

# Topic Exploration Worksheet

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**"The success of your presentation will be judged not by the knowledge you send but by **what the listener receives.**"**

— Lily Walters

The above quote reminds us that topic selection bridges the gap between the speaker's passion or expertise and the audience's needs, ensuring that your message is both impactful and memorable.

With these factors in mind, this worksheet will guide you through the process of brainstorming and refining a topic that works for you, your audience, and the occasion.

## ➤ Characteristics of a strong topic

- Has importance or value to the audience, contributing to their understanding or sparking meaningful discussion
- Specific and focused (not too broad or narrow)
- Personally interesting to you
- Researchable and supported by evidence
- Original or offering a fresh perspective

## ➤ Mistakes to avoid

- A topic that's overdone or unoriginal
- A topic you're not genuinely interested in
- Ignoring audience's interests or knowledge level
- Topics that are too broad to cover effectively
- Subjects that might alienate or overly polarize the audience unless handled carefully
- Too vague topics or trying to cover too many points without a clear direction

## Why Topic Selection Matters

### For the Speaker:

A topic that aligns with your passions, expertise, or experiences will naturally make your content and delivery more confident, engaging, and authentic. When you care about what you're talking about, it shows—and your enthusiasm can inspire your audience.

### For the Audience:

Your audience's needs, interests, and expectations must remain foremost in your mind at all stages of development, starting with topic selection. The best topics resonate with listeners, providing them with something valuable—whether that's new knowledge, inspiration, or a fresh perspective.

### Meeting the Needs of the Occasion:

Every speaking event has a unique context and purpose, whether it's an academic assignment, a professional presentation, or a community gathering. Your topic should align with the event's goals, adhere to its parameters, and meet the audience's expectations.

# Discover Possible Topics

## 1. Brainstorm Your Interests and Expertise

Generate ideas for the following categories, listing as many ideas as possible for each.

**Academic:** What topics related to your major, classes, or academic projects interest you?

**Personal:** What hobbies, personal experiences, or challenges have shaped you?

**Career:** What knowledge or insights have you gained from internships, jobs, or industry interests?

**Community/World Interest:** What social, cultural, or global topics do you care deeply about?

## 2. Star ( ) the 2 topics you feel most passionate about and would enjoy presenting.



**« Make an appointment  
to discuss your topic  
ideas with an ECC peer  
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### 3. Evaluate your top two ideas.

For each of your top two ideas, answer the following questions to determine their suitability and practicality for your audience, purpose, and occasion:

- ✓ **Is this topic relevant to your audience?**  
Consider your audience's interests, needs, and experiences. Will this topic engage them, resonate with their perspectives, or provide them with value?
- ✓ **Does this topic align with the purpose of the speech or occasion?**  
Reflect on the goals of the assignment, event, or context. Does the topic meet the expectations and objectives set?
- ✓ **Can this topic be effectively addressed within the given time frame?**  
Assess whether the topic is appropriately narrow or broad. Can you explore it thoroughly and meaningfully in the allotted time without oversimplifying or overwhelming your audience?
- ✓ **Are there credible resources to support this topic?**  
Strong presentations are grounded in reliable information. Are there enough reputable sources available to provide evidence, examples, and depth to your content?

**Audience relevance:**

**Purpose/occasion:**

**Scope:**

**Sources:**

Topic 1

**Audience relevance:**

**Purpose/occasion:**

**Scope:**

**Sources:**

Topic 2

### Next steps

After evaluating your ideas, use feedback from others — such as peers, instructors, or an ECC consultant — to help select the best topic. Choose one you're genuinely drawn to and excited about. Once your topic is finalized, write a clear specific purpose statement and thesis to define your focus. Develop a logical structure by selecting and organizing main ideas, and support them with credible evidence. Refine your language to ensure clarity and connection with your audience. Finally, practice your delivery to enhance confidence, timing, and presence.



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