

Graphic icons have been around for a while. From cave paintings, to today's smartphone apps, icons are effective visual clues that can play a strong role in helping your PowerPoint audience understand your story and ultimately influence the success of your presentation. Creating icons using PowerPoint's built-in tools can help ensure graphic consistency in your presentation, avoid potentially expensive photography costs and create universal designs, that are easy-to-recognize, and have a high image quality.

This tutorial will not focus on the dos and don'ts of creating icons for PowerPoint. Rather, we will focus on *how* to create icons.

But before we get started building, we'll have to customize our QAT or Ribbon. Here are instruction for the QAT.

The Quick Access Toolbar (QAT)

Right click on the QAT and select Customize Quick Access Toolbar. This takes you backstage where all kind of Microsoft secrets lie (Image 1).

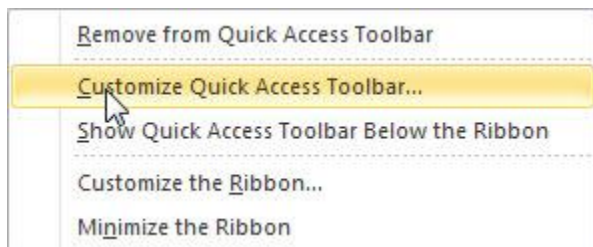


Image 1

When the Customize the Quick Access Toolbar dialog appears, change the Choose Commands from in the Ribbon to All Commands. After choosing the following Commands from the left command well, hit the Add button to move them to the right command well:

- Shapes (with the More Arrow)
- Group
- Ungroup
- Regroup
- Align (with the More Arrow)
- Format Painter
- Rotate (with the More Arrow)
- Combine Shapes (with the More Arrow)

For good measure, sure the Show Quick Access Toolbar below the Ribbon box is checked. Hit OK. (Image 2).

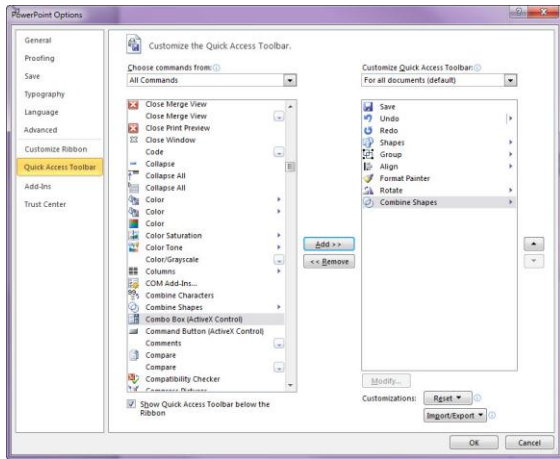


Image 2

Combine Shapes - Order Matters

This new set of PowerPoint tools is integral to creating professional looking icons. Keep this short tutorial on hand as quick reference until you get used to each tool. The most important tip for using Combine Shapes is to remember that *the order in which you select each Shape, determines the outcome of your effort.*

Here, I've drawn a Pentagon and a perfectly round Oval, then overlapped them slightly (Image 3). Look what happens when you select the Pentagon first, hold down the Shift Key, then select the Oval, then click the Combine Shapes tool on the QAT and select Shape Union. The two objects become one and take on the color of the Pentagon. Conversely, if you select the Oval first, hold down the Shift Key, then select the Pentagon. The two objects become one and take on the color of the Oval. (Image 4).

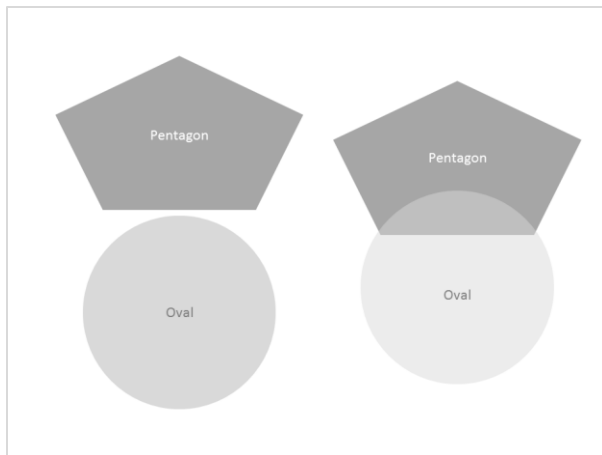


Image 3

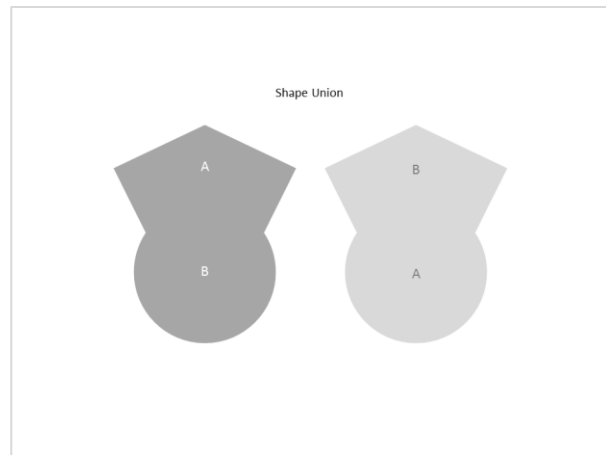
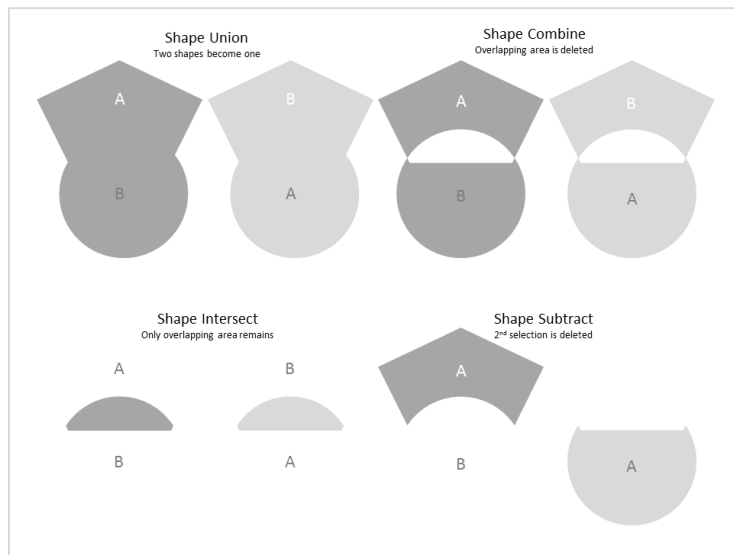


Image 4

The result is similar when applying Shape Combine, but with the tool the overlapping area is deleted. With Shape Intersect, only the overlapping area remains. And finally, with Shape Subtract, the last object you select is deleted. (Image 5).



Bringing it Together

So let's create a simple, resizable icon that can become any color in your palette. Let's assume you're creating a presentation in the health care market, and need a set of practitioner icons. This one will be a nurse.

Take these steps (Image 6):

1. Bring back our two, slightly overlapped Shapes – the Pentagon and the Oval
2. Duplicate the Oval and drag the duplicate to the side
3. Select the Pentagon first, then select the oval; Apply Shape Subtract to be left with the nurse's cap
4. Position the duplicated Oval slightly under the nurse cap (this Oval has been reduce in size so the cap "fits")
5. Draw the Round Same Side Corner Rectangle – drag the yellow diamond shape at the top of the shape as far to the left as possible
6. Select the cap, head and body (in that order) and the 3 shapes will be combined in a single icon. In this case a nurse with a really big cap!

The icon can be duplicated, resized and recolored as needed.

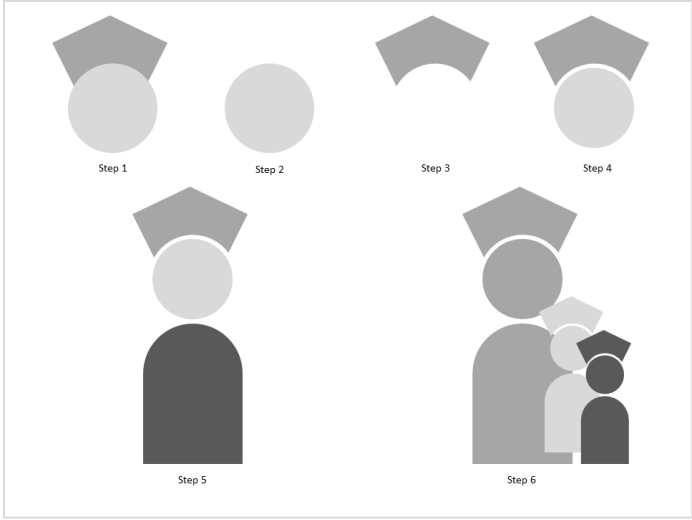


Image 6