

# creative techniques

## Creating Photoshop-esque graphics using PowerPoint's drawing tools



by nancy duarte

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Visuals can help bolster a presentation. But by transforming an ordinarily flat graphic to one that appears three-dimensional, you can take that visual one step further and make it "pop" from the slide. Such "3D" graphics can give the illusion of depth, of spatial relationships and — with clever use of custom animation — of motion, in an otherwise two-dimensional slideshow.

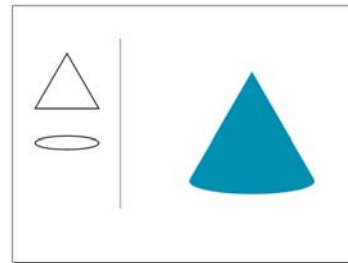
The best part? You don't have to be a professional graphic designer intimately familiar with Adobe Photoshop. You can improve the realism of graphics using Microsoft PowerPoint's Drawing tools, which has the added advantage of minimally affecting file size.

PowerPoint provides you with the functionality to mimic how objects would appear in the real world. For example, applying a gradient to a shape can add darkness and light to create stunning contrast. Even more so, overlaying colors and shapes can create Photoshop-like graphics without having to leave the PowerPoint environment. Indeed, the know-how to create *composite* graphics is what produces a dramatic end product. (For a sample PowerPoint file, visit [www.duarte.com/PowerPoint](http://www.duarte.com/PowerPoint).)

The following simple examples should get you on the road to creating your own graphic illusions.

**Caution!** Using a transparent gradient in PowerPoint artwork can create Photoshop-esque look and feel, but it has its limitations. For one, images created in PowerPoint with transparent gradients currently do not print correctly, but there are creative workarounds to solve this problem.

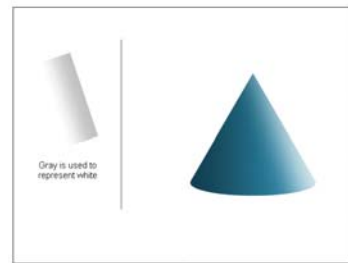
**EXAMPLE 1: THE CONE.** Using only PowerPoint's drawing tools, we transformed this cone from a flat, 2D object to an object with 3D shadows and contours.



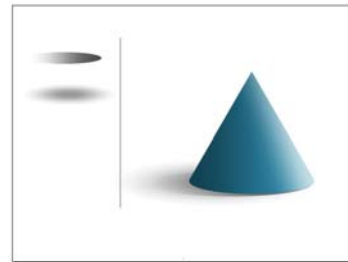
EXAMPLE 1A



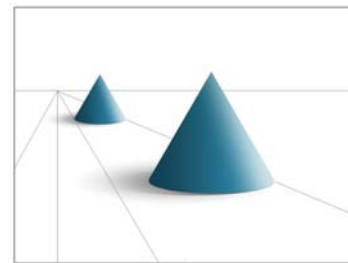
EXAMPLE 1B



EXAMPLE 1C



EXAMPLE 1D



EXAMPLE 1E

One way to create a print-friendly graphic is to Copy and Paste Special as a .PNG file. This allows your graphics to maintain the transparent effect and print a clean version of your image.

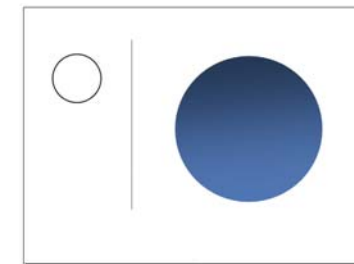
### Shape, light and perspective

**EXAMPLE 1: THE CONE.** First, create a conical shape by drawing an oval and a triangle (from the drawing toolbar, select AutoShapes → Basic Shapes) and moving them together. Fill the shapes with a color (from the top toolbar, choose FORMAT → AUTOSHAPES → Colors and Lines). (See **EXAMPLE 1A**.)

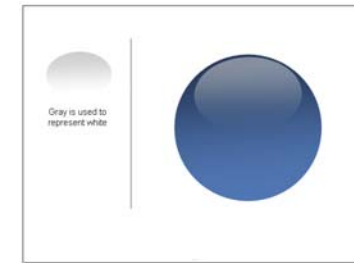
Next, you'll create a two-dimensional effect by applying a dark-to-light vertical gradient to both shapes for a seamless look. First, determine the direction and angle the "light source" is coming from to keep the shadows on the cone consistent throughout your presentation. In this case, we'll envision the light source coming from high on the right side of the cone and a bit behind (see **EXAMPLE 1B**).

To create a realistic shadow effect, draw a simple rectangle. Then from the FORMAT menu, select AUTOSHAPES → Colors and Lines. Pull down the Color selector arrow in the Fill area and choose Fill Effects. From the Gradient tab, select the radio button for "One color" and using the arrow button by "Color 1:" select the color white. In the Transparency area, set the "From:" slider to 20% and the "To:" slider to 100%. Shading styles should be set to Vertical. Make sure the Variants selection has the dark extreme on the left and the lightest on the right. Position the rectangle over the right side of the cone. (Note, **EXAMPLES 1C** and **1D**: a gray box is used on the left side for illustrative purposes only; the gray is used to represent white.)

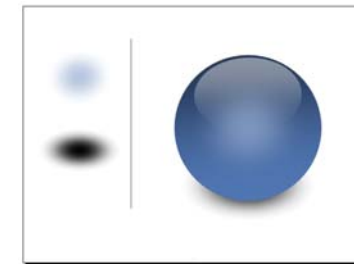
The appearance of a shadow cast by the cone on the lower-left side, away from the light source, creates a three-dimensional feel (see **EXAMPLE 1E**). This look can be achieved by drawing two black-gradient ovals, one for a hard-edged shadow and the other, soft-edged. Draw the first oval, and in Fill Effects, give it a Shading style of Vertical, left-to-right, and set the transparency "From:" at 0% and the "To:" at 100%. The second oval



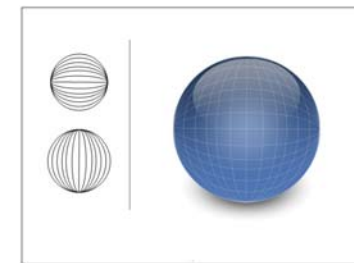
EXAMPLE 2A



EXAMPLE 2B



EXAMPLE 2C



EXAMPLE 2D

**EXAMPLE 2: THE SPHERE.** Using a variety of transparency and shading settings, this plain circle turns into a 3D orb.

needs a "From center" shading with a softer-edge shadow. Layering the two ovals will give you the appearance of a more photorealistic shadow. The degree of dark and light can be adjusted based on the size and effect of the shadow desired.

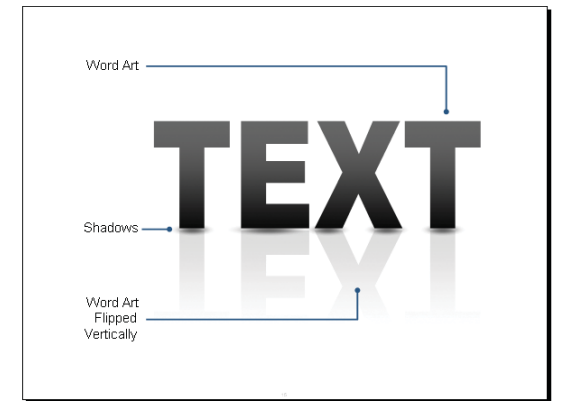
If you plan to composite more than one graphic, make sure you've thought through where your vanishing points are in the scene. You can lay down gridlines to serve as a guide that can be deleted later (see **EXAMPLE 1E**).

**EXAMPLE 2: THE SPHERE.** To build a shiny 3D sphere (see **EXAMPLE 2A**), start by drawing a simple blue circle and apply a dark-to-light horizontal blue gradient to the circle (FORMAT → AutoShape → Colors and Lines, and for Fill Color, select Fill Effects, then the Gradient tab).

Next, to generate the effect of a light source, draw a smaller oval with a dark-to-light horizontal white gradient (see **EXAMPLE 2B**). Set the Transparency "From:" at 55% and "To:" at 100%. Position this shape near the top of the blue circle. (Note, **EXAMPLES 2B** and **2C**): a gray shape is used on the left side for illustrative purposes only; the gray is used to represent white.)

To add a glossy effect to the circle, draw another circle and fill it with a lighter shade of blue (see **EXAMPLE 2C**). It should have a dark-to-light "From center" shading style and a Transparency setting of "From:" at 30% and "To:" at 100%. Place it in the center of the large blue circle. To further enhance the dimensional illusion, you can add a shadow below the circle to give it the appearance of hovering above the surface. The shadow can easily be created by drawing a circle and giving it a "From center" gradient fill effect. Set Color 1 to black and Color 2 to your background color or to transparent.

This glossy sphere can be repurposed to represent different objects. For example, you can create a globe with latitudinal and longitudinal lines by drawing a series of arc lines, connecting them at the ends, and over-



laying them on top of the sphere (see **EXAMPLE 2D**).

**EXAMPLE 3: DIMENSIONAL TEXT.** Text can also achieve a 3D feel by applying the proper treatments.

Because text entered as text in PowerPoint cannot be treated with a graphical effect, we'll use the WordArt tool on the Draw toolbar. In the WordArt Gallery, select a simple outline style, then type in your word or phrase (see **EXAMPLE 3**). On the Fill Effects' Gradient window (FORMAT → WORDART → Colors and Lines tab, then under Fill, for Color, select Fill Effects → Gradient tab), apply a slight gradient from the bottom to the top of the text (horizontal style) so it looks as though the light source is coming from the top. Add light shadows individually to sit beneath the WordArt to "anchor" the text. For the final step, you can vertically flip a copy of the WordArt item and adjust the setting of the gradient so that "From:" is 70% of the original text's primary color and "To:" is 100% transparent. This creates the illusion of a reflection. ■

**Software and system used:** Microsoft PowerPoint XP; Microsoft Windows XP.

**NOTE:** To view an additional example, on creating 3D cup graphic, visit [Presentations.com](http://Presentations.com). Look in the Create section's Creating Your Visuals area for "Creating Photoshop-esque graphics." ([www.presentations.com/presentations/3d\\_visuals](http://www.presentations.com/presentations/3d_visuals))

**EXAMPLE 3:** 3D TEXT can be created through the clever use of PowerPoint's gradient effects to add shadows.