Transitions are audio and visual effects used to smooth the flow from clip to clip. For example, in movies, you may have noticed the screen fade to black at the end of one scene and then fade back in at the start of the next. You may have also noticed that the audio followed suit, growing quieter during the fade to black and then welling up as the picture faded back in. These are transitions.

Note that you don’t have to insert a transition between each clip in a project. If you don’t insert a transition, the second clip starts playing immediately after the first clip ends, which is commonly called a cut transition.

Movie Maker offers a good mix of transitions, and you can get more from Microsoft and third parties such as Pixelan.

Still, knowing which transitions to use, and when, is key to using transitions effectively.
In the Collections pane, click the Video Transitions collection to display Movie Maker’s transitions in the Contents pane.

Double-click the transition you want to preview.

Movie Maker plays your selected transition in the Monitor.

For the Circle transition shown here, Microsoft supplies two images to help you preview the transition. The sunny hill and blue sky represent the first clip in the transition. The sand dune represents the second clip.

The Circle transition opens a widening circle in the first clip through which the second clip is visible.

Have some fun and preview any transitions that appeal to you.
insert a dissolve

I want to smooth the scene change from a view of the party room to the arrival of the first guests. This is a minor change, so I’ll try a subtle dissolve transition, which blends frames from the two video clips with a touch of pixilation.

Find a similar spot in your project, where you’re moving from one scene to another, making sure the change is equally minor. Working in either the Timeline or Storyboard view, have the intersection of the last clip from the first scene and the first clip from the second scene in view.

1. Display the Video Transitions collection in the Contents pane and select the Dissolve transition.

2. Hold down the mouse button and drag the transition to the intersection of the two clips.

3. Release the mouse button.

inserting transitions
insert a dissolve (cont.)

Movie Maker inserts the transition on the Transition track. This slightly opaque area (and the transition beneath it) represents the area of overlap between the two clips.

Note the information window Movie Maker displays when you hover your mouse over any content in the Timeline or Storyboard. You’ll use this information in a moment to adjust the duration of the transition.
preview transitions

Now preview your transition to be sure it works like you want it to.

1. Double-click the transition in either the Timeline or Storyboard (shown).

2. Click the Play/Pause button (shown in Pause mode because the preview is playing).

When you preview your transition, Movie Maker plays it in the Monitor and then continues to play subsequent clips.
The dissolve is pretty plain. My movie is a birthday party, so I think I should liven it up a bit. I’ll try the Heart transition. See if this works for you.

1. Select the new transition.
2. Hold down the mouse button and drag the transition to the previously inserted transition.
3. Release the mouse button.

When you replace a transition, the clip information window shows the data from the video clip above the transition, not the transition itself. Just ignore that and drop in the new transition.

Movie Maker replaces the Dissolve transition with the new one. Now my movie has heart! (Sorry—couldn’t resist.)
Preview your new transition. Mine flashes by a bit too quickly, so I’m going to make it longer. Two seconds sounds about right. Try a 2-second duration for your transition, too.

Be sure you’re in Timeline view; you can’t adjust the duration in Storyboard view.

1. Hover the cursor over the left edge of the transition until the two-headed cursor appears.

2. Hold down the mouse button and drag the transition to the left, watching the information window until you’ve reached the target duration (2 seconds here).

3. Release the mouse.

Now preview again. With its longer duration, this transition looks a lot better.
You just inserted a video transition. Now you’ll work on the audio. You’ll fade out the audio on the clip before the transition—from 100% volume to 0%—and fade it back in on the clip after the transition—from 0% volume to 100%.

1. Right-click the Audio track for the clip before the transition.

2. Choose Fade Out from the menu.

3. Right-click the Audio track for the clip after the transition.

4. Choose Fade In.

Movie Maker doesn’t provide visual feedback on the Time-line after you insert an audio fade effect. The only way to tell that the effect is selected is to right-click and see if the effect is checked.

Preview your work. You can’t configure the settings, so it’s take it or leave it, but if you don’t like the way the fade sounds, delete it by following the same procedure: click the audio track, right-click, and choose the checked fade effect to remove the check mark.
fade video to black

Now move to the scene changes between the video portion of the project to the slide show. To let viewers know that a major change is occurring, you’ll fade to black after the last video clip and then fade in from black to start the slide show.

1 Right-click the Video track of the target clip—here, the last video clip before the slide show.

2 Choose Fade Out.

3 Right-click the Video track of the target clip—here, the first image in the slide show.

4 Choose Fade In.

To see if you’ve applied a fade effect, right-click the Video track and see if the option is checked.
repeat a transition

If you’re building a slide show with 60 or so pictures, you’ll be happy to learn that there’s a way to insert the same transition between all of them at the same time. For this task, you need to work in Storyboard view.

1. Click the first picture in the slide show.
2. Hold down the Shift key on your keyboard.
3. If necessary, drag this slider bar until you can see the last slide in the slide show.
4. Click the last picture in the slide show. All of your pictures should now be selected.
5 In the Contents pane, right-click the desired transition. Try the Page Curl transition.

6 Choose Add to Storyboard.

Switch to Timeline view. Each line on the Transition track is a transition that Movie Maker just inserted.

**Important!** Preview your work immediately to make sure that you like the transition you chose. If you don’t, click Undo on the Movie Maker toolbar (at the upper left) and start over. Otherwise, if you change your mind later, you’ll have to delete every single transition individually, which can be time consuming.
How you use transitions is a matter of personal taste and style and should vary by the type of movie and the audience. The best way to learn how to use transitions is to pay attention to how they’re used in movies and television. Serious movies and television shows usually stick to cuts, dissolves, and fades, while children’s shows and comedies may use more obvious and fun transitions.

I follow three rules when using transitions with video clips. First, I use transitions to alert the viewer to a change in scene or time, but only if I don’t have video that does a better job than the transition. Second, I try to match the extent of the scene change and the transition. If it’s a minor scene change, I use a modest, barely noticeable transition. If it’s a major scene change, I use an obvious transition. And third, whenever I insert a video transition, I transition the audio as well, fading out the audio from the first clip and fading in the audio from the next clip.

Slides shows are a bit of a different animal. I almost always use transitions between the slides.

Remember that transitions overlap frames from the two affected video clips, partially obscuring the content for the duration of the transition. If you have important content at the start of the second clip or end of the first clip, make sure the transition doesn’t obscure it. If it does, retrim the clip, adding the duration of the transition to the front or back of the clip, as necessary, to ensure that the transition doesn’t obscure the content you want to appear.
Microsoft offers several sources of additional transitions, some free, some with a modest charge. You can download the free Windows Movie Maker 2 Winter Fun Pack 2003, which includes both a Snow Wipe and Snow Burst transition, at http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/moviemaker/downloads/winterfun.asp.

Also consider the Microsoft Plus! Digital Media Edition, which costs $19.95 and can be found at http://www.microsoft.com/windows/plus/PlusHome.asp. The Plus! pack includes a range of useful transitions as well as other tools and effects.

If you’re serious about your transitions, surf over to http://www.pixelan.com/mm/intro.htm. There, you’ll find transitions and effects that extend Movie Maker’s capabilities immensely.

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- Each audio fade (in and out) lasts two-thirds of a second; you can’t adjust the duration.
- All video fades (in and out) last half a second; you can’t adjust the duration. There are techniques you can use to produce longer fades, but they’re beyond the scope of this book. See *Microsoft Windows Movie Maker 2: Visual QuickStart Guide* from Peachpit Press for more details.