What is a presentation? (it is a conversation with a group)
A presentation is a means of communication that can be adapted to various speaking situations, such as talking to a group, addressing a meeting or briefing a team.

A presentation can also be used as a broad term that encompasses other 'speaking engagements' such as making a speech at a wedding.   A presentation requires you to get a message across to the listeners and will often contain a '*persuasive*' element. It may, for example, be a talk about the positive work of your school or organisation, or what you could offer an employer.

Key elements of a presentation

Context
Ask yourself the following questions to develop a full understanding of the context of the presentation.

- When and where will you deliver your presentation? (Live or prerecorded)
- Will the presentation be to a small group or a large crowd? (live or web based)
- What is the audience expecting to learn from you and your presentation?

All these aspects will change the presentation. See below for information on Deciding the Presentation Method.

Presenter
The role of the presenter is to communicate with the audience and control the presentation. Remember, though, that if you want some kind of interaction this may mean handing over the control to your audience.

Audience
The audience receives the presenter's message(s).
  (The message will change depending upon the audience – is the message intended for teens or
    retirees, business executives or the general public?)

Message
The message or messages are delivered by the presenter to the audience.

The message is delivered not just by the spoken word (verbal communication) but can be augmented by techniques such as voice projection, voice tone, body language, gestures, eye contact, and attitude or authentic passion displayed (non-verbal communication), and visual aids, such as PowerPoint slides.

The message will also be affected by the audience's expectations. For example, if you have been billed as speaking on one particular topic, and you choose to speak on another, the audience is unlikely to take your message on board even if you present very well. They will judge your presentation a failure, because you have not met their expectations.

Method
How will the presentation be delivered?
Presentations are usually delivered direct to an audience. However, there may be occasions where they are delivered from a distance over the Internet, or recorded and posted on the internet, then people may be able to access it for several years. This will mean that your contemporaneous references should be kept to a minimum.

Preparing a Presentation

Preparation is the single most important part of making a successful presentation. This is the crucial foundation and you should dedicate as much time to it as possible avoiding short-cuts.

Not only will good preparation ensure that you have thought carefully about the messages that you want (or need) to communicate in you presentation but it will also help boost your confidence.

Complete the Presentation Worksheet as you read through these topics.

The Objective

You have been asked to speak to a group of people. First, ask yourself 'why?' What is the purpose of the presentation, what is the objective, what outcome(s) do you and the audience expect?

It is useful to **write down the reason** you have been asked to present so you can use this as a constant reminder while you prepare the presentation. There are many reasons for giving a presentation or talk, but never lose sight of your objective as determined when you were asked and accepted the invitation.

Use the Presentation Worksheet to write your objective and plan your presentation.

The Subject

The subject of what you are going to talk about comes from the objective but they are not necessarily one and the same thing.

For example:

- The subject may be given to you by an inviting organization (or your teacher).
- The subject may be entirely your choice within certain limitations.

The Audience

Before preparing material for a presentation, it is worth considering your prospective audience. Tailoring your talk to the audience is important and the following points should be considered:

- The size of the group or audience expected.
- The age range - a talk aimed at retired people will be quite different from one aimed at teenagers.
- Gender - will the audience be predominantly male or female?
- Is it a captive audience or will they be there out of interest?
- Will you be speaking in their work or leisure time?
- Do they know something about your subject already or will it be totally new to them? Is the subject part of their work?
- Are you there to inform, teach, stimulate, or provoke?
- Can you use humour and if so what would be considered appropriate?

The Place

It is important to have as much advance information as possible about the place where you are going to speak. Information about the size of the room and seating arrangements. There is also the possibility that you will be presenting via the internet or be asked to produce a pre-recorded presentation, which will mean a different kind of presentation.

Length of Talk

Always find out how long you have to talk and check if this includes or excludes time for questions. The presentations for this assignment are to be as close to 3 minutes as possible, not including time for questions.

Organize the Presentation Material
Clarity of ideas and good organization should help result in a lively, logical and compelling message, delivered in a confident and professional way

Blue Sky Thinking (The Ideas)
Keeping your objectives in mind, write down all the points you wish to make, try writing all the ideas on a blank page to do a Brainstorming session.

Select Your Main Points
The talk/presentation should be divided into three sections:
- Introduction (beginning)
- Main Content (middle)
- Conclusion (end)

A useful structure would be the following:
- Tell the audience in the introduction what your subject is and how you have organized the presentation (by stating the key elements).
- Then tell them the details of the key elements and/or messages (by expanding and qualifying the key points in more detail and providing supporting evidence).
- Then tell the audience what you have just told them (by summarizing the key points, concluding with the main subject again).

Work on the main content first.
From your notes decide on the most important things that need to be said. If you have too much material, be selective.
As a guide:
- 1-3 key points are sufficient for a 3-5 minute presentation.

Arrange the key points in logical order and expand them with supporting material. If you are hoping to persuade people then it is advisable to address potential objections within the presentation so that you present a reasoned, well-balanced view.

Decide Whether to Illustrate
Most talks benefit from personal anecdotes, real-life situations or hypothetical examples to bring them to life. Use visual illustrations if anything requires expanding, clarifying or simplifying. Illustrations of any type should be relevant and fully explained. PowerPoint or other presentation software is often used to support a presentation, although care needs to be taken to ensure that this technology aids the presentation and does not detract from the main essence of your talk. Do not use visual aids or PowerPoint just for the sake of it or to show off your technological prowess, there is nothing more distracting than whizzy and pointless PowerPoint animations in a presentation.

Introduction and Conclusion
The introduction should give a preview of what you are going to say and should gain the attention of the listeners with a statement of purpose. Make it clear whether you wish to accept questions as they arise during the presentation, thereby breaking your flow and risk being side-tracked, or will invite questions at the end.
The conclusion should repeat the main points but this time try to use different words and summarise the main point and argument. End decisively, so that no-one is in any doubt that your presentation is finished. This is also the time to ask the audience whether they have any questions.

Writing Your Presentation

You should structure your presentation with an introduction, the main message or content, and a conclusion.   You should also aim to write a story that has maximum impact and one which conveys your message in a way that is easily understood by the target audience.   You might like to consider some standard presentation structures for inspiration.

Harnessing the Power of Three

In public speaking and rhetorical debate, as well as in much communication, three is the magic number. The brain finds it relatively easy to grasp three points at a time: people find three points, ideas or numbers, easier to understand and remember than four or more. You could therefore structure your presentation about the magic number of three.

For example, your presentation should have three main elements: the introduction, middle and conclusions. Within the main body of your presentation, divide your key message into three elements and then expand each of these points into three sub-points. If you are using a visual aid such as PowerPoint, limit the number of bullet points to three on each slide and expand on each of these as you go along.

What, Why, How?

You could try structuring your presentation by addressing the questions "What?", "Why?" and "How?" to communicate your message to the audience.

"What?" identifies the key message you wish to communicate. From the perspective of the audience, think about what is the benefit of your message. What will they gain, what can they do with the information, and what will the benefit be?

"Why?" addresses the next obvious question that arises in the audience. Having been told "what", the audience will naturally then start to think "why should I do that?", "why should I think that?" or "why should that be the case?" Directly addressing the "why?" question in the next stage of your presentation means that you are answering these questions and your talk is following what the audience perceives as a natural route through the material. The result is that you have the audience on your side immediately.

"How?" is also the next question that naturally arises in the audience's mind: how are they going to achieve what you have just suggested. Try not to be too prescriptive here so, instead of telling people exactly how they **should** act on your message, offer suggestions as to how they **can** act.

You should also finish by proving what you have just said: **providing evidence** that what you have just said is beyond dispute using either case studies, personal examples or statistics.

Editing Your Content

Once you have a first draft of your presentation, it is important to review and edit this.

When editing presentation content, you should consider the following:

1. Ensure that the language you use is appropriate for the audience. Are there any terms they may not be familiar with? If so use more familiar terms or explain the meaning.
2. Is your language presentation friendly? Presentations are spoken and so choose to use accessible and easily-understood words (such as those you would use in a conversation) rather than technical or obscure words.
3. Eliminate long sentences. Remember that you will be talking through your ideas and that the audience will be listening rather than reading. Therefore keep sentences short, and their structure, simple to ease the audience's understanding.
4. Use metaphors to aid understanding and retention.
5. Identify ways of grabbing the audience's attention. Are there additional visual materials that you could include to illustrate your key points?
6. Check, and double check, that any presentation slides or illustrations, titles, captions, handouts or similar are free from spelling mistakes.

Working with Visual Aids (like PowerPoint)

If visual aids are used well they will enhance a presentation by adding impact and strengthening audience involvement, yet if they are managed badly they can ruin a presentation.

Before you start, ask yourself: What is the purpose of the visual aid?
- To clarify a key point?
- To provide an illustrative example?
- To clarify or simplify a model?
- To summarize?
- To entertain?

Video
Videos are excellent for training purposes, but can be difficult to fit into a presentation structure. Videos can also be built into a presentation using PowerPoint or other presentation software.

PowerPoint
Use of PowerPoint and other presentation software is very common when presenting today. Care should be taken, however, that visual effects do not detract from the presentation itself. If you do choose to use PowerPoint ensure you have a practice run well in advance of a presentation so that you are confident when giving the presentation itself.

Handouts
Handouts summarizing or including the main points of a presentation are an excellent addition but must be relevant. Presentation software packages such as PowerPoint can automatically generate handouts from your presentation slides.

However, think carefully about when to distribute your handouts. Giving out handouts at the start of a talk will take time and the audience may start to read these rather than listen to what the speaker is saying. However, if your presentation contains complex graphs or charts, the audience will appreciate receiving the handout before the presentation starts since they may find it easier to view these on paper than on the projection screen. The audience may also appreciate being able to make their own notes on the printed handout during the presentation.

Consider the best time and method to distribute any handouts, including either placing them on seats prior to the start or giving them out at the end of your presentation. You may also consider emailing copies of handouts to participants after the event. If your talk includes questions or discussion this will give to time to summarize this and communicate it back to the attendees.