Choosing your Topic Theme

Choose a topic that interests you and develop a theme around it. A theme is the central or key idea of any presentation. When a good presentation has been completed, the audience should be able to summarize it in one sentence. This sentence should be the theme. Development of a theme provides organizational structure and clarity of understanding. Once the theme of a presentation has been decided, everything else tends to fall into place. Themes should:

- Be stated as short, simple, complete sentences.
- Contain one main idea.
- Reveal the overall purpose of the presentation.
- Be specific
- Be interestingly and motivatingly worded when possible.

Themes are not Topics:
“Butterflies” is not a theme. It is a topic. “Butterflies play an important role in nature” is a topic theme. “Abraham Lincoln” is a topic. “Abraham Lincoln's life was often marred by tragedy” is a topic theme. “Geysers in Yellowstone” is a topic. “The function of geysers in Yellowstone is dependent on 3 variables” is a topic theme.

Other Examples of Topic Themes:
1. All life is dependent on the sun.
2. Technology is changing the way Universities deliver college courses.
3. Searching for and investing in a retirement plan while in your 20s will help secure your financial future.
4. Learning the art of napkin folding will transform your meal into a sensational dinner party.
5. Energy is neither created nor destroyed.
6. A constructive communicative relationship is likely when there is a willingness to become involved with the other person.
7. Developing an attractive professional resume will increase your chances of receiving a job offer.

Deciding Who Your Audience Will Be:
Choosing your audience is often determined in conjunction with your topic and development of your topic theme. In some situations, the need to develop a topic will come first, and you must then define the audience that best fits the subject matter. In other situations, the audience is defined first, and you then must develop a topic theme that will interest them. In either case, you need to match your audience to your presentation by considering the following: the interests and needs of your audience relative to your topic theme; the type and amount of information you want to convey; what is it that you want to accomplish; who will be most interested in what you have to say and why; and what are the knowledge, expectations, backgrounds, and values your audience brings to your presentation.

Examples:
- **Topic Theme**: Butterflies play an important role in nature.
  **Audience**: adults, children, families of all ages; individuals interested in butterflies, nature, the outdoors.

- **Topic Theme**: Searching for and investing in a retirement plan while in your 20s will help secure your financial future.
  **Audience**: young adults, older teenagers, and parents/relatives of same; individuals interested in planning a financial future.