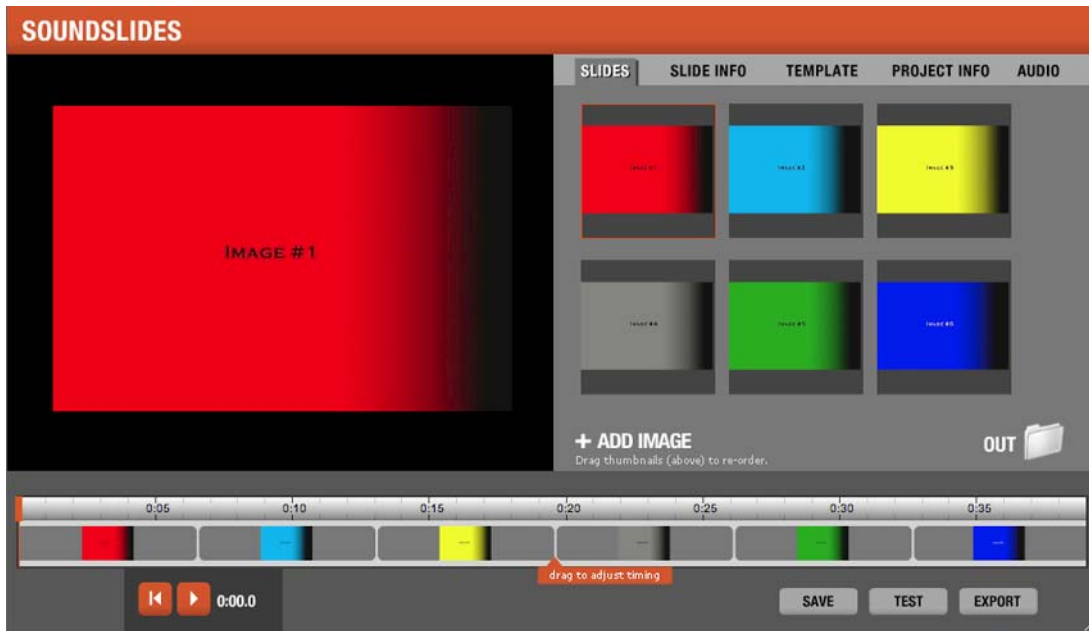


# An AP Guide



## Creating SoundSlides Web galleries

This guide is intended to introduce you to SoundSlides, a gallery creation software package that will enable you to produce photo-audio presentations for the Web.

In this latest version, you can also produce slideshows without sound. If that's what you are looking for, you'll want to skip to the end of these instructions after you reach the point where you load your photos.

You'll find the software is easy to use. Use this guide to learn how to use the tools but don't lose sight of the fact that content is the most important part of the process.

Just as it is in the AP's print and broadcast endeavors, compelling photography and engaging sound are key ingredients in telling a story that will draw readers. It's important to gather and assemble those components with an eye to how they will fit together if you intend to give the reader an audio-photo slideshow.

Before creating a project, talk with the Multimedia team in New York to make sure it's something that will work for us. Projects need to have national or international interest and advance coordination is important.

# GETTING YOUR SOFTWARE



The screenshot shows the SoundSlides website with a dark theme. The top navigation bar includes 'SOUNDSLIDES', 'Forums', 'Help', and 'Web'. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column features a header 'Ridiculously simple storytelling.' followed by a description of the software. Below this are two download sections: 'Download OS X version' and 'Download Windows version', each with a price of \$39.95 USD. A central graphic shows a computer monitor with sound waves. The right column is a 'SoundSlides blog' with several entries, including 'SoundSlides 1.4 beta released', 'Official SoundSlides PC launch', and 'Final PC release candidate'. A footer at the bottom reads 'Copyright 2009 - 2008 | SoundSlides, LLC.'

Go to [www.soundslides.com](http://www.soundslides.com) to download your SoundSlides Plus software. This is the new version of SoundSlides with enhanced capabilities.

If you already have a license serial number, you can click on the “Download Windows version” link (if you are using a PC) and download the software to your computer. If you need to buy the license, click on the “Buy PC version” link.

If you have a licensed version of SoundSlides, you can upgrade to the Plus version.

As you download the software, a query box will pop up. Click on all three questions (I have read ..., install desktop shortcut and launch SoundSlides. Then, click on the “install” button.)

At this point, you need to enter your registration information. You’ll only do this the first time you use the software.

**Note:** It is important that you enter a serial number if you intend for us to use your projects. If you set the software up in demo mode, you will not be able to use the output on the Web because it will be marked “demo” in large type. You can use it in “demo” mode to practice your techniques.

## KEY POINTS BEFORE YOU START

### Planning:

Before starting this whole process, you need to communicate ahead of time with the Multimedia group in New York so they can weigh in on how the project might fit into the bigger picture. We're looking for projects that have a wide interest so talk to us ahead of time, please. Don't start working on a project before talking with New York.

Go to the <http://multimedia.ap.org/> site and click on the "multimedia requests" button. If it is a spot story, contact Lauren McCullough (212-621-6925) for national or Suzanne Boyle (212-621-1919) for international to coordinate.

### Photos:

Before you start, you need to have selected your photos. Assemble the photos with an eye toward telling the story. You'll want a mixture of wide, medium and tight images. Two minutes of sound will need 15-20 images to keep the show moving in an interesting manner.

Listen to your audio during the selection process. You don't want your audio to be talking about apples when all you have on the screen are pictures of oranges.

The two components need to work together.

Some people find it easier to edit their captions in Photo Mechanic or some other picture-editing software. Captions need to be concise and should be viewed as a whole, not as a series of stand alone documents,

Many users also find it easier to determine the order of the photos in advance and name them accordingly. SoundSlides will display the photos in logical naming order (photo01 will come up before pix02, etc.) You can easily move them around once they are in SoundSlides but doing it ahead of time is an option.

The photos need to be in the .jpg format for SoundSlides. Although you do not need to resize them, you can take them down to 900 pixels or so on the long edge, at 72 dpi, and it will make the intake and handling go faster.

### Audio:

You need to have your audio track ready before you start SoundSlides if you are doing an audio version. The program has no sound-editing capabilities of its own. Remember, you need to have the rights to use the audio for the Web. No commercial music or audio unless you have secured clearances.

It's a good idea to have 90 and 120-second dead air clips available to insert so you can build a SoundSlides on deadline while your audio track is being prepped by someone else. You can create this in your SoundForge or Audacity software.

You should try to keep your projects in that range (90 to 120 seconds). Much longer and the audience will begin to lose interest. Much shorter and the project goes by too quickly to show off the photos.

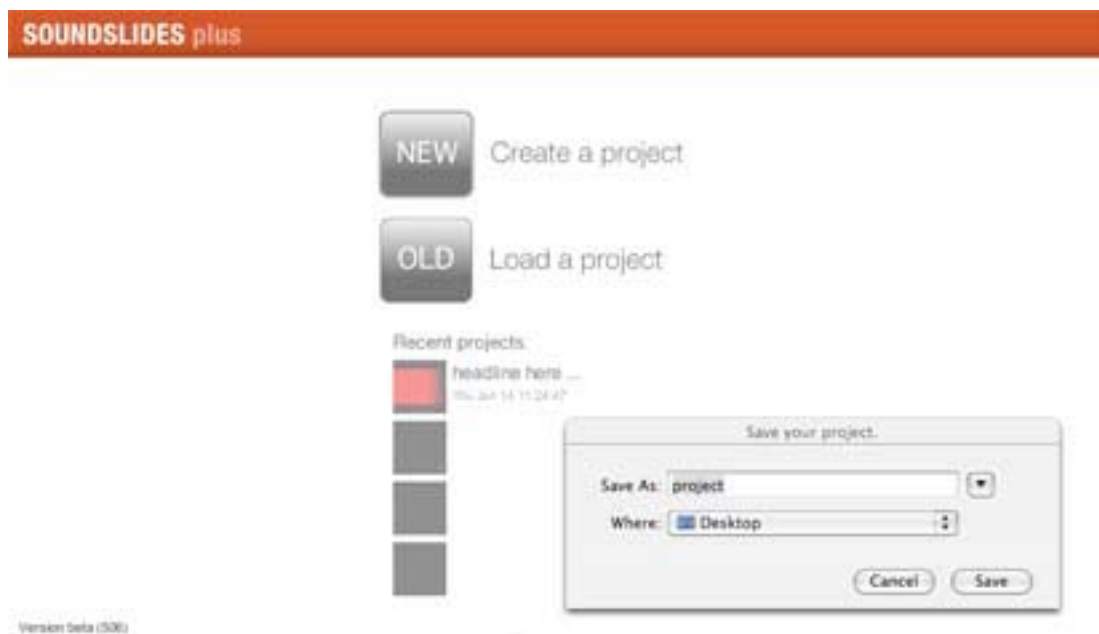
The sound file needs to be in the universal mp3 format for SoundSlides to ingest. Once in, SoundSlides will create its own audio files.

## STARTING YOUR PROJECT



After you've started your SoundSlides software by double-clicking on the icon on your desktop (it's an orange and silver disk), you'll see a window that lets you open a project you've done in the past or to create a new project.

Let's create a new project. Click on the "new" button.



A dialog box will come up asking you to name a folder for your project. Name it with something meaningful for the gallery you are doing. This will serve as the slug for the project so it must be publishable as the public will see it in the url when it is linked. It should be all lower-case and instead of space between words, you should use an \_ (underscore – hold down the shift key and hit the dash).

## MANUAL FOR SOUND\_SLIDES PLUS



After you've created a home for the project, a dialog box will come up asking you to import your sound and your photos. Make sure the "standard" (top) radio button is clicked in the dialog box on the left. Click on the JPG button and navigate to where you have your project photos stored.



Click the "choose" button and SoundSlides will take in your photos. SoundSlides will indicate with a green progress bar when your photos are in.



When the photo portion is done, click on the “SND” (sound) button. Follow the same procedure to navigate to your sound file and click “choose.”

The sound file needs to be in the mp3 format.



### GETTING YOUR PROJECT READY

At this point, you’re ready to do the fine-tuning to make the pictures and the sound match up and make sure all of the details are tended to.

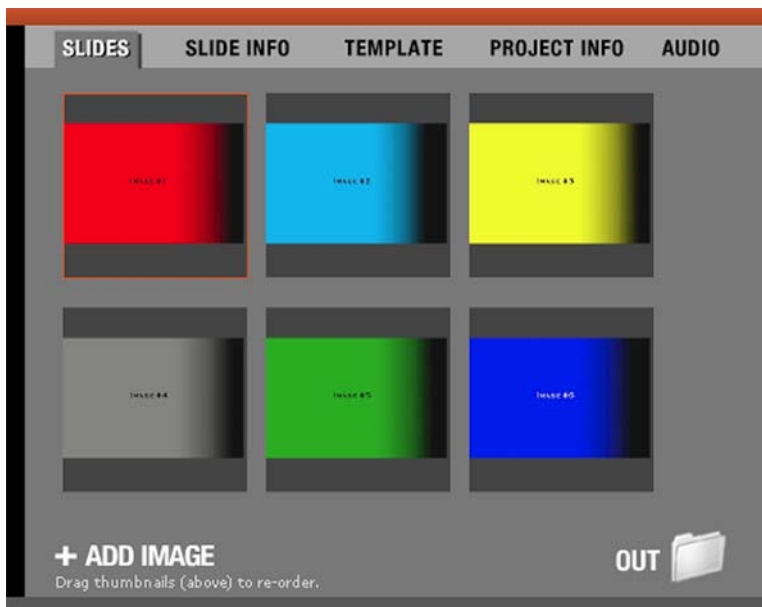
### MANUAL FOR SOUND\_SLIDES PLUS



Your project will come up with the first photo displayed in a large format at left and the selection of photos in order in a grid at right.

Across the bottom is the timeline which controls the sequencing of the photos in relation to the sound track. Everything from this point on will be done from this “command” screen. One key tip on this “command” screen. Use the “save” button as often as you can. That will protect you if the program crashes and save you redoing a lot of work.

## PUTTING THE PICTURES IN ORDER



If you haven't already put the pictures in order by using the file names, you can click on a photo at this point and drag it to a new position.

**IMPORTANT:** You should do your positioning of the photos before you begin fine-tuning the sequencing with the sound as that sequencing will be thrown off any time

## MANUAL FOR SOUND\_SLIDES PLUS

you move a photo. Settle on an order, then move on to making the photos and audio match up.

If you realize you need a photo you didn't bring in the first time, you can click on the "add image" button and bring it in at this point. You can also use the "out" folder to trash any pictures you want to discard at this point.

Now's the time to make sure the captions are ready to go.

## CAPTIONS



You select a photo for caption editing by single-clicking on the image in the right thumbnail ("slides") window of the main command screen and selecting the "slide info" tab.

When preparing captions for your SoundSlides production, remember that the pictures will be viewed as a group and will have the benefit of the soundtrack to help tell the story.

Unlike the photo network, where each picture has to have enough information to stand alone, your SoundSlides piece can have short concise captions that rely on those before and after to tell the story.

You only need to establish the location and time element in the first caption. No need to repeat it in each frame. Same with names. Identify the person fully the first time they appear and, from that point, they can be referred to by their last name only.

Include the photographer credit in each caption, even if it is the same person who made all the photos.

It is important to remember that the captions will be read in the brief moment when the picture is on the screen. They have to be concise enough that the reader can see them without having to stop the show.

You can move directly to the next picture by clicking the "next" button. To return to a picture you've already captioned, you can click the "back" button.

We do not use the "update image" button.

## MANUAL FOR SOUNDSLIDES PLUS

## FINE-TUNING THE SHOW



Using the timeline, you adjust the flow of the show. Remember the apples and oranges? Now's the time to make sure that great sound bite on the oranges comes up in perfect synch with the photo of the oranges.

This will take some tinkering.

Generally speaking, it is better to start from the left and move across adjusting the photos to line up with the audio track. Remember that any change in the order of the photos at this point will wipe out your sequencing.

Click on the vertical bars separating the photos and slide to the left or right to alter the amount of time each photo is on the screen. The time scale above the image line can be your guide to how long each image will be shown.

You can check your work by clicking on the orange play button on the lower left (next to the timer). That gives you a test run in the large window on the left of the command screen. You can also see how it will look on the Web by clicking the “test” button which actually shows the project in a browser window.

Also remember to save often. That's on the lower right row of buttons.

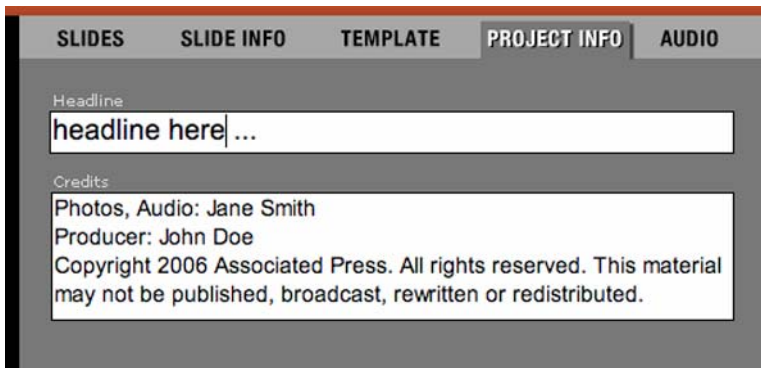
## JUST ABOUT DONE NOW

Just a couple of steps to go. Your pictures have been put in order, the captions have been tweaked and you've matched up the sound and the images.

That's the lion's share of the work but now we need to get the project ready so it will show up with the right information and proper structure on the Web.

We're going to move on to other tabs now.

Click on the “project info” link in the row of buttons on the top right of the main command screen.



You can ignore the headline box. We won't be using it for a headline. But, you can put your project name there and it will show up later on your opening screen as you

fire up SoundSlides under the Recent Projects banner. Might make it easier to find your project quickly. Not mandatory, though.

In the credits box, you should follow this style:

Audio, Photos: Jane Smith (who made the photos and collected the sound. In this case, it was the same person. It might be two different people and be listed separately. If you use a narrator, make that a separate credit line.)

Producer: John Doe (who put the project together)

(if needed) Source: Hunt Country Vineyards (where you got information)

Finish that box off with the following copyright information:

Copyright 2008, The Associated Press. AP text, photo, graphic audio and/or video material shall not be published, broadcast, rewritten for broadcast or publication or redistribution directly or indirectly in any medium. Neither these AP materials nor any portion thereof may be stored in a computer except for personal and non-commercial use. Users may not download or reproduce a substantial portion of the AP material found on this web site. AP will not be held liable for any damages arising from any of the foregoing.



Next, click on the “template” tab.

Leave the color preset box at “plain white.”

You’ll want to have these boxes checked:

## MANUAL FOR SOUNDSLIDES PLUS

- **Center in HTML**
- **Show footer**
- **Show captions**
- **Show credits**
- **Thumbnail previews**
- **Play automatically**
- **Show volume**

Time to hit the “save” button again.



You’re done! This is the basic SoundSlides production.

You’ll end up with that original folder loaded with a lot of different files. SoundSlides creates different size sound and photo files so it can display the work a lot of different ways, Don’t discard any of the files.

Contact the Multimedia group in New York ([apdprojects@ap.org](mailto:apdprojects@ap.org)) to let them know you’re done and they’ll give you instructions for uploading to the ftp site.

From there they’ll add a few specialized files and post the results on the Web.

While this seems rather drawn out, you’ll find you’ll be able to create projects in an hour or less once you get the hang of it.

In the following section, we’ll cover some of the extra bells and whistles you can, but don’t have to, use to enhance your project.

## **LOWER THIRDS:**

### **MANUAL FOR SOUNDSLIDES PLUS**

If you watch much television news, you are used to seeing the names of people on the screen come up as they first show up in a piece, then fade away. This is called Lower Thirds.



Under the Audio tab, SoundSlides Plus gives you the ability to name the person speaking and have a short description of the person. For instance, the name line could be Jane Doe and the description line would be Winery Owner.

You have to set the points where this title slide will come in and go out of your show. The In Point column is where you put the time element point (like 6 which would be six seconds into the show) and the Duration column is where you put how long you want the title to be on the screen. It takes at least 4 or 5 seconds for someone to read a simple title so you won't want to have the title up less than that.

Remember to do a test to make sure the title doesn't overlap with the next picture if it doesn't belong there. This may take some fine-tuning on your part.

### **MOVING PICTURES:**

The new SoundSlides Plus software gives you the ability to zoom or pan across a picture. Use this option sparingly, please.

Under the Slide Info tab is a tab marked Movement.

When you click on it, you'll see two smaller windows with the selected photo in each of them. You can adjust the magnification on either pane to either start tight on some aspect of the photo and zoom to a wider view or do the opposite, starting wide and going tight. Use the slider bars under each image to make the changes.



By clicking on the image inside either window and dragging, you can adjust the photo to have the part of the image you want show in the window.

You can test the effect by clicking on the Save button, then running the show from the orange arrow button on the lower left side of the command pane.

Again, this should be used sparingly. Most pictures won't be helped by this technique and over-use is jarring for the reader.

### TEMPLATE TAB:

Under the template tab on the main window, you'll see options for display, fonts, transition and shell.



We primarily use the defaults on these so you won't need to adjust anything there.

There may be a time when your project will be enhanced by the use of a different transition. The best way to learn about these is to try them and test your project.

Remember, the transition you select will apply to your whole project, not just the one picture you have in your preview screen.

Like the movement technique, use the options here sparingly.

### **CREATING A SLIDESHOW WITHOUT AUDIO:**

If you have a selection of photos and you want to produce a project without sound, the new SoundSlides Plus allows you to do that. The older SoundSlides software could only work when you had an audio file.

You should select and name your photos as outlined earlier in this guide.

After you have imported your photos, at the step where you would upload your audio, you can select the option to create a gallery without sound by clicking on the gray bar that says, "slide show only."



Load a folder of jpgs and an optional audio file.



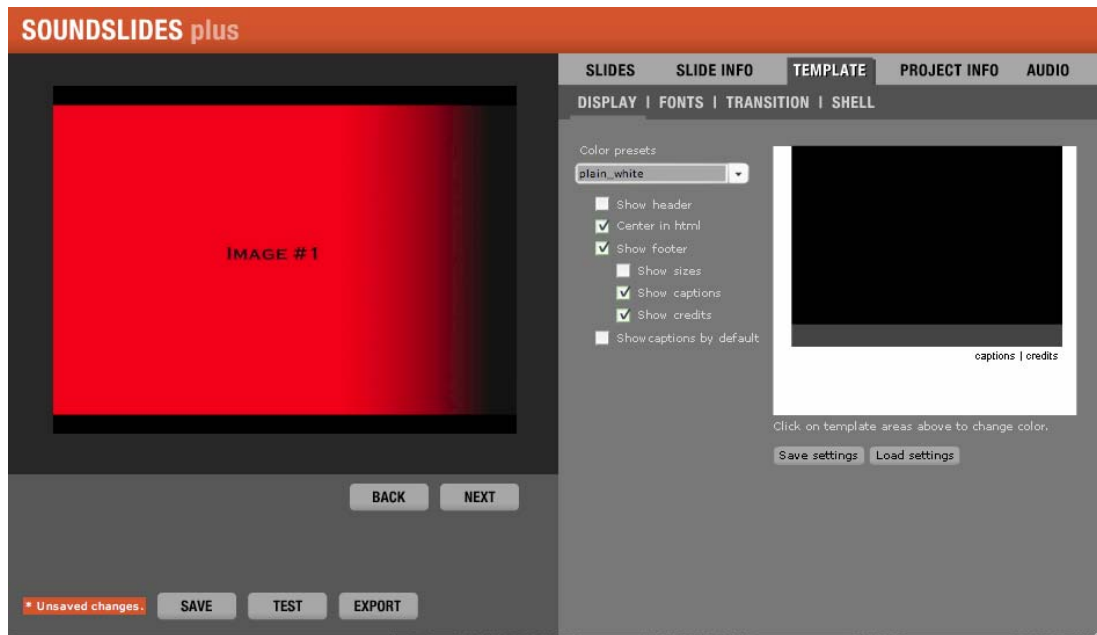
**All images done.**

#### **Audio format**

Audio files must be an MP3 file, have a sample rate of 44.1khz or 22.05khz, and be encoded at 32kbps, 48kbps, 56kbps, 64kbps, 128kbps, 160kbps or 256kbps.

**SLIDE SHOW ONLY - SKIP AUDIO**

There are only a couple of other differences. You won't be able to pan a photo like you can in the audio version. And you don't have the lower thirds option, either. Obviously, you'll not have to change the pacing of the show since it isn't geared to a sound file.



You'll also notice some of the audio-related choices are missing from the display menu. See the image above for the proper settings for the photo-only gallery output.

Otherwise, handling is the same as far as captions and credits and uploading the files to the ftp server.

### FINAL REMINDERS:

Communication is key. Use the multimedia.ap.org page to pitch your project to New York ahead of time. No surprises!

Create concise captions.

Pick pictures that are eye-catching, show variety and tell a story. Select audio that is good quality and has strong content.

Combine your photos and your audio to highlight the key parts of the story.

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