Putting graphs and diagrams into PowerPoint

When presenting research papers in PowerPoint, it is sometimes helpful to insert a graph or diagram prepared in another format. Here is some guidance on two such instances.

Disclaimer: These notes reflect my experience with a Professional version of the MS Office tools run on a fairly new Windows system. They may not work on all computer systems or with all versions of the various programs. SSW students who run into roadblocks on these should consult Brooks Callison (callison@u.washington.edu), the school's electronic media specialist.

How to insert graphs from Excel into PowerPoint

First, why would you want do this? Although PowerPoint contains a graph-making function, I have found it to be unwieldy at best. It is hard to format within cells; insert or delete cells; and control the sizing of columns and rows. Excel has superior graph-making capacity.

OK, now how? Make the graph in Excel and make sure you have it exactly as you want it to appear on the slide. Highlight and copy the graph (ctrl-C or right click-copy).

Now switch to PowerPoint and choose "Paste Special" from the Edit menu. A dialog box will come up. Make sure the toggle option is set to "Paste" rather than "Paste link." There should be a menu with several formats. I use "picture" and have found that to work well. Choose picture and click OK. This will put a picture of your Excel graph into the presentation.

Although you can resize the pictures, sometimes they get fuzzy or hard to read if you shrink or enlarge them too much. In my experience, it's better to make the graph in about the right size by choosing larger fonts in Excel. Remember that you should use fonts of at least 16pt for presentations.

How to insert graphs or diagram from .pdf (Adobe) files into PowerPoint

Although this is a reference for graphs, this technique can be used to put any rectangular piece of a .pdf file into a presentation.

Use the snapshot tool. The toolbar icon for this tool looks like a camera or you can choose it from the menu by going to Tools->Basic->snapshot tool. The snapshoot tool will allow you to select a rectangular section of the document. Right click to copy image to clipboard. Then paste into your slide.

Note: This explanation refers to Adobe Acrobat Professional. I believe the same function is available in Adobe Reader (the free download), but I am not sure. The Professional version should be available in the SSW computer lab.