Seventeen suggestions for giving a talk

About your slides:
1. Dark background with light text is supposed to be easier to read.
2. Use a sans serif font for your text (like Helvetica or Arial).
3. Text size should be pretty big – I use 34 point for titles and 28 for other text.
4. Text on the figures can help remind you what your main points are. (This is much better than reading them off a card or from the powerpoint notes.)
5. Make figures as big as possible and don't cram too many on each slide.
6. Practice your talk in the room you are giving it in, if possible. This helps you see if your slides are projecting well on the exact projector that you are using.
7. Avoid cheesy animations etc.
8. I like to have two copies of the conclusion slide – one at the beginning and one at the very end.
9. You do not need to put references in a separate slide at the very end. (You may want to put them on relevant slides in ~18 point font at the bottom, especially when you borrow figures from other sources.)

About giving your talk:
1. When arranging your slides, try to tell a story.
2. For the title slide: don't just repeat the title. Try to say something slightly different that encapsulates the main point of your talk. Then memorize exactly what you want to say. This tends to help people overcome any nerves.
3. Practice practice practice. I practice three times by myself before practicing for another person. Then I practice some more.
4. Remember to explain the axes on graphs, the scale on maps, and any other important details about your figures.
5. Hold the laser pointer with two hands. Don't overuse the pointer – just use it to point out features on your figures.
6. Plan on having one slide per minute, so ~12 slides total for your talk in class.
7. Remember to look at the audience when you're speaking.
8. You can try to anticipate what likely questions might be…sometimes you can even leave ideas dangling as obvious potential questions for the audience.