

HOW TO ORGANIZE A DIGITAL SLIDE SHOW

No matter how many pictures you have taken to use in a photography show, if you don't do the proper editing, arranging, and planning of narration, you won't have a program that will interest an audience.

I. Preparations of Photos

1. Identify. Transfer images from the camera to your computer, identify them, and back them up.

2. Screen images slowly enough to eliminate the pictures that are out of focus or over/under exposed. Be ruthless in the weeding. If a picture calls for an apology, don't use it.

3. Select. Take each group of photos and screen them again to select the really good ones that you want to use. Move the discards into a separate folder in case you need to look at them again to fill in a gap in the story. This is one way it can be done: Set up a folder such as "China Show" for the images you think you might want to use. Then set up two sub-folders, "In" and "Out." As you go through the main "China Show" folder, scrutinize each photo to see if it is good enough for the show. Next put it into the "In" or "Out" sub-folder. Sometimes you may have to repeat this procedure several times in order to get the show into an appropriate timing. Some poorer photographs may be saved by digital manipulation, if you need them badly. Knowing that you are emotionally involved with the pictures you took, try to objectively select images that will interest others.

4. Sort. Photos can be grouped by location if preparing a travel show. Your first slide could be a map showing where you went. You will probably put the pictures in the order in which you took them. However, this is not mandatory. You can put them in any order that will look the best, be grouped by subject, or tells the best story. But plan your story-line for the narration, and decide whether you want to rearrange the order to make a good story. Nobody in your audience will care what order you took the photos or the order in which you visited places.

5. Sequences. Make short story-telling segments of related pictures. Use transition photos to bridge gaps. When you come to a spot in your story where the locale shifts from city-to-city, country-to-country, or even just across town, look for photos which will tell your audience that you are moving from one place to another. Use a picture of a bus, train, boat, airplane, sign, or roadside scene – anything which will form a transition from the place you have been describing to the place you will next describe. Use a long shot to show an overall view and surroundings; a medium shot to show part of the scene you think is most interesting and a close-up shot to show details.

6. Trim. Select the photos you really want to include in your show. Eliminate the weak slides and duplicates of a subject. Nobody wants to see the same photo more than once.

7. Arrange. Put the photos selected into a logical order – chronologically as taken, geographically, historically, or however you would tell a story. (a) Don't switch back and forth from vertical to horizontal images. Try to put as many of one format together as possible. Your eyes need time to adjust to the change in format. (b) It is a good idea to group photos with similar colors together, when possible. (c) Try not to have images next to each other in which the exposures are too different (light or dark) because it is hard on the eyes of the viewers.

8. Titles and Maps. Decide on a method to make title photos to add to your show. For example, use a photo showing the overall title, the next one saying "photography by _____," and the third one possibly being a map. Or make one title slide with the text overlaying a photo. Begin the show with especially interesting shots and end up with equally good ones to leave your audience wanting more. Come up with a good "The End" shot.

9. Photograph (for travel shows) souvenirs, artifacts, handicraft objects, etc., which you have brought home to add detail interest, and use them where desired in your show. Or you could display them on a table to be viewed after the show.

10. Check your photos and adjust any where horizons are askew or main subjects and objects are tilted. Edit out distracting objects and make color corrections as needed. Take out any spots such as dust or scratches. Nothing is more amateurish and irritating to your viewers than seeing little spots all over a sky and having to admit that “those are not birds.” Check images carefully to see which could be improved. This will raise a mediocre show into an A+ rating.

11. Review your show to see if it comes together well and flows smoothly. Now is the time to delete portions that are of little or no interest and add portions that would make your show more interesting.

12. Music. When using music in your show, it should be kept soft so that it will not compete with your images. If it is too loud, you can't concentrate on the images. It should not be music that will become tiresome or irritating to the viewers. If the show is longer than the song, switch to new music. Match dramatic music to dramatic photos and soft music to “quiet, peaceful” photos. You probably would not want music if you are giving a narration.

13. Transitions and Movement. If you are automating your show, don't overdo transitions and movement. Transitions between photos that spin or flash are very distracting. Choose one or two that are less distracting, like fade-out/fade-in. Occasional zooms or movement are okay, especially if they help the viewer notice an important subject. But movement changes your photo's composition and should be used sparingly.

14. Backup the whole show.

II. Preparation of Commentary. Prepare an outline based on photos selected. Fill in your outline by using the research material and notes you have accumulated, following closely the order of your show. Use conversational style, speak in the present tense. Be yourself: use interesting, colorful, descriptive language, and good verbs, but sound like yourself. Avoid use of narration to describe what is obvious as the photo is shown – many don't need to have anything said about them. Don't brag about or apologize for your photos. Don't continuously repeat any stock phrase, no matter how good. Practice at home.

III. Timing. The time limit for single-sitting shows will usually run 30-45 minutes. A show might run up to 1 ¼ hours by dividing it about in the middle with an intermission. The success of a show of this length depends upon having a strong or highly interesting story to tell, or a vital message. The stories can make or break a show. Remember, the mind can enjoy only as long as the seat can endure!

Length of time you leave each photo on the screen depends upon the strength of the photo and the narration. Photos left too long will cause the viewer to lose interest. Too short a look will create restlessness or even impatience – five seconds should be the minimum. The absolute maximum length should not exceed 15 seconds to match narration. If you have more to say, use two or more photos. The photos that do not require comment should appear for a shorter period of time. You can set your show to run automatically but tell the audience to wait until the end to ask questions.

IV. The “Big Show.” Look at your photos before you leave home to see that they are in the correct order. Check equipment to make sure you have not forgotten anything. Take an extension cord and a flashlight. Arrive early enough so that you will be set up before the audience arrives. Be prepared to accept compliments on your show. If you follow these guidelines the program is likely to be well accepted. Then after the show is over, you will feel a warm sense of pride in accomplishment.