

Photo Story Tips & Workarounds

How do you stop the “Ken Burns effect”?

In Photo Story 3, one imports still pictures into a timeline. Ken Burns, who as a documentary filmmaker, created an illusion of motion in still pictures by having the camera pan or move over an image. This “Ken Burns’ effect” is automatically applied to all images in a Photo Story 3 timeline sequence that do not contain titles. The designers of Photo Story 3 were concerned that the audience might not be able to read all text on a title screen such as the “Credits”, if the camera was automatically panning from one side of the slide to the other. It was decided that any time a title was added to an image (step #2) in the process, the “Ken Burns effect” would be disabled so that the audience could see the complete full screen image without having to worry about zooming or loss of characters. However, if someone used Paint to create a “Credits” slide at the end of a movie, one might think that since the slide contained text, the “Ken Burns effect” would be disabled. This is not the case. Text added, using Paint, is saved as a slide in a GIF, JPG or PNG format and is treated in Photo Story 3 as an image so panning happens automatically. However, one can disable the automatic zoom or panning effect on a given slide by importing such an image and adding a “hidden title”. For example, import the slide in step #1 and in step #2 would add a title such as “stop panning”. To make the “stop panning” a hidden title, press the <Enter> key in front of “stop panning” about 10 times to move this title down below the visible area of the slide. The software knows that a title had been added (e.g., “stop panning”) and would stop the “Ken Burns effect” on this image even though the words “stop panning” were not visible in the preview frame. To refine this process, in step #2, by simply pressing the space bar to insert an “invisible blank” over any image in which I wanted the Ken Burns effect disabled. Panning can also be disabled by using the “Customize Motion” options whereby the Start and End positions of motion are defined as the full screen but the “space bar hidden blank” works well without introducing too much additional complexity for younger students.

How can I add a “fancy” credits page to my digital story in Photo Story 3?

Photo Story 3 users may begin creating a “Credits” page using the “Add a title ...” second step. Users soon learn that whatever font, color and size that is chosen in this section, applies to every line of text on the screen. Users who wish to have the word “Credits” in an Arial, 24 point font with red text and each line below with a “Comic San MS”, 16 point font in blue, must look for an alternative. Some choose to create, for example, their “Credits” page in Paint where they have control over the font attributes in different lines. However, some find using the Text tool in Paint to be a challenge particularly when they need to select and drag different lines to try and center the text rather than click on the “Center” justification button which is available in most word processors.

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How can I add a “fancy” title slide to my story?

You may wish to use the WordArt feature in Word to create “fancy” title pages. One can begin by creating a background slide in Paint. From the Paint menu choose the “Image-->Attributes” menu items. Set the “Width:” to 800 and the “Height:” to 600 pixels in order to preserve the standard 4:3 ratio of all computer screens. Fill the frame in Paint with an appropriate color, save this image as a background slide and minimize Paint. Next, start Word and click the menu items “Insert-->Picture-->WordArt”. Choose an appropriate WordArt style, select a font, add the title text to the WordArt text field and click “OK”. Once the title is created as WordArt, one can drag the eight “handles” to re-size the title. Click on the WordArt display to make it active and select the “Edit-->Copy” menu items from Word. Minimize Word and choose Paint from the taskbar. In Paint, click on the “Edit/Paste” menu items to transfer the WordArt title to the previously created background. Drag the WordArt handles and position the WordArt display in the middle of the 800 x 600 pixel frame. With the WordArt “active”, click on the bottom tool to make the WordArt background transparent so that the white frame is filled with the background color. Once the “fancy” title slide is created, save it in the PNG format as “TITLE.PNG”, import it into the Photo Story 3 and drag it to the start of your timeline.

Can I create a “fancy” title page in PowerPoint?

Yes, quite easily in fact. On a blank screen, select the “Format-->Background” menu items. Clicking the “down arrow” to the right of the background white color allows you to select the “Fill Effects” option. On the next screen, select a two color gradient fill and click the “Apply” button to create a unique background. Using similar steps to those outlined above, you can insert a WordArt title and position it in the middle of this PowerPoint slide. Next click on the “File>Save As” menu items, navigate to the desktop, and enter the “File name” field as “TITLE”. Rather than save the slide as the default PowerPoint “Presentation (*.ppt)”, click the down arrow to the right of the “Save as type:” field and scroll down and selected the “JPEG File Interchange Format (*.jpg)”. When the “Save” button is clicked, you will be prompted “Do you want to export every slide in the presentation or only the current slide?” Click on the middle “Current Slide Only” button which saves this single “fancy” "TITLE.JPG" slide with a gradient fill and a WordArt display to the desktop. From here, import the “TITLE.JPG” image into Photo Story and drag it to the front of your movie.

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Can I add speech or thought bubbles to my image?

Using the techniques outlined above, one can start PowerPoint. Next one can click the “Insert-->Picture-->From File” menu items. Navigate and insert a picture of one of the people in your digital story. When the picture is inserted on to the slide, drag the eight handles to re-size and re-position the person appropriately. Next make certain that the “Drawing” toolbar is displayed by clicking the “View-->Toolbars” menu items. If there is no checkmark to the left of the “Drawing” option, click on “Drawing” to invoke this toolbar. With the Drawing toolbar active, one can click on the “AutoShapes-->Callouts” tabs in the bottom left corner and select the appropriate speech or thought bubble. Click the mouse near the head of the person and drag to display the speech bubble area. Click inside the speech/thought bubble and enter a rather large bold faced font that stands out and is easy to read. Drag the yellow handle at the end of the thought circles or at the tail of the speech bubble so that it is positioned near the brain or mouth, as appropriate. When the image, with the callout is finally positioned properly, use the “Save As” a JPG or PNG image as outlined in the question above and import it into your story to add a new dimension.

When I create an image with text in Paint, why is the text “fuzzy” when saved?

Users who save Paint files, containing text, may find that the pixels are shaded around the edges of the text to give a smoother view. However, a simple way to maintain sharp textual images in Paint is to select a different format when saving the file. Click the “down arrow” to the right of the “Save as type:” field and choose PNG (*.PNG) to save the image as a Portable Network Graphic.

Why does my image look “chunky” when displayed as a full screen movie?

If one selects an image off the Internet for inclusion in a Photo Story movie, it is important to select an image with the largest area. Most search engines will display the size of the image in pixels. For example, if you have searched for images of the Eiffel Tower and the first image is 200 x 300 pixels and the second is 1200 x 1800 pixels, choose the latter. If you choose the smaller 200 x 300 pixel image and import it into Photo Story where it is displayed as a full screen movie at 800 x 600 pixels, the software will do its best to “stretch” or magnify the small image to fill completely the larger screen display. The resulting small image becomes “chunky” as each pixel is stretched and the curves of the overall picture break down as each pixel becomes viewable. To avoid such “pixelation”, always choose images that are as large or larger than the final screen display size. An excellent on-line article, entitled “Zooming Without Pixelation” can be found at: <http://www.windowsphotostory.com/guides/nopixelzoom/> which is part of a great reference entitled “Beginner’s Guide to Photo Story”.
