

Corel Presentations 9 versus Star Office 5.1 versus Microsoft PowerPoint 2000

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Preface: Over a year ago, my school district chose to take all of the WordPerfect products off our desktops and give everyone Microsoft Office. Prior to this, I had no strong feelings one way or the other about Microsoft Office. I purchased a computer for my mom with both Microsoft Office '97 and Corel Office 7 on it and was slightly jealous and played around with MS office prior to presenting her with the computer. With the impending installation of MS only products on our school computers, I spent a great deal of time comparing WordPerfect and Word—it was important to me, as I had personally produced roughly 120 megabytes of worksheets and tests and I wanted to be able to continue to use those documents as well as to be able to produce additional documents with equal ease. My original assumption was that the word processing programs would be similar, with a few differences in keystrokes, which was to be expected. I was surprised to find that not only was Corel WordPerfect better than Microsoft Word, but it was significantly better. It was easier to use, more flexible, less expensive, and more powerful. This study is found elsewhere at this web site. Given all of this, I thought it might be worthwhile to compare the presentations modules of two programs, along with Star Office 5.1. Since Lotus is no longer making Lotus Suite, I did not review their product, although they do have their Millennium Suite, still available, which is contemporary with the other three.

We will compare the programs in the following areas: **Customization**, **Ease of Use**, **Exclusive Features**, **Extras**, **Graphics**, **Interface**, **Masters**, **Slides**, **Slide Sorter View**, **Sounds**, **Transitional Effects**, **Miscellaneous Comments**. If you would like to cut to the chase, the **ratings** are found at the bottom.

<Return to Menu>	Corel Presentations 9	Microsoft PowerPoint 2000	Star Office 5.1	comment
Customization				
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Keyboard	See <i>Exclusive Features</i>		See <i>Exclusive Features</i>	
Menu	Presentations ships with one menu, which may be copied and then customized (you may customize a build as many menus as you would want). €	The menu in PowerPoint is really just a toolbar. PowerPoint ships with one menu, which may be customized and a new one may be built. I did not see a way to copy the given menu so that a new one could be built.	There is one menu which may be customized. I found the process similar to the customization process found throughout Star Office, but slightly cumbersome.	
Toolbars	Easily customized.	Easily customized.	Easily customized.	Why is there not a specific toolbar for PowerPoint?
Default Layout				
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Menu	Corel has a menu specific to Presentations.	Microsoft adds a <i>PowerPoint</i> sub-menu to its menu.	Star Office adds a <i>Presentations</i> sub-menu to its menu.	I prefer the specific menu for Presentations, but I can see how others would differ.
Original layout	Presentations has two or three toolbars, a specific menu, four options with regards to the slides of the right, and an insert slide option at the bottom. There was an additional menu on the left which I caused to disappear and can't get back. €	The original layout looks almost exactly like MS Word. The negative is that there are several functions specific to PowerPoint which should be immediately available.	Good original layout; however, there are some items which could be better put to the forefront which deal with this presentations program specifically.	
Toolbars	Pretty much everything you need is available when you open up Presentations. €€	There is no toolbar button which deals with the slide transition in PowerPoint. You must change toolbars or add the button.	About 80% of what you need for a presentation is available via toolbar when the program is opened. €	MS PowerPoint has five very important but very tiny slide show specific buttons which are almost hidden.
Exclusive Features				
Presentations 9				
Property Bar	This is a very nifty feature found throughout the Corel product line. A property bar is a toolbar which changes depending upon what environment that you are in. Rather than having 3 or 4 toolbars open at any given time in order to access every function that you want to access, you have your main toolbar, which has the items on it that you use in any environment, and then your property bar automatically changes as you go to a different environment. There are 20 different environments in Presentations, including chart, drawing object, layout (nothing selected), edit text, etc. Corel has placed on these bars the items that you would most likely use when in that environment. All of these toolbars are fully customizable. €€€			
Keyboard customization	The keyboard in Presentations may be copied and fully customized. The customization of this keyboard is done exactly the same way as it is done in WordPerfect. €€			
RealTime Preview	<i>Corel RealTime Preview applies to font attributes, frames, borders, color fills, outlines, zoom, and undo and redo operations.</i> This is a slick feature found throughout the Corel Suite—you get to preview your changes prior to applying these changes. You do not need to choose a font, change its size, look at the result, then repeat this step several times until you have the look and the balance that you want. Going through the list of fonts, for instance, takes about a second per font change. €€€			
Transitional Effects	One of the pluses of giving a Corel Presentation, is that you can have transitional effects and options which are not found in MS Office PowerPoint. This makes you appear as though you know a little more or have a great computer expertise than the person who has only used MS PowerPoint. He will wonder how you did this or that. €			
PowerPoint 2000				
Animation	Although I did not find animated images as a part of the PowerPoint package (and I may have missed them); PowerPoint will run .gif animated images (they are only animated when the show is being played). €			
Collect and paste	You can copy or cut several different items in PowerPoint (as many as 12) and save them all on an expanded clipboard. Then you may choose whatever which one you want to use. Now, while this was a nice idea, it was very poorly executed in MS Office. I should, without going to help, be able to figure out how to do this. I should go to the edit menu, where we find <i>copy</i> , <i>cut</i> , and <i>paste</i> , and see something about <i>paste from clipboard</i> or <i>add to clipboard</i> . Like many of the features in MS Office, it is a nice idea but cumbersome to use. Also, apart from distinguishing between text and clipart (and the symbol is very similar), one piece of clipart looks like another (luckily, when the mouse is taken over the text entries, one can see what is in the text entry). €			

Text	Text can be entered as if typing it; there are sound effects to go with this.			
Star Office Presentations 5.1				
Animation	Star Office ships with a small handful of .gif animations which are fully functional in a Star Office presentation. Even while the show is not being viewed, these images are animated. I would suspect that any animated .gif image functions the same way. €€€			
Keyboard customization	The keyboard in Star Office Presentations may be fully customized. You only get one keyboard. Each of the modules in Star Office has its own keyboard (it appeared, because of the similarity of the programs, that it would be the same keyboard. €			
Text	Text can scroll across the screen. There are several nice textual effects. €			
Ease of Use				
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Begin presentation	On menu, under <i>view</i> ; on property bar above the slide, and on tab to the right (Quick Play, which begins the show with the slide that you are working with).	There are teeny little toolbar buttons off to the side to use to play the show (or go to <i>Slide Show -> View Show</i>).	It took me awhile to find where this was. It was under <i>Presentations -> Slide Show</i> . I later discovered a button on the side..	
Customizing a feature	Once you know how to customize a toolbar, keyboard, etc. in WordPerfect, you can easily customize it in Presentations.	When you know how to customize a toolbar in MS Word, than you can easily customize one in PowerPoint.	Customizing the keyboard and toolbars in Star Office Presentations is identical to customizing them in Star Office's other programs.	
Help	Easy to use and understand. €	Easy to use and understand. €	This is by far one of the weakest features of Star Office 5.1; it gets you started, but do not expect to get help with any particular question that you might have.	I think by fooling around, you could figure out most of what you needed to in Star Office.
Preparing a presentation	The second time that I opened Corel Presentations for the purpose of designing a slide show, I wrote a 45 minute presentation in 2 hours (this is without any previous training in this type of software).	I have been told by students that I am one of the very few teachers who actually does presentations, although most teachers in our district have large monitors, free training available in PowerPoint (we are required to take so many hours per year of training as teachers), and all have PowerPoint on their computers.	After using Presentations and PowerPoint, I felt as though I could easily prepare a presentation in Star Office.	

Toolbars	The toolbars available were designed for building the presentation. €	The toolbars available were essentially suite-wide toolbars, giving the program a consistent look, but which is not very helpful when one would like to work on the slide show.	The toolbars available were essentially suite-wide toolbars, giving the program a consistent look, but which is not very helpful when one would like to work on the slide show.	
Extras				
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Backgrounds	Ships with 190 different textures. They are not easy to find. You must be setting up either a master, then you right-click and choose <i>page setup -> textures</i> ; this can be done from a slide, but I had overtaxed my memory at that time. €€	I could not find an additional group of backgrounds, although I am certain there must be some.	Nearly 60, several of which were very cool.	Star Office does not differentiate as it should between clipart and backgrounds.
Clipart	10,000 on extra disk. For presentations, you cannot have enough clipart. €€	The second disk of MS Office has some additional clipart.	Star Office is free. So, get some free art from the Internet as well.	
Fonts	1000. €	Less than 20.	Star Office is free; get some fonts off the Internet.	Many of the additional Corel fonts are fairly straightforward and not too interesting.
Graphics				
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3-D effects	Any flat object can be transformed into a 3-dimensional object by going to the graphics menu. Fairly easy to use and understand. €	I did not find a similar function here.	Star Office, under formatting, will allow you to give a 3-dimensional effect to any 2D object. Although I found it more confusing to use than Corel's version, it appeared to do more than Corel did. €	
Animation	Corel allows for .avi movies to be played; some played much better than others.	See <i>Exclusive Features</i> .	See <i>Exclusive Features</i> .	
Graphics from toolbar	A full set of graphics shapes are available from the toolbar. €	A full set of graphics shapes are available from the toolbar. €	Very limited graphics can be gotten from the toolbar.	In Corel, there are several different buttons; in MS, there is one.
Interface				
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General layout	Although Presentations looks generally like WordPerfect and QuattroPro, its tool bars are different, the application bar is different, and the menu is different; they are specific to this particular program. It is function over form. €	In order to present a more unified look, PowerPoint does not look much different from Word or Excel.	In order to give a more unified look, Star Office Presentations looks very much like Star Writer.	What we have is more the illusion of similarity in the latter two programs. What we lose is specific functionality for the given program.
Masters				
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Customization of masters	VERY easy to do. €	If this could be done, I did not know how.	If this could be done, I did not know how.	I do my presentations on a television monitor and, subsequently, my font must be larger than what Presentations allows. The first thing I do prior to a presentation is to build my own master.
Number of masters	180 (more on separate disk). €€	68	44	
Number of categories of masters	7 categories (35 mm, theme, business, color, design, nature, printout). €€	2 categories; design template and presentations. One group were essentially an outline and several slides all set up for a business presentation. €	Not categorized	Presentations comes loaded for the newbie.
Type of Presentation	Not differentiated. However, with perfect print, you were given the option of books, banners, posters, booklets, and handouts.	Not differentiated.	Screen, overhead, slide, paper	
Slides				
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Number of slide layouts	7	24 €	20 €	Not as important, but very helpful to a newbie; the difference is additional charts, outlines, clipart, etc..
Slide Sorter View				
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Slide sorter view	It takes a couple of clicks from this view to listen to a sound or to play a slide transition.	One click will give you the transition of the slide.	One click would give you the slide transition and the sound associated with the slide.	
Slide sorter view	You can see if a slide has a sound, whether it is timed, and what sort of a transition is with it.	You cannot see if a slide is associated with a sound unless you left the speaker on the slide large enough to be seen.	You can see if there is a special transition from this view, as there is a small box to click (much like MS PP).	
		Sounds		
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Available sounds	Midis, waves and CD's.	It appeared as though it would play midi's and waves.	It wasn't clear.	
Inserting a sound into a presentation	Click on the icon which looks like a speaker. Click on midi, wave or CD and then go find the sound. In doing so, you are automatically hooked into <i>Explorer</i> and you can look for files in whatever way you want. A right-click on the slide or going to the <i>Insert</i> menu would also insert a sound onto the slide.	There were no toolbar buttons in the default setup to add a sound. Right-clicking the slide did not obviously provide this option either. From a right-click, you had to choose <i>slide transition</i> and the dialogue box which follows allows for a sound to be added. Go to <i>Insert</i> on the menu, then <i>Movies and Sounds</i> .	It took me several clicks to insert a sound into the show. It wasn't as intuitive as I would have liked. <i>Presentations</i> -> <i>Effects</i> -> Click on 3 rd tab (<i>Extras</i>) -> go down to sound, click <i>play in full</i> . Then, you must click the green check mark, which will assign the sound. A right-click on the slide and <i>slide transition</i> is the key to adding a sound to a slide.	What was Star Office thinking? They couldn't have made it more complicated if they tried.
Inserting a sound into a presentation	I could insert sounds from any directory on my hard drive.	I could insert sounds from any directory on my hard drive.	I was not able to add sounds from other directories—only their sound directory.	
Peculiarities		A small speaker is placed on the slide. If this is unwanted, then it just has to be made very small using your mouse.	Couldn't tell what would play and what would not in slide show. Took me several tries to figure out how to insert a sound.	
Playing a sound				

Ships with:	About 3 dozen sounds (14 waves and two dozen midi's). Not all are automatically installed.	Didn't appear to ship with any sounds; you could get some from going to MS's site on the web.	35 sounds.	
		Transitional Effects		
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Number of slide transitions	53, however, many of these had further choices. For instance, the windmill effect could go clockwise or counterclockwise. This gives 117 effects in all. €€	43, mostly in alphabetical order. Not grouped or categorized.	To set up, 43, uncategorized and not in alphabetical order. Once the production has begun, there are ten transitions (actually categories), with various options of each one (51 in all).	I don't know why the discrepancy in Star Office.
Object Transitions:	23 animated effects (all of which can be further modified as to speed) and 53 stationary effects which are further categorized (116 stationary effects in all). €€	19, with further choices, making 56 in all (although speed was a part of some of those choices)..	Same 51 as the slide transitions.	
Preview	Immediate; choose the effect and you see how it looks immediately. €	Immediate (in PowerPoint '97, you had to click a button to see the transition). €	After beginning your slide show, if you want to change the transition, there is a button to push to see the effect of the transition, but nothing happens, other than you see a slide. When the slide is clicked, there is a transitional effect. Click it again, and there is a different transitional effect. None of these seem to be related to the choice that you are considering for your slide.	
Speeds offered	Slow, medium, fast	Slow, medium, fast	Slow, medium, fast	
		Miscellaneous		
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Bugs	The underlining of misspelled words was not functioning on my home computer version of Presentations. I could not figure out how to get that back.	When I opened the second presentation in MS Office, it just sucked my memory dry.	When I tried to open two programs, it shut down Star Office and it would not re-open until I re-booted my computer.	Star Office has quit on me before. If you download Star Office, keep a virgin copy of your download somewhere hidden on your computer or on a disk just in case.
Changing the text size	When you select the text box, then changing the size is easy. You may also select the text like MS PowerPoint. €	You must select the text, then you may change its size using the proper toolbar button. €	I did not find a way to do this in Star Office Presentations.	
Price	Comes with Corel Office 2000; \$100–250; almost anyone qualifies for the cheaper competitive upgrade. €	Comes with MS Office 2000; \$180–700; if you have an office suite, you should be able to get the competitive upgrade (read the box).	Comes free with Star Office 5.1, which may be downloaded from the Internet (it is a large download). €€	
Second open document	When a second document is opened in Presentations, it is opened in the same program, but the other presentation may be accessed from the application bar at the bottom of the screen.	If you open another presentation in MS Office 2000, it is pretty much like opening PowerPoint a second time. It does not mean that you can use different toolbars; you change to a different set of toolbars while doing one presentation, and it changes to those toolbars in the other. It's main advantage is that you can go from one to the other using <i>Alt+Tab</i> or by clicking on the windows toolbar.	When I opened a second document, it shut Star Office down. I had to reboot the computer to get it to run again.	

Compatibility: One of the things touted by Corel is the compatibility between their products and Microsoft's. Unfortunately, this does not appear to be the case in terms of presentations. I could not run a MS PowerPoint '97 Presentation in Corel without several problems, nor would a Corel Presentation saved into MS PowerPoint format run on PowerPoint successfully. Although I didn't exchange files with Star Office and MS, I suspect that there is greater compatibility between these two produces. However, my strongest suggestion is that if you are using Office Suite X to prepare your presentation, then make certain you have Office Suite X to use in presenting your presentation.

Installation: With Office 2000, you are asked at the beginning of the setup if you would like to retain your previous version(s) of Office. It was not clear what Corel was going to do in setup (it preserved my two previous versions of Corel Office). MS Office also preserves many of your settings (I don't know which ones, but I assume the customized toolbars, etc.); Corel did not do that, although menus and keyboards from previous versions could be used in Corel Office 2000 (but a relatively new user would have no idea as to how to do this). In defense of Corel, there are a lot of people who use Corel Office and get a version and stick with that version. I use WordPerfect 7 almost exclusively at home and WP 9 at work (I have access to both versions in both places). And I use WP 8 when converting a document to a HTML format. However, most people get one version of Corel Office and it often does so much that many do not upgrade. Many of the features found in WordPerfect 8, for instance, are now in MS Word 2000, a product of three years later. In other words, Corel Office users have a leg up on MS Office users even when using an older version. Many Corel users do not upgrade immediately simply because Corel has developed a reputation for turning out buggy software on the first couple editions (I was personally very unhappy with the instability of WordPerfect 9 and QuattroPro 9).

MS Office has a feature called *install-as-you-go*. As I mentioned when I first reviewed MS Word, that it was a nifty little feature, the first two times it worked. My computer came with the OEM version of Word, so after I got tired of inserting and re-inserting the disk to get a simple property, I finally re-installed my OEM version of Word, using the

utility to install it all, and it still prompted me for the disk several more times. So far with the shrink-wrapped version of MS Office, I have not had that problem. I chose to install it all and so far, I have not been prompted for the disk again.

The Final Scorecard:

	Number of areas where product is generally superior	Number of areas where product is clearly superior	Number of areas where product has extremely important superiorities to the other programs
Corel Presentations 9	13	8	2
Miscrosoft PowerPoint 2000	8	0	0
Star Office Presentations 5.1	5	0	1