Use of Hyperlinks in PowerPoint Presentations as an Educational Tool

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PowerPoint software (Microsoft, Redmond, WA) has become a popular tool for creating and displaying electronic presentations. The "hyperlink" function in PowerPoint allows users to advance from one slide to another slide in the presentation when they click on a predetermined word, shape, or image, thereby allowing for a more dynamic and interactive experience than can be obtained with serial presentation of slides alone. The objective of this article is to provide a tutorial describing the necessary steps to create hyperlinks and incorporate them in a variety of ways into a PowerPoint presentation. Hyperlinks can turn a passive learning experience into an active one by allowing the participant to become more engaged with the presentation.

Key Words: Medical education; presentation; PowerPoint; hyperlinks.

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CREATING A HYPERLINK

PowerPoint software (Microsoft) has become a popular tool for creating and displaying electronic presentations. Such presentations typically consist of a series of "slides" that are presented in sequential order by a lecturer to the audience (using a computer, projector, and screen), or are viewed in sequential order by an individual at a computer workstation. The "hyperlink" function in PowerPoint, however, allows users to advance from one slide to any other slide in the presentation when they click on a predetermined word, shape, or image. The hyperlink can also electronically "connect" the word or picture to a slide in a completely different presentation, as well as a web page, e-mail address, or another type of file. Using hyperlinks, therefore, can allow for a more dynamic and interactive experience than can be obtained with serial presentation of slides alone. This article describes the necessary steps to create hyperlinks and incorporate them in a variety of ways into a PowerPoint presentation. The article assumes that the reader is not familiar with the process of creating hyperlinks, but otherwise has a basic understanding of PowerPoint software, including how to enter text, images, and shapes onto a slide; many excellent articles are available that can serve as tutorials for creating effective PowerPoint presentations, some of which are listed in the following references: Barone and Tucker, 2002; Collins, 2004a,b; Dodds, 2004; Harolds, 2012; Scarsbrook, Graham, and Perriss, 2006; Tarpley and Tarpley, 2008 (1–7).

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In our opinion, hyperlinks are best created after a presentation has been prepared, but they can also be incorporated into the presentation during the preparation process. We will demonstrate how to create hyperlinks using a premade four-slide PowerPoint presentation (Fig 1). This simplified presentation consists of the following: (1) a title slide; (2) a slide containing a test question ("Which of the following radiographs shows a mallet fracture?"), as well as radiographic images of two types of finger fractures (mallet and volar plate fractures); (3) a slide with text describing a mallet fracture; and (4) a slide with text describing a volar plate fracture. This particular slide array is an example of one that might be found in a self-guided PowerPoint presentation; however, the basic process described for creating hyperlinks would also be applicable when creating a presentation to be used during a lecture or case conference.

The first step in creating a hyperlink is selecting the text or object that you want to use as the hyperlink. In this case, we will select each of the radiographic images on slide 2. To select the image showing the mallet fracture of the distal phalanx, we position the cursor over that image and right-click the mouse. A menu appears as shown in Figure 2a. From this menu, we select the "Hyperlink" option. At this point, the "Insert Hyperlink" box appears (Fig 2b). On the left-hand side of the box, under the words "Link to," we see four options: (1) "Existing File or Web Page," which allows us to browse our computer for another document (e.g., another PowerPoint presentation, a Microsoft Word or Excel file, or a PDF file) or web page and link our image to that file or web page; (2) "Place in This Document," which allows us to link our image to another slide in our current PowerPoint presentation; (3) "Create New Document," which allows us to name and open a new ("blank") PowerPoint presentation; and (4) "E-mail Address," which allows us to link our image to an e-mail address that we enter. We wish to link our image to another slide in our presentation, so we select

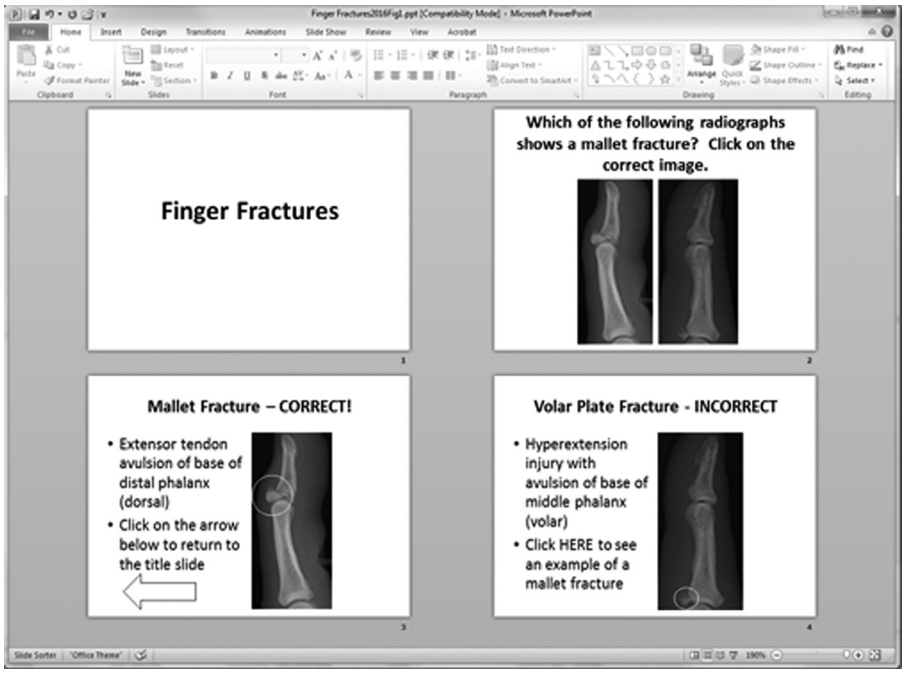

Figure 1. Screenshot of a four-slide PowerPoint presentation consisting of the following: (1) a title slide; (2) a slide containing a test question ("Which of the following radiographs shows a mallet fracture?") as well as radiographic images of two types of finger fractures (mallet and volar plate fractures); (3) a "correct answer" slide with text describing a mallet fracture; and (4) an "incorrect answer" slide with text describing a volar plate fracture.

"Place in This Document." A list of the four slides in our presentation appears to the right of this button. Because we want to link our image of a mallet fracture to the slide with the text describing the mallet fracture, we select slide 3. At this point, a hyperlink has been created. We then repeat the same steps for the image of the volar plate fracture, but link that image to slide 4, which describes the volar plate fracture. When the slide show is viewed and advanced to slide 2, the user will now have the option of selecting either the image of the mallet fracture or the image of the volar plate fracture. If the user clicks on the image of the mallet fracture, the presentation will advance to slide 3. If the user clicks on the image of the volar plate fracture, the presentation will advance to slide 4.

In addition to pictures, one can select text to be used as hyperlinks. For example, suppose we wish to link the word "HERE" in the sentence "Click HERE to see an example of a mallet fracture" on slide 4 to slide 3 (see Fig 1). First, we must select the word "HERE" by positioning the cursor to the left of the word "HERE," holding down the left mouse button, and dragging the cursor over the word "HERE" until it is highlighted. Next, we release the mouse button, position the cursor over the highlighted word "HERE," and right-click the mouse. The now familiar menu appears that allows us to select "Insert Hyperlink" as described in the preceding paragraph. We would then select slide 3 as the linked slide for the word "HERE." When the slide show is viewed, the user can advance directly to slide 3 by clicking on the word "HERE" on slide 4.

Shapes can be hyperlinked to other slides in a manner identical to hyperlinking images. For example, if we wish to link the block arrow on slide 3 (under the text "Click on the arrow below to return to the title slide," see Fig 1) to slide 1, we would position the cursor over the outline of the arrow, right-click the mouse, and follow the directions described previously, ultimately selecting slide 1 as that to which the users would advance if they were to click on the arrow when viewing the presentation.

APPLICATIONS OF HYPERLINKS

Now that the basics behind creating a hyperlink have been discussed, we will review some applications. These can be broadly divided into those appropriate for a self-guided PowerPoint presentation, and those used by a presenter during a lecture or case presentation.

Using Hyperlinks with Self-Guided PowerPoint Presentations

Multiple-Choice Questions

Creating a multiple choice question hyperlink follows the example described previously, with the first slide posing the question and listing answers in the form of words or images. The correct answer on the question slide would be hyperlinked to another slide congratulating the user. The incorrect answer(s) could be hyperlinked to a slide encouraging the user to "try again" (with text or a shape hyperlinked to the original question slide to facilitate another attempt), or preferably to individual slides explaining why the user's choice was not correct. Hyperlinks can also be created on the question or answer slides that open a web page or file pertinent to the subject matter. Figure 3 shows an example of how to create a hyperlink to a website. After highlighting and right-clicking on the word "HERE" on the slide, we again select

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