

Get started with... Impress

Learn how to make a slideshow of your photos using OpenOffice.org's presentation tool...

Every proud parent or intrepid traveller loves to share their pictures with their friends, family and just about everyone who stands still long enough. But the age of the plastic photo album is long gone: if people are going to sit through 200 slides of your trip to Bognor Regis, they at least want to see them in vibrant colour with some explanation of what's going on. This is the perfect use for *Oo Impress*, because it's a presentation tool at heart, and has lots of clever ways to make your slides be more exciting.

In this tutorial you'll learn how to create a photo slideshow using *Impress*, and also how to add text and animations to the effects to make them a bit more interesting. All you'll need to follow along are some pictures of your own – any will do, even the wallpapers you use for your computer's desktop are good enough for testing.

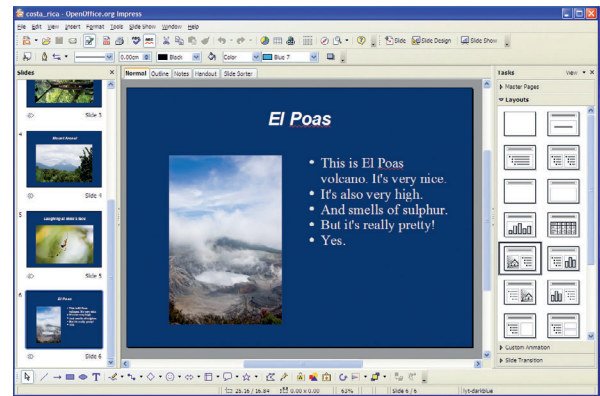
Although we cover good presentation design on p64, there are a few quick tips you should know before creating a photo slideshow:

- 1** Let the pictures do the talking. You don't need lots of words on the screen – restrict it to a place name or the names of people in the photograph at the most.
- 2** Use your pictures at the largest size you can. They are the most important thing in this presentation, after all!
- 3** Don't use a garish theme. Darker, more subtle tones are less likely to class with the colours of your pictures. The exception to this is if your pictures share a common colour tone (eg blue if

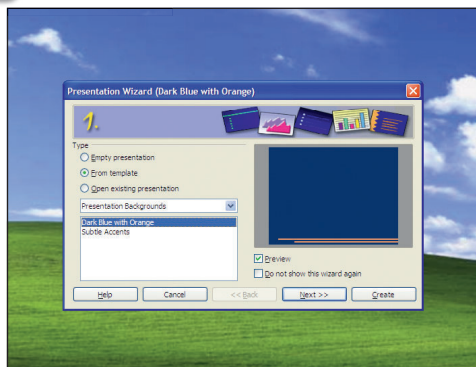
they are pictures from a sailing holiday). In this situation, a nice blue slide theme would complement the pictures.

Finally, if you are already an experienced *PowerPoint* user, don't just skip over this introduction – you might find a few hints and tips in here that will help you migrate to *Oo Impress*! The techniques shown here are common to all *Impress* presentations: you'll learn how to create slides, assemble text and pictures, add animations, and build up a finished presentation from scratch, which are the real fundamentals of *Oo Impress*.

With that out of the way, let's get started...

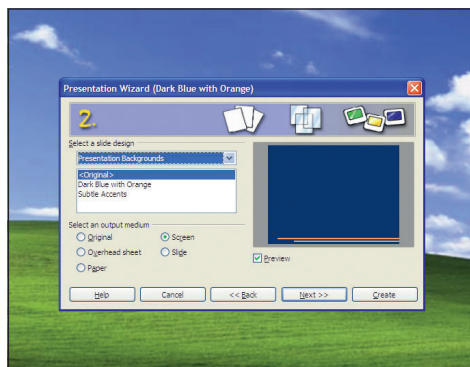


Impress: create a photo slideshow



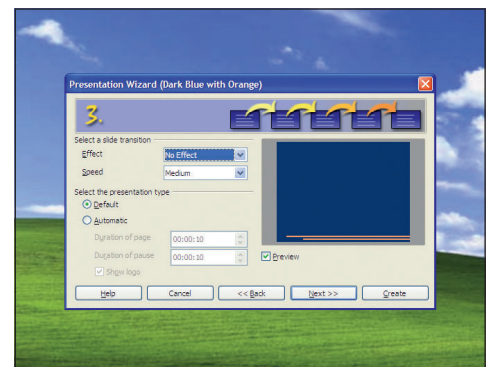
1 Create a presentation

When you start *Oo Impress* for the first time, the Presentation Wizard launches. The default option is to create an empty presentation, but it'd be beneficial to have *Impress* do some of the groundwork for us at this time. So, change the selected option to From Template, then click Next.



2 Appearance choices

On the second screen of the wizard, you can choose how you want your slides to appear. The selection of themes available is pretty weak by default, so just leave it as Dark Blue with Orange. However, you should change the output medium option to the way you intend to show your presentation – we chose screen, because this will be shown on a computer. Click Next.



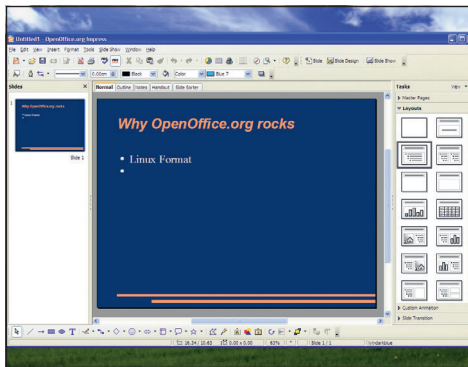
3 Animation effects

If you want to set a default slide animation effect, you can do that now. But we'd recommend leave it off – it's best to add effects as needed, rather than as a rule. However, if you ever want to create an automated slideshow that moves from slide to slide without your input, you can set that here. For now, just click Next.



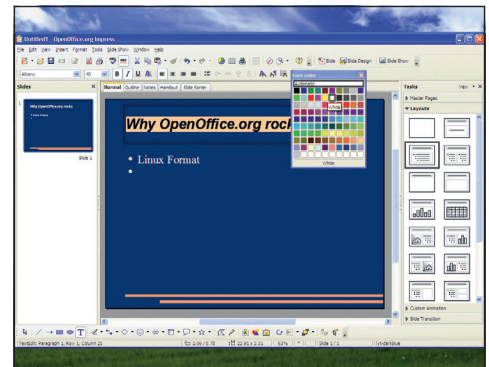
4 The opening slide

OOo Impress can create a very basic opening slide for us, just as a starting point. To utilise that, enter some text in the company name and presentation subject fields, then click Next. The Further Ideas box is rather pointless, so you can safely ignore it.



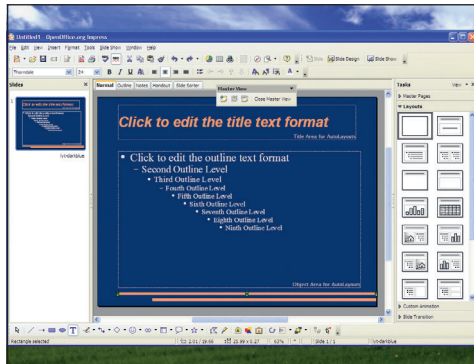
5 Wizard results

OK, the OOo Impress presentation wizard has finished, and has magicked up this simple – but remarkably ugly – presentation, and inserted some basic text for us. It's a long, long way from looking good, but that's OK – we can fix that pretty quickly.



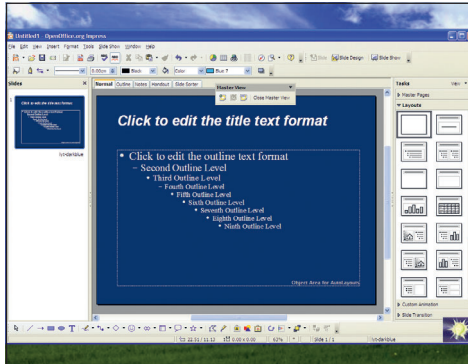
6 Colour changing

To change the title colour from salmon to white, click on it. A box appears around the text, to show it's selected. Click and drag over the text so it's selected, then look for a toolbar button with an A underlined in salmon colour. Click the down arrow next to that, and click the white colour palette.



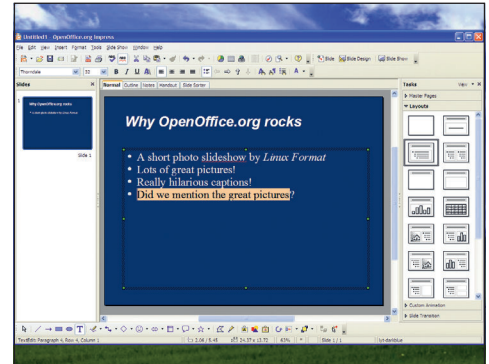
7 Changes to the master slide

If you try deleting the lines at the bottom, you'll notice you can't modify them. That's because they are in the master slide, so that they automatically appear in all the slides you create. To delete them, click View > Master > Slide Master, then click the lines with your mouse and press the Delete key.



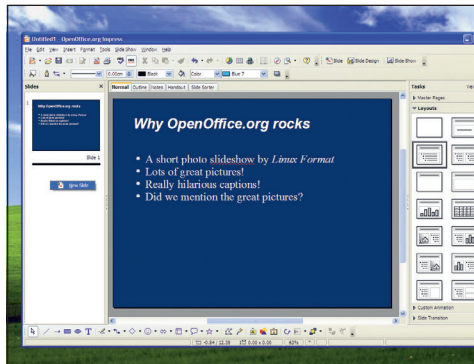
8 Setting defaults

While you're here, you might as well set the default title colour to be white – use the same procedure from Step 6. If you want to change the background colour, click Format > Page, then choose the Background tab and select a colour you prefer. When you're done, click the floating Close Master View button to go back to the first slide.



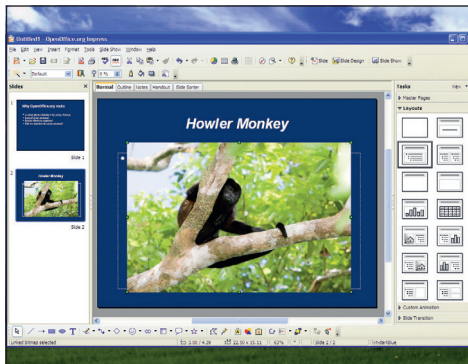
9 Type in your title text

This first slide is going to hold a bit of text about this presentation, so click on the default text (it's "Linux Format" for me) and type in some text of your own. When you press Enter, Impress creates a new bullet point automatically.



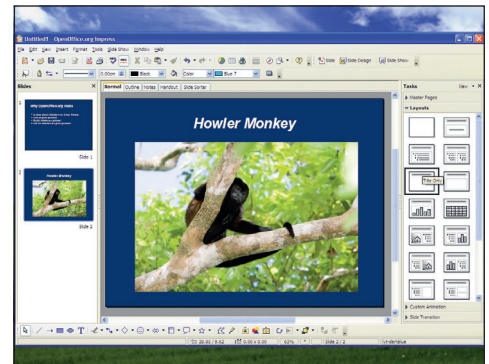
10 Add a second slide

There's only so much you can do with a single slide, so let's add a second one: right-click in the Slides pane on the left of the Impress window, and choose New Slide from the menu that appears. This will have the basic layout from the master slide, so it'll be dark blue with a title and some text.



11 Title tweaking

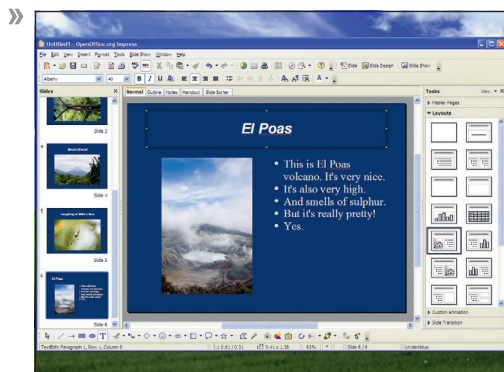
Change the title to be a one-line description of your first picture, then click the Centre button from the toolbar. Now, drag a picture from your computer into the Impress window, and it will appear in the slide. You can drag around the green boxes on the edges to resize the picture.



12 Removing text boxes

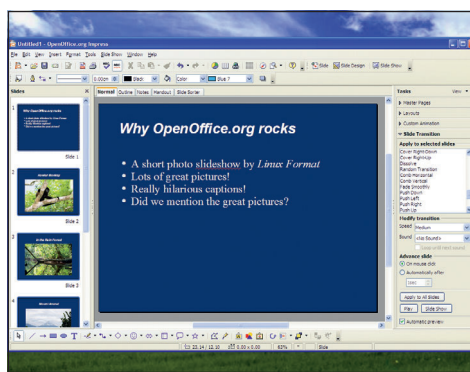
If you look carefully, you'll see a thin grey box around your picture – that's the text box behind it. As we're just showing a picture here, that text box isn't needed, so you can either delete it by selecting it and hitting the Delete key, or you can just click the Title Only slide layout from the right – it's the first one on the third row of layouts.

Impress: the basics



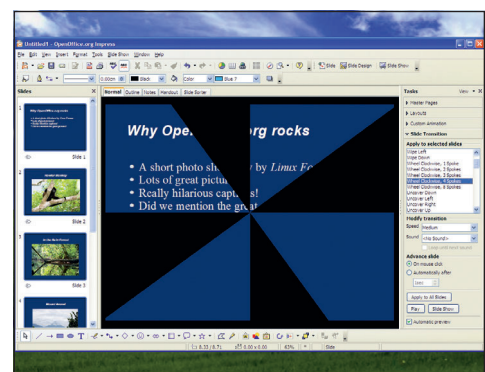
13 The more slides, the merrier

Now go ahead and add a few more slides, giving each one its own title and its own picture. Don't be afraid to try some of the other layouts from the Layout pane, because it adds some variation. For example, why not try making every third slide have text and a picture on?



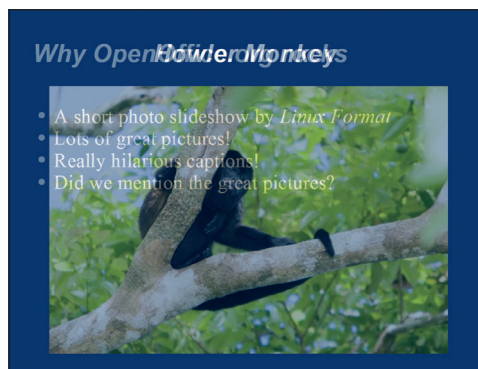
14 Transitions

That's the basic presentation made, so let's make the slides blend together smoothly to result in the presentation looking a bit nicer. To do that, click the first slide, hold down Shift, then click the last slide – this selects them all. Now click the Slide Transition arrow on the bottom right of the window.



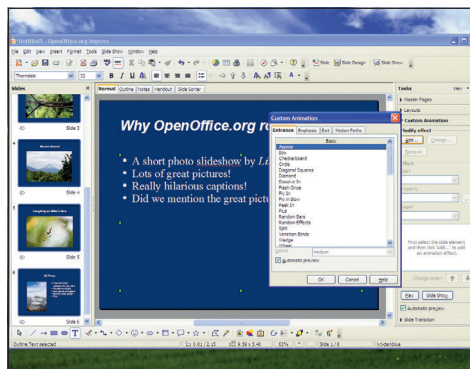
15 Live preview

Clicking an effect shows a live preview of how it will look. Here's where most people go wrong: once you see the list of slide animations, people seem to love making every slide have a different transition, making ugly presentations. Keep it simple: scroll down the list of options and choose Fade Smoothly.



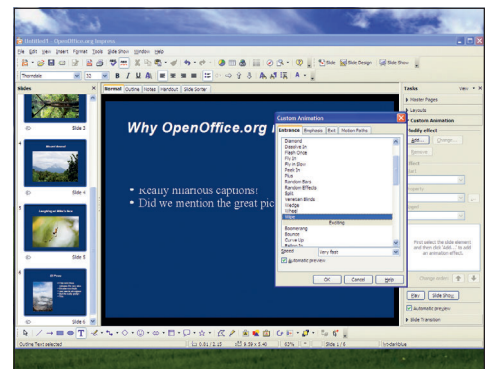
16 Preview your slideshow

As you selected all the slides before applying a transition, that transition gets used for all the slides. If you press F5, Impress will launch your slideshow so you can see how it works – click your mouse to advance through slides. This picture was caught half-way through the fade transition.



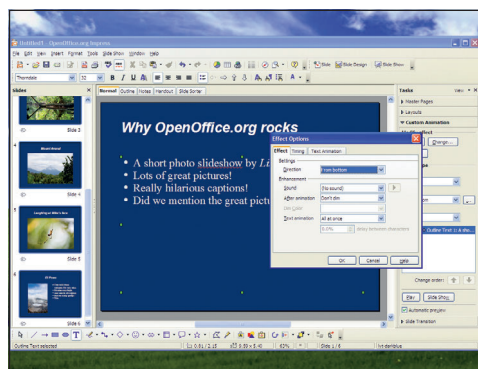
17 Adding animation

Now let's add some animations to individual elements. Again, you need to keep your "Tack Alert" set to maximum: no one likes tacky presentations, so keep it simple! Select something you want to animate, then click the Custom Animation arrow in the right pane. Now click Add.



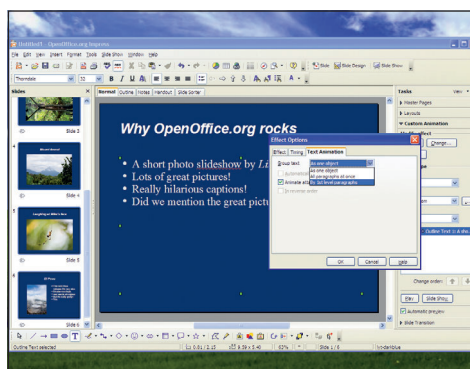
18 The Star Wars-style wipe!

The default option, Appear, is dull in the extreme, so change it to Wipe. As with slide transitions, Impress automatically previews object animations so you can see how they will look – this is how the Wipe animation looks part-way through. Click OK to add the animation.



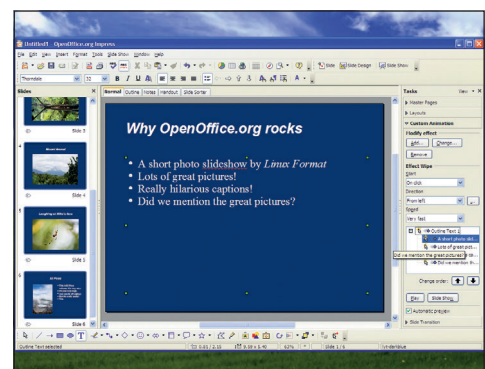
19 Wipe direction

The default wipe animation is set to From Bottom, meaning that the wipe moves from bottom to top. Click the "..." button to the right of that selection box, and a new window will appear where you can customise the animation.



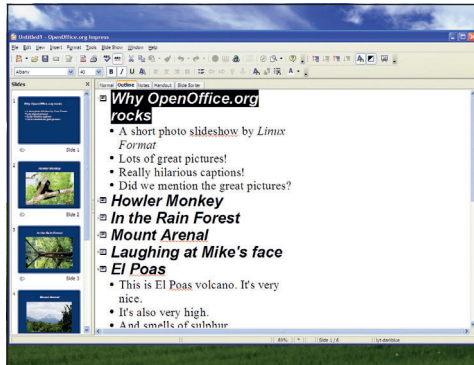
20 Text animation options

From this window, change the direction to be From Left, then go to the Text Animation tab and choose By 1st Level Paragraphs for the Group Text option. This should make the text appear on screen one bullet at a time.



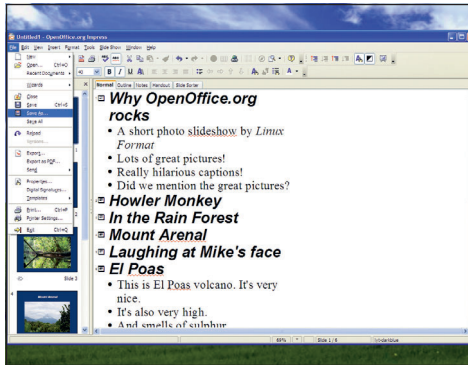
21 Precise adjustment

When you click OK to save the changed effect, you should see the single animation break into multiple smaller ones in the Custom Animation pane – one bullet for each line in your text box. This lets you be more precise if you need it.



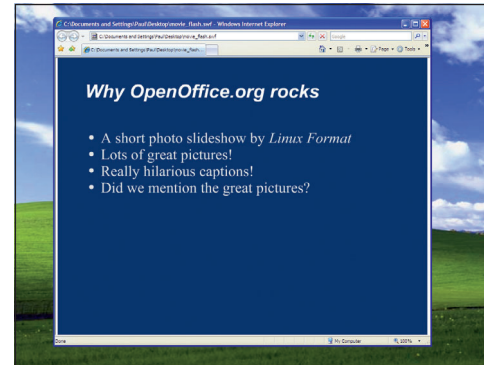
22 Text preview

Now that your presentation is done, you can preview all the text at once by switching to the Outline tab. These tabs are just above the slide layout, and you'll be in Normal by default. The outline view lets you see your slides at a glance, as well as make changes if you want to.



23 Save your presentation

And now, you're done: it's time to save your presentation so that it's safe on your hard disk. Click File > Save, then enter a filename. Remember, if you're using OpenDocument Presentation file format (.odp files), *Microsoft PowerPoint* users won't be able to view your work!



24 Convert to Adobe Flash

Impress can save your presentation as an Adobe Flash file; it doesn't save any of the transitions, but it does store all your text and pictures, which makes it perfect for distribution to other people. To save as Flash, click File > Export, then choose Flash from the list of supported formats.

Going further

We've only scratched the surface of *OOo Impress* in this short primer, but you've managed to make a slide show using a master slide, pictures, transitions and animations, and even exported it to Flash format! That's not bad going for the work of 30 minutes, but there's lots more you can do with this presentation if you want to learn through a little exploration – here are some ideas to get you started...

» **Edit the master slide** to make it more interesting. A plain dark-blue background gets no one excited – why not try some of the drawing shapes (see the toolbar at the bottom) to see if you can add a few dark boxes to break up the background a little?

» **Add some other media** to your slides. We've only looked at pictures here, but *Impress* can handle movies and sounds just as well. In fact, you can even add sounds to your animations, but the effect is usually quite off-putting!

» **Impress gives your slides numbers** for their names by default; it can be hard to remember which slide is which. But if you right-click on a slide you can rename it. This is useful when you're in the middle of a presentation – you can right-click on the screen and jump to a slide by its name.

» **Made a slide you're particularly happy with?** See if you can figure out how to duplicate it, then modify the duplicate.

» **Make your slideshow automated** so that it changes slide every 10 seconds. In our examples, all the transitions and animations happened through a mouse click, but if you were looking carefully through the options you would have

noticed that *Impress* lets you activate transitions after a set time passes.

» **The Color/Grayscale option** under the Edit menu lets you preview selected slides in either colour (the default), grayscale or plain black and white. Can you think of when this would be useful?

» **Experiment with style options.** As with *Writer*, *Impress* has its own range of styles to choose from.

These affect the way the text appears, but also how indented it is on the screen (*ie* how important it is). Choose carefully!

So, that's you all up to speed with *OOo Impress*, but if you want to push your presentation skills further there's more to come – read on to see how *Impress* can help you with business presentations, and also read our top tips for giving the best presentations! **LXF**

“In the middle of a presentation, right-click on the screen and jump to the slide of your choice.”

