To create a PowerPoint that enhances rather than distracts from your verbal presentation, try these tips:

**Layout**
For proper display, make slides landscape in orientation.

**Appearance**
Text heavy slides and bulleted lists hurt audience comprehension. Here’s what can help:

- Reinforce your argument with visual evidence such as diagrams, figures, tables, or images. Make sure images are functional, not decorative or distracting.
  - Use as many of your own images and figures as possible.
  - If you use images and figures from others, make sure to cite them properly. (Learn how by visiting [https://colinpurrington.com/tips/photo-creds](https://colinpurrington.com/tips/photo-creds).)
- Simplify your slide design. Only include essential information while verbally delivering the details.

**Font and Text**
- Use sans serif fonts such as Arial or Calibri as these are easier to read on a projected screen.
- Use fonts no smaller than 24 pt on any given slide.
- Use the “6x6” rule for bullet points—one thought per line, a maximum of 6 words per line and no more than 6 bullets/lines per slide.

**Headings/Titles**
- Just like other writing, PowerPoint presentations should convey a “story.” In the sciences, for example, you might be telling the story of a set of experiments at a national conference, or you might be telling the story of your research-in-progress to your thesis committee members. Make sure you are clear about the purpose—the story—of your presentation and your audience’s relationship to it. Undergraduates in Intro Biology may need you to include definitions of DNA, RNA, etc. while a thesis committee probably will not!
- Use informative headings instead of generic headings like “Introduction” or “Methods,” and clearly state the slide’s main idea in a complete sentence. For example, “The implementation method shows promise for reducing overall speed” is a much more informative, compelling, and storytelling title than “Results.”

Check out these helpful online resources with more tips and do’s and don’ts:

- [https://colinpurrington.com/tips/science-talks](https://colinpurrington.com/tips/science-talks)
- [https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/guides/writing-a-powerpoint-presentation](https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/guides/writing-a-powerpoint-presentation)
- [https://miamioh.edu/hcwe/handouts/powerpoint-presentations/index.html](https://miamioh.edu/hcwe/handouts/powerpoint-presentations/index.html)

See the next page for examples from the Carnegie Mellon University Global Communication Center of how to re-design slides with informative headings and meaningful graphics.
Slide Design: Before and After

**Result**
- The average before was 7
- The average after was 5
- The standard deviation before was 2.5
- The standard deviation after was 2

**The implementation method shows promise for reducing the overall speed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Speed</td>
<td>7 mph</td>
<td>5 mph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>2.5 mph</td>
<td>2 mph</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Informative heading:** Message is distilled into a sentence

**Visual display (summary table) is easy to follow and highlights important results**

**Bullet lists like this are designed to help the speaker, not the audience**

- Text-heavy slide. Think about delivering details verbally

**Formal vs. Informal Email**
- **Formal**
  - Audience
    - People outside company
    - Superiors
    - Word Choice
      - i.e. “Dear”, “Sincerely”
  - Informal
    - Audience
      - People inside company at similar level
    - Word Choice
      - Formal greeting not necessary
      - Short

**The distinction between formal and informal email communication is essential for new employees**

**Informative heading:** Slide heading contains a message, not single topic

**Visual display (flowchart) shows conceptual relationships between ideas**

In addition to transforming bulleted talking points into a flowchart, bulleted lists can be “built” on the slide. Have each talking point appear as you verbally discuss it, before you cue the next point to appear.