

# How to Use the Remove Background Option in PowerPoint (Jul 12)

by Geetesh Bajaj

The *Remove Background* option is among PowerPoint's newest and most wonderful abilities. It lets you remove the background from an inserted picture — this can be a great feature if you want to remove a sky, a wall, any backdrop, or something else in a photograph so that the slide background shows through as transparent within the removed parts of the picture.

Follow these steps to learn how the Remove Background option works:

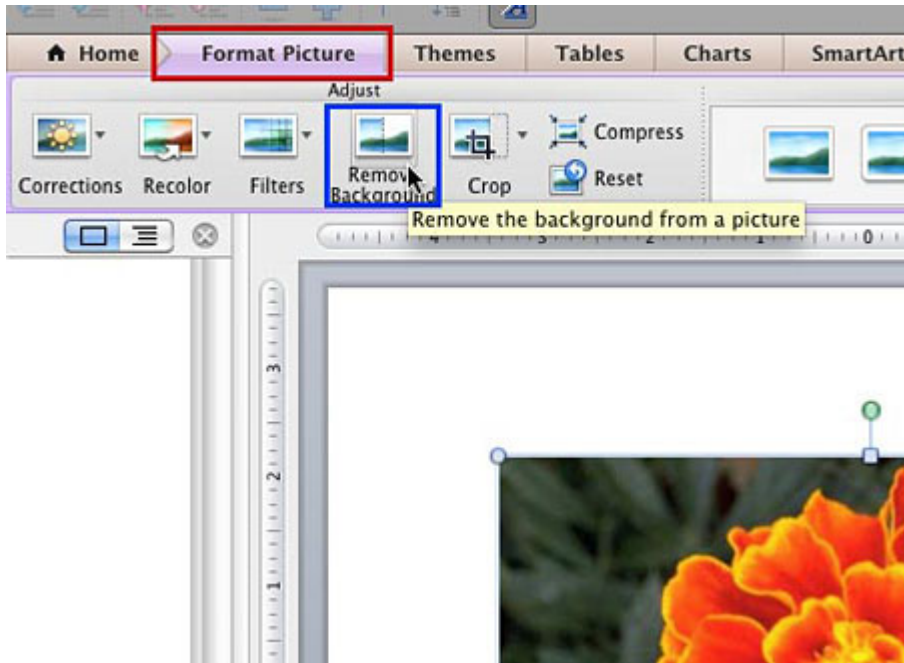
1. Before you start, we assume you already have a picture inserted on your slide. It helps if the parts of the picture you want to remove are fairly different in color from the rest of the picture, although as you get more proficient with PowerPoint's Remove Background option, you will be able to work with more complicated compositions.

Look at our sample picture, as shown in **Figure 1** — you will notice that the color of the flower is distinctly different from the rest of the picture.



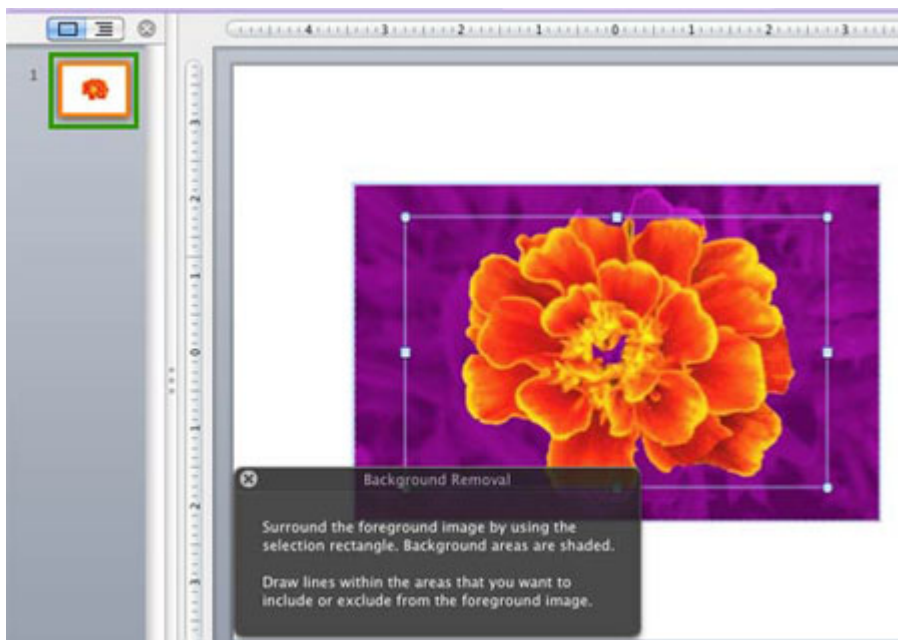
**Figure 1:** Picture with fairly distinct background and foreground areas

2. Select the picture to bring up the **Format Picture** tab (highlighted in red in **Figure 2**) of the Ribbon. Activate this contextual tab by clicking on it — locate the **Adjust** group, and click the **Remove Background** button (highlighted in blue in Figure 2).



**Figure 2:** Remove Background button within Format Picture tab of the Ribbon

Once you click the Remove Background button, PowerPoint makes a guess and shows the areas that it ascertains you want to remove (see Figure 3).



**Figure 3:** Background area selected by default for removal

In addition, note these changes in the PowerPoint interface:

- a. You will see a selection box, indicated by the eight handles shown in Figure three. You use these handles to resize the selection box.

b. You will also see the **Background Removal** message window providing you with the instructions for removing the picture background. Of course, you can close it at any time by clicking the Close (x) button on its top left.

c. The active slide within the Slides Pane will show a preview of the picture with the background areas removed, as shown highlighted in green in Figure 3. Nothing is removed yet — this is just a preview.

3. You can see that a major portion of the picture has been covered with a pink overlay. This pink overlay indicates the background areas to be removed. Only those areas that still show the original colors of the picture will be retained.

At this stage, you need to drag the handles of the selection box to help PowerPoint decide the areas of the picture you want to remove or retain as explained below:

a. You can remove more areas by making the selection box smaller. Click on any of the handles and drag inside the picture area — wait for a while for PowerPoint to add more pink areas to your picture.

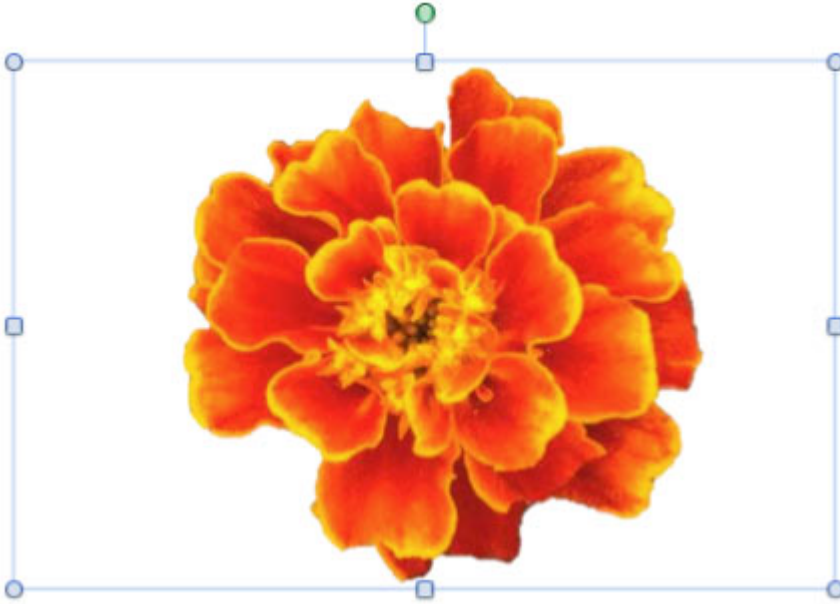
b. You can retain areas by making the selection box larger. Click and drag any of the handles outwards — again wait for a while thereafter for PowerPoint to reduce the pink areas within your picture.

**Figure 4** shows the picture with the selection box resized to reduce the pink areas. Compare the areas highlighted in pink in Figures 3 and 4.



**Figure 4:** Pink overlaid areas reduced by enlarging the selection box

For simple pictures, this is all you need to do. If you are happy with the results, go ahead and click anywhere on the slide outside the picture, or just press the Return key on your keyboard. This will make all pink overlaid background areas of the selected picture transparent, as shown in **Figure 5** below.



**Figure 5:** Picture with background removed

4. Save your presentation.

If your picture is busy and does not have clearly demarcated areas, then consider exploring our [Advanced Remove Background Options](#) tutorial.

Tip: The Remove Background works not only with inserted pictures, but also works with any [picture that is used as a fill for a shape](#).

**About the Author:**

Geetesh Bajaj has been designing and training with PowerPoint for 15 years and is a Microsoft PowerPoint MVP (Most Valuable Professional.) He heads Indezine ([www.indezine.com](http://www.indezine.com)) a presentation design studio and content development organization based in Hyderabad, India. The site attracts more than a million page views each month and has thousands of free PowerPoint templates and other goodies for visitors to download. He also runs another PowerPoint- related site (<http://www.ppted.com>) that provides designer PowerPoint templates.

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