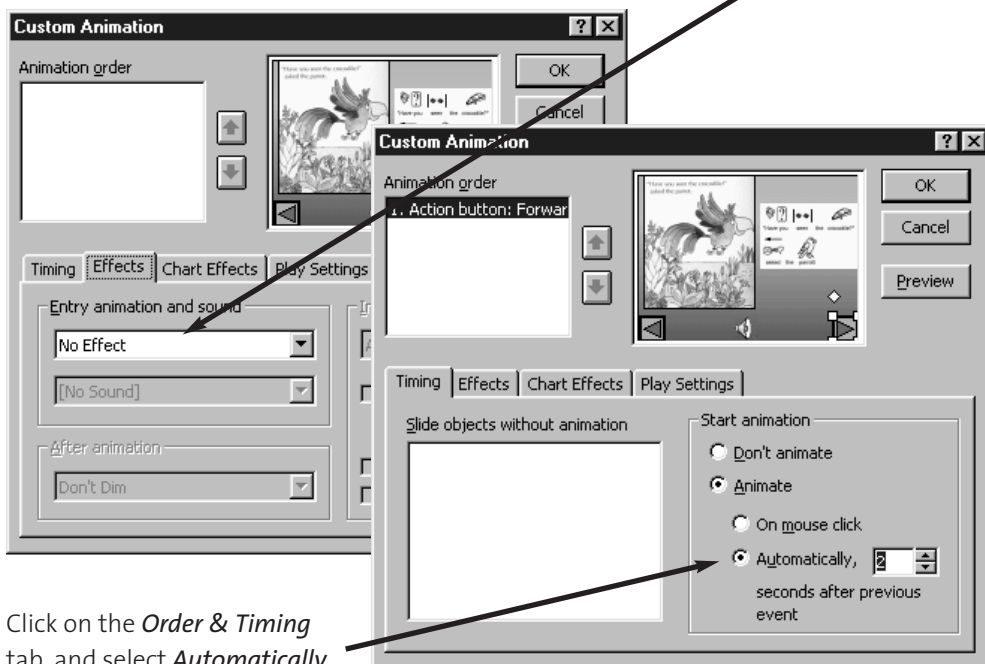
3a If you're using **Powerpoint 2000**, click the *Action button* box...



... and choose *Appear* in the *Entry animation and sound* window.

Click on the *Order & Timing* tab, and select *Automatically* in the *Start animation* box. In the box underneath choose a time delay by using the up/down buttons. We would advise using **00:02** seconds. Click on *Ok*.

3b If you're using **Powerpoint 97**, click the *Action button* box and choose *Appear* in the *Entry animation and sound* window.



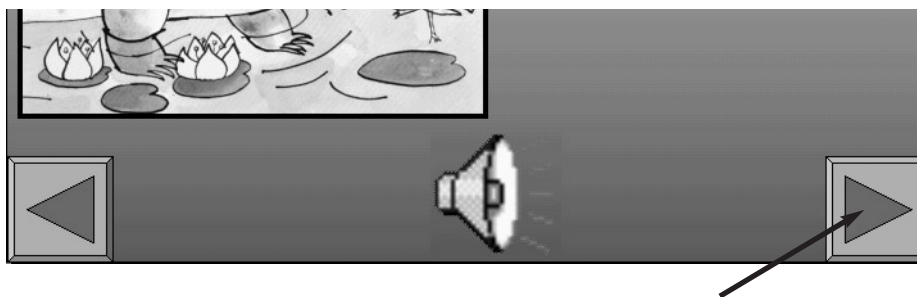
Click on the *Order & Timing* tab, and select *Automatically* in the *Start animation* box. In the box underneath choose a time delay by using the up/down buttons. We would advise using **2** seconds. Click on *Ok*.

Part 6:

Enabling access with a single switch

There is no easy way to add direct switch access in Powerpoint so that people who can't use a mouse can access your talking books. Although you can use utility software like **Clikit** (from Intellitools) to create 'hotspots' on the page which can be controlled with a switch, results can be unpredictable. You can, however, connect a single switch to operate the combined speech and page turn button.

Position the mouse cursor over the page arrow and attach a switch using either a mouse switch box (Semerc **Mouser** or Tash **MouseMover**) or a keyboard switch interface. The keyboard switch interface must be set to send a mouse click (This is possible, for example, with a Don Johnson keyboard interface, an Inclusive Technology keyboard switch interface, or a switch attached to the Intellikeys keyboard).



Position the mouse cursor over the page turn arrow

You should now be able to operate the talking book using a single switch. Make sure that the cursor remains over the arrow!

Part 7:

Getting creative with talking stories

Perhaps one of the most exciting activities involved in making talking books is the creation of *new* stories with pupils. These stories can be developed using the pupils' own language and can incorporate their own choices. This allows those with learning difficulties real access to shared and creative writing.

Commercial talking books with a simple interface are usually targeted for very young children with age-appropriate language and topics. There are few talking books on a more adult level that have the same simple interface.

The books that you create for your own pupils can be on more adult themes. It is possible to incorporate feelings and activities that reflect young adults' interests, while keeping the simplicity of layout and control that pupils with learning difficulties need.

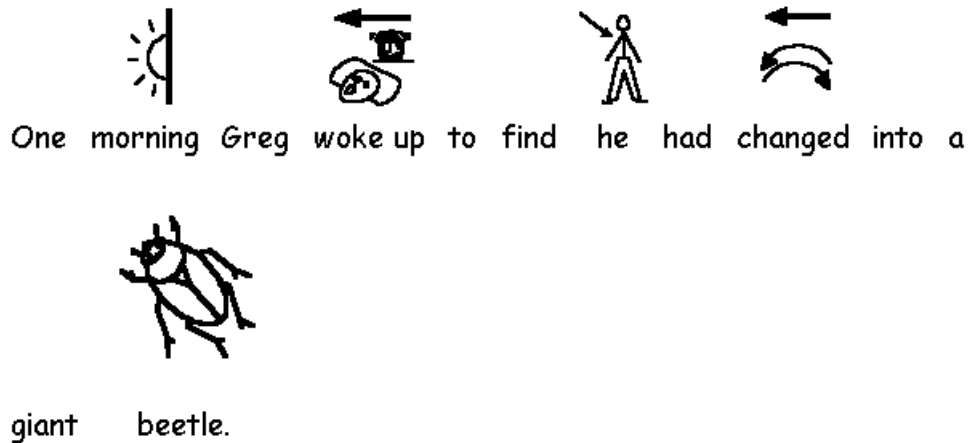
There are obviously many different methods in transferring pupils' ideas and creative writing to the computer. One method is to start with a story page planner sheet:

Name:	Date:
Title:	
Picture	
text/symbols	
Sounds/animation	

Pupils can build these pages into a storyboard, planning out their book by constructing the individual pages.

I have found it most successful to use a 'story starter' that is based on either from a real situation or the continuation of a story line from a book.

For example, here is the opening line taken from *Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka:



You can develop the storyline by first asking some simple questions, shaping the story from the pupils' answers.

- How would Greg feel?
- What would he eat?
- How would he get out of bed?
- What would his family feel?

In this way the story can be developed, in the style of Franz Kafka, with creative writing generated by the pupils.

Another story we have made into an accessible symbol and talking book on the computer is *The Iron Man* by Ted Hughes. You may wish to consider making your own talking book of this story. The opening chapter from *The Iron Man* is not only an excellent piece of imaginative writing, but it contains most of the elements that make for good shared reading; relatively simple language, repetition, imagination, and well written, almost poetic, prose. It also has the benefit of a story tape read by Ted Hughes himself that you can use alongside your computer.

All sorts of methods, including Rebus choice sheets and story cubes, can give pupils using AAC communication methods access to imaginative creative writing. As always, the emphasis is best put on possibilities, not barriers.

Enjoy your creative writing!



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