

A GARISH SCREEN SAVER

Back in the day of cathode ray tubes (CRTs), when the same image was held on a computer screen for long periods of time, a ghost of that image could be permanently burned into the display. Screen saver programs were invented to avoid such disaster.

Today's LCD screens don't have the burn-in problem, but people have come to love the photograph, animation, or slide show that pops on after a few minutes of inactivity.

This exercise is a radical warm-up. Radical because you are going to use MS Word as an unlikely graphic design tool. Warm-up because messing around with MS Word

is going to prepare you for the next chapter. Your task is to overload a single frame with words, objects, drawings, Word Art, animation, photographs, and clip art. Your intent is not to reflect your superb visual taste but, instead, to fabricate something that is garish, over the top, overdone. Be really outrageous. Flaunt hideous colors and clashing typography. Mix fonts. Find truly silly clip art.



1. TEXT ABUSE

Open a blank Word document. Type the phrase SCREEN SAVER DU JOUR and center it. Copy and Paste two more versions of the phrase. Set each copy in a different display font. Make the size 20 points or larger. In the example shown I went with drop shadow, a background color, and a text color.

2. LOGOTYPE MASSACRE

Lets take your first name and turn it into a logotype. Duplicate your name three times. Each will be treated in a distinct way and part of the assignment is to figure out how your version of MS Word will complete these three tasks. First, **box it up**. Select a font and put a box around it. Second, **drop it out**. Highlight your name and give it a fill color. When the background color is in place, make the type color white. This creates the “drop out” effect. It looks like the letters have been punched out, and the paper color is showing through. Third, **put your name inside an object**: MS Word contains a library of shapes. Find this collection, drag a shape to the document and then place your name inside it. The object I went with was the thought balloon.

3. WORD ART SHOWBOATING

Navigate Word's main menu until you find WordArt. A dialog box appears. Write in the letters of your last name, using yet another font and large size. The example shows 36 point Braggadocio. Note the WordArt palette lets you kern the font. I used “loose” to spread apart the letters.

4. BACKGROUND MAYHEM

Word will let you choose a background color, texture, pattern or picture. I went with gradient. Remember you are pursuing the garish in this exercise. Find a background that really clashes with the elements you have collected so far.

5. DRAWING DISASTERS

You can get into lots of trouble messing with the Drawing toolbar. Try free form doodles. Auto Shapes are fun. Explore different lines and fills.

6. CLIP ART CHEESE

Finish off this garish screen saver with a few examples of clip art. MS Word has plenty of oddities you can look through. Resize and reposition to your heart's content.

7. REPEAT, BUT TASTEFULLY

Along with its hideous outcome, this project should have gotten you familiar with the graphic design toolset that comes in MS Word. It's surprisingly robust. Now that you know your way around, try creating a screen saver that you would actually want to see when your desktop times out. Make a tasteful slate—a one-page graphic you can also use at the head of slide shows or on a Web page. Render your name in a font that suits your personality and style. Make the name into a logo by applying appropriate graphic treatments. Find some decorative elements or border. Select a background that works with everything else. If you get something you really like, e-mail a copy to Mediapeda.net where I will collect a gallery of beauties.