

Working with sound in PicturesToExe 5.6

Here are a few points about sound in PTE that I have learned the hard way.

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Options in the Project Options dialog box

Main Tab: The "Synchronize music and slides" checkbox

This option affects all slides in the current slideshow.

The purpose of this button seems to be to make the music pause when you pause the running slideshow. If it is not checked, the music will continue playing, even when you pause the slideshow.

When this option is checked you can't add individual sound files to a slide in the "Customize Slide" dialog. Furthermore, if you have opened the "Customize Slide" dialog for any of the slides in the show and checked the "Play new background music file(s)" checkbox, the slideshow won't play at all, even if you haven't added any files to the slide. If this happens, you will have to go through all the slides to find which one has that option checked and uncheck it.

There is another way of finding out which slide (or slides) is the culprit. Open the slideshow project file in Notepad or Word, then search for the string "MusicAction=2". If you find this string, move upwards in the file and you will find out which number the slide has. Close the file without saving, then go to PTE, open the "Customize Slide" dialog for the slide in question and uncheck the "Play new background music" checkbox.

Music tab: "Background music for show"

In this list you can add sound files that will play from the beginning of the slideshow until the sound file ends. They will play in the order they are listed unless you check the "Play songs in random order" option. You could add only one short song and make it last the whole slideshow by checking "Repeat music after playing".

Music tab: The "Don't interrupt sound comment when next slide appears" checkbox

This option affects all slides in the current slideshow.

"Sound comment" in this checkbox does not refer to the sound you add in an individual slide by opening the "Customize Slide" dialog. Instead it refers to the sound you add by clicking the button "Add sound" in the top right corner of PTE itself. That button affects the currently selected slide only. And if it were to correlate to the "Don't interrupt..." checkbox, the button should be labelled "Add sound comment" instead.

This option makes the sound you add by clicking the "Add sound" button continue to play until it ends, even if the slide to which it was added ends first.

Options in the Customize Slide dialog box

Music tab: "Play new background music file(s)"

If this checkbox is checked, the files that are added in the list below it will be played for that individual slide.

Do not forget to uncheck this checkbox if you have removed all the sound files in the list. If you leave it checked, all sound currently playing will stop when this slide is reached in the show. Unless this is just what you want of course.

These sound files can behave in two ways when the following slides appear. If the "Play new background music file" is unchecked in the following slides the sound files will continue to play (if they are longer than the slide time) regardless if you have unchecked the "Don't interrupt sound comment when next slide appears" checkbox in the "Project Options" "Music" tab. If the "Play new background music file" is checked however, the current slide's sound will stop.

Note that the behaviour is different when you preview the show or play a created exe file compared to playing the show in the preview window in the PTE program window. If you preview the show or play a created exe file, individual slide music will play as I have described. However, if you play the show in PTE's preview window, the individual slide sounds don't work at all, and the background music will play as if no slides at all had the "Play new background music file" option checked. This may make you very confused.

My conclusion is that you shouldn't (or couldn't) use the "Play new background music file(s)" option if you are using background music either added in the "Project Options" dialog on the "Music" tab or added by the "Add sound" button above the PTE preview window.

The "Add sound" button above the PTE preview window

This button is described here and there above. This button adds one background sound file to an individual slide. Unlike the sounds added in the "Customize Slide" dialog, this file can play at the same time as the "Project Options" music is played.

This sound file will stop at the next slide unless the "Synchronize music and slides" option is checked in the "Project Options" dialog. If that option is checked, the sound file will continue playing until it ends, even if it is longer than the slide time.

My experience is that this is the place to add sound effects to animations. However, if the sound effect should start later than the slide start, or if you want more than one sound effect for a slide, you have to create a sound file yourself with a program like Adobe Audition.

Synchronization problems on computers with slow (or fast) graphic cards

If you create the show on a computer with a fast graphic card and then play it on a computer with a slow graphic card, the slides will run slower than the background music. If you do it the other way around the slides will run faster than the background music.

Either way you will end up with synchronization problems if you have added some animation that you expect to happen exactly at that drum beat you synchronized it with when you created the show. The "out of sync" will of course grow longer the later in the show it appears.

Sadly, there doesn't seem to be a solution to this. If you have several songs in a slideshow, you could add them closer to the sync point by adding them with the "Add sound" button.

But my conclusion is that you shouldn't try to sync long music pieces with the slides or any animation if the slideshow will be played in different computers with different hardware performance.

Conclusion

Do not add sounds or even check the sound option in the "Customize Slide" dialog for any slide if you want to play background music added in the "Project Options" dialog or added with the "Add sound" button in the PTE program window upper right corner.

Do not trust the sound you get when playing the slideshow in the preview window in the PTE main window. Instead, preview the show with the "Preview" button.

Don't try to synchronize long music pieces with the slides or any animation if the slideshow will be played in different computers with different hardware performance.

Add sound effects to animations with the "Add sound" button. If you want complex sound effects, make them up in an audio editing program.

