Some Tips on Powerpoints

The medium of a paper and the medium of a powerpoint are different, so they communicate information in different ways. Think about how this specific form has unique ways of communicating that a paper or a speech alone can’t do.

Use It As A Tool
Your powerpoint slides should augment and improve upon what you’re saying, highlighting things that speech cannot necessarily do alone. Why are you using a powerpoint specifically? Is it because it would be useful to you, or is it because it is part of the assignment? Think about how it helps present an idea.

Slides ≠ Notecards
A powerpoint is what the whole class is seeing, not your presentation notes. If your bullet points for everything you’re going to say are just on the screen, then you as the speaker are turning your head looking at the screen and then back at the class. Having notes in front of you to look at is a simple way of combating this, showing confidence and keeping the attention on you. Your slides should be illustrative of your points, not just saying your points and taking words out of your mouth.

Slides are Visual
Powerpoint is a visual medium, so use it like one! Images and diagrams can help illustrate your points in clearer ways text can’t alone, so have fun with it, and use it to your advantage. Walls of text are boring and hard to look at, and don’t help your presentation move forward. If you use text, be short and clear and to the point, and make it easy to understand not only in your text but in the way you display it.

Structuring and Outlining
A powerpoint helps your audience follow what’s going on, and it helps YOU stay on target while speaking. It is not a replacement for organizing your speech, rather it is there to help you get your point across in a clearer way. If your speech is based on a paper, returning to your outline or making an outline from the finished paper can help structure your powerpoint as well. It can be helpful in figuring out what you want to say, picking out your strongest points to present.

Less is More
Images are great to use to help illustrate your point and make your presentation exciting, but don’t go overboard. Too many images are distracting and take away from your points. Remember, since you are the presenter, everything you put in your powerpoint should help direct attention to what you’re saying and improving it. Too much text, too many images, too many diagrams in a slide can all be confusing and cause people to focus more on the slide than they are on you.

Plan your speech, THEN make your powerpoint
This is a visual aid, not necessarily the center of the presentation. This is here to assist and enhance your speaking, not distract or replace your words.