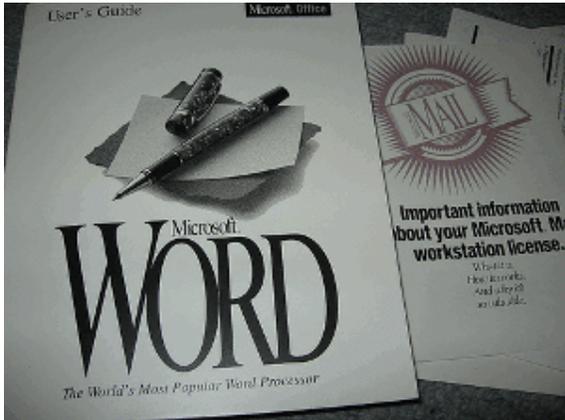


## Ribbon Hero – Boost Your Microsoft Office Skills with This Fun Add-on

By Saikat Basu



We normally don't associate the word "fun" or "play" with Microsoft. Pinball and Minesweeper are fine, but hey, a game for Microsoft Office? This is where the guys from Redmond have got off the well-trodden path and done something that's downright unique.

Microsoft has introduced a Microsoft Office training game called Ribbon Hero that attempts to fill the learning gap for new users as well as Microsoft Office old hands who just can't find their way with the Ribbon.

The feelings towards Microsoft's interface enhancing *Ribbon* (the panel that has all the commands and icons arranged in tabs) has been somewhat mixed. It was a departure from the old vertical menu approach, which brought in a learning curve. The Ribbon is meant to be a '*Fluent User Interface*'. It is meant to enhance speed and productivity by putting the oft used commands right in front of our face.

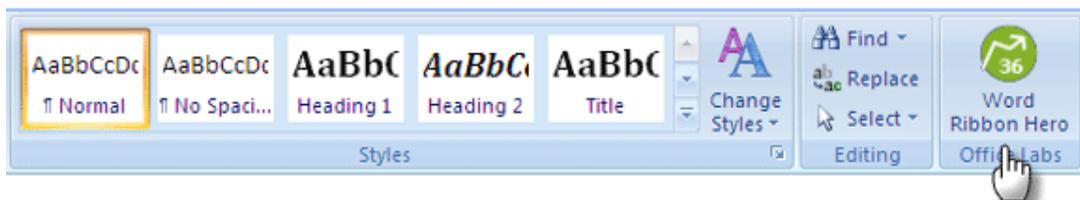
Despite the changes, one thing has remained constant; some of us are unaware about how to use MS Office to the max. There are easier ways to do certain things and then there are ways to do a lot of things with Microsoft's Office suite. We sometimes fall short in both.

That's where Ribbon Hero (<http://ribbon-hero.en.softonic.com/>) is supposed to come and give us a hand, in a fun and engaging sort of way. Ribbon Hero is also a well-timed idea because from Office 2010 onwards, all applications will come with the Ribbon.

So throw out your 'Dummies' guides, shut off the help file and start off with the free and small Ribbon Hero Microsoft Office training download. Ribbon Hero installs itself in Office applications (Excel 2007 and PowerPoint 2007) and of course, where else but on the Ribbon?

### Office Play

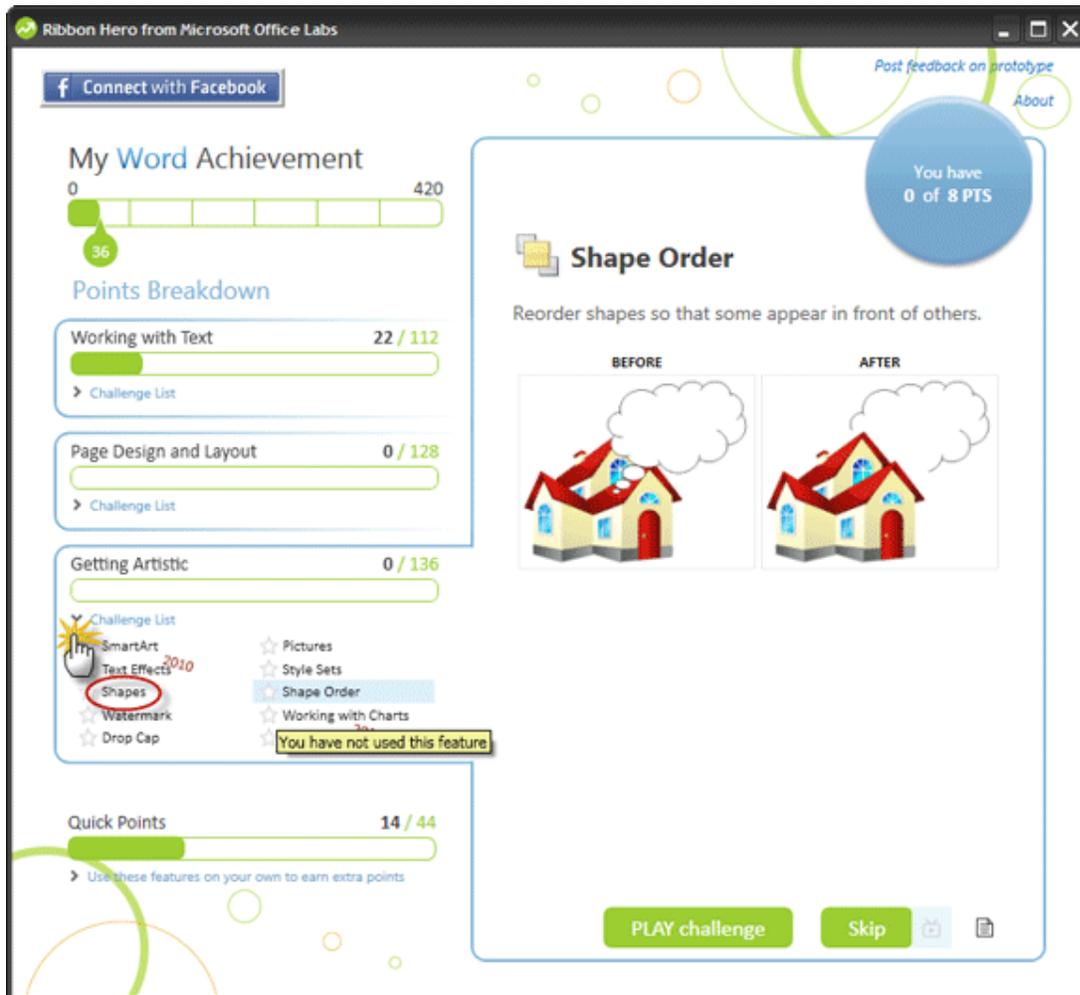
Do you see the round green icon sitting on the Ribbon all alone? When at first, you go your own way, working on a document and using some functions here and there, the little white digits indicate the points you are adding up doing your Office functions.



Each command has certain scores and with some you will score more than others. For instance, applying *Styles* will give you more than just normal formatting.

Clicking on the Ribbon Hero button takes you to the Microsoft Office training interface. The first thing you see is the *Points Breakdown*.



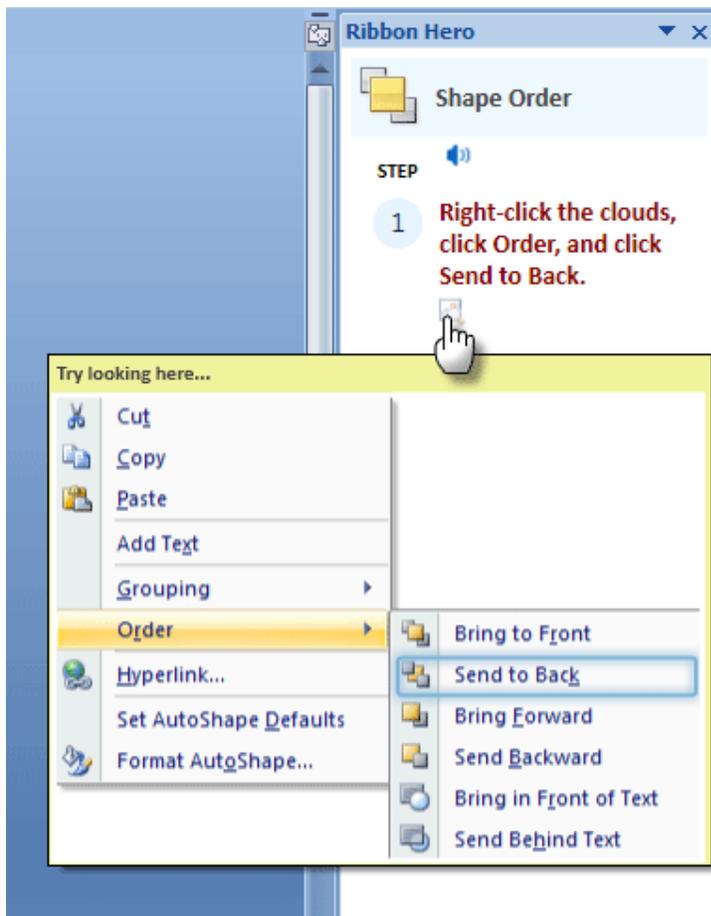


You can also get to the lessons by clicking on the small arrow for the *Challenge List*. Ribbon Hero puts in challenges for you to play, to expose you to new features.

Clicking on *Play Challenge* opens up a new document with a lesson and instructions. Get a better idea of what's required from a *Before* and *After* snapshot given right below the instructions. This is how it looks:



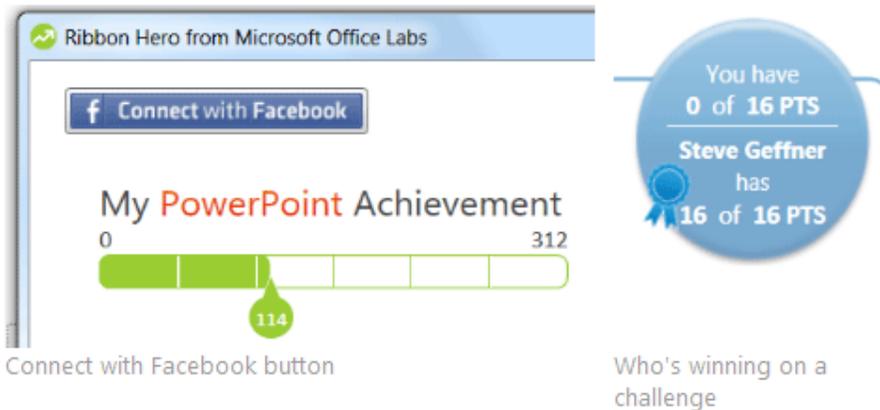
Now you just have to follow the instructions laid out and complete the task. If you are stuck, take a *Hint*. You can also take a peek at a small preview of the step.



If you get it right, there's the ring of congratulations and a few celebratory balloons as a cheer. You can apply the lessons learnt with some real world working to boost your Ribbon score.



Ribbon Hero brings in some Facebook social sharing. Post your scores on Facebook and check the leader board to see if you are on the same class as your friends. Every 100 points earned by you prompts Ribbon Hero to ask you if you would like to publish it on Facebook's newsfeed.



For me, Ribbon Hero is proving to be a shorter hop towards improving my MS Office craft. Citing my own example, my score zoomed up in MS Word, but took a beating in MS Excel. To please my ego, I am using Ribbon Hero more as a guide for MS Excel. I check up on the categories and see how it has been done.

### What I Am Learning

*Learning + Fun = Better Learning.*

This equation is always true and more so for the digital age... Think of the seconds you can shave off by executing a command in a speedier way. The seconds can snowball into minutes with a long document, spreadsheet or presentation. A few rounds with Ribbon Hero and we can well become MS Office experts. The great thing is that it would be achieved without the help of a boring help guide or the guy in the next cubicle.

The only slight problem I found was that the word count stopped working. That's a rough edge but it's still a Microsoft Office Labs application on a test drive.

So, let the games begin.

Your thoughts matter. Use Ribbon Hero and let us know if it's a dumb, good or a great idea.

Ribbon Hero works on Microsoft Office 2007/2010 (both 32/64 Bit) and for Word, Excel and PowerPoint only. Find out some more rules for the game from Jennifer Michelstein, the brain behind the project.