

# Master Your Meetings

A Guide to Club Quality





**TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL**

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# Missions, Values, and Promises

## Toastmasters

### International Mission

We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.

## District Mission

We build new clubs and support all clubs in achieving excellence.

## Club Mission

We provide a supportive and positive learning experience in which members are empowered to develop communication and leadership skills, resulting in greater self-confidence and personal growth.

## Toastmasters International Core Values

- ▶ Integrity
- ▶ Respect
- ▶ Service
- ▶ Excellence

## Toastmasters International Brand Promise

Empowering individuals through personal and professional development.

This is the promise Toastmasters International makes to club members. Once we have reached this goal consistently, through all clubs across the globe, we will have achieved club excellence.

## A Toastmaster's Promise

As a member of Toastmasters International and my club, I promise

- ▶ To attend club meetings regularly
- ▶ To prepare all of my projects to the best of my ability, basing them on the Toastmasters education program
- ▶ To prepare for and fulfill meeting assignments
- ▶ To provide fellow members with helpful, constructive evaluations
- ▶ To help the club maintain the positive, friendly environment necessary for all members to learn and grow
- ▶ To serve my club as an officer when called upon to do so
- ▶ To treat my fellow club members and our guests with respect and courtesy
- ▶ To bring guests to club meetings so they can see the benefits Toastmasters membership offers
- ▶ To adhere to the guidelines and rules for all Toastmasters education and recognition programs
- ▶ To act within Toastmasters' core values of integrity, respect, service, and excellence during the conduct of all Toastmasters activities

# Introduction



A successful Toastmasters club is much like a successful business: The member is the customer, and the club strives to keep the customer happy with the service it provides. In this case, the service is the club meeting. Make special efforts to ensure each meeting helps members in their self-development efforts and is enjoyable and exciting.

In successful club meetings:

- ▶ The meeting begins and ends on time.
- ▶ All meeting participants arrive on time and are prepared.
- ▶ Members and guests alike are greeted as they arrive, helping them feel welcome.
- ▶ The program is fast-paced, interesting, and fun.
- ▶ Transitions between segments are smooth.
- ▶ All members present have an opportunity to participate.
- ▶ Evaluations are helpful, constructive, and contribute to members' personal growth and improvement.
- ▶ Members' achievements are recognized.
- ▶ Members are enthusiastic and are enjoying themselves, and it shows.

Many other factors contribute to the success of a club meeting. One of the most important factors is high club standards. During meetings, your club should demonstrate a number of characteristics, activities, and

behaviors which ensure that quality meetings are regular occurrences. These standards are discussed later in this manual.

Quality club meetings happen when all members are committed to the club and its purpose, and all officers and program participants know and fulfill their responsibilities.

## How This Manual Can Help

This manual contains the information needed to conduct a quality club meeting. In it you will find:

- ▶ How to create the right environment.
- ▶ The elements of a club meeting.
- ▶ The standards for club meetings.
- ▶ The roles of club officers.
- ▶ Program ideas.
- ▶ Tools and resources available to help your club be the best it can be.

This manual can benefit your club, whether it is newly chartered or celebrating its 10th anniversary. You will pick up many tips on how to improve your meetings, and you may even develop some ideas of your own. Throughout the manual are references to other helpful materials. These materials may be ordered from the online store at [www.toastmasters.org/Shop](http://www.toastmasters.org/Shop).

# Creating the Right Environment

Club environment plays a major role in attracting new members, keeping current ones, and in how much and what members learn. Your club must provide a positive, encouraging, and supportive environment in which to conduct the Toastmasters education program. Let us consider some things that directly or indirectly affect your club's environment and people's willingness to join and participate in the club.

## Treatment of Guests

Every club member should greet guests as they arrive at each meeting. Make sure each guest sits next to a member who can explain the meeting events as they happen. Ask your guest why they chose to visit the club and then explain how being a member will help them achieve their specific goals. Find out more about your guest, their job, hobbies, family, etc. and explain how the club operates. Pay special attention to guests who arrive alone and do not know anyone in the club.

Some clubs invite guests to participate in Table Topics® or to comment on the meeting as it draws to a close. Ask the guest before the meeting begins, privately, if they would like to participate in Table Topics and/or offer comments on the meeting. If the guest declines, respect their wishes. Never force guests to speak or embarrass them in any way. If your club maintains a guest book, remember to ask the guest to sign before they leave so that the club can follow up with them after the meeting to see how their experience was and to see if they have any other questions.

## Treatment of Members

Proper treatment of members is just as important as proper treatment of guests. All members should greet one another upon arrival at the meeting, paying special attention to new members, and treat one another with respect and courtesy. Every club is a community where every member is important and their voice counts, especially while conducting club business. No one should ever feel left out or be treated rudely.

## Attitude

Members' attitudes also play a key role in providing the proper environment. Everyone must realize that members joined the club to learn; they learn through practice and practical experience and from one another. Members serve as role models for others. This means everyone should strive to do their best at each meeting and to support and encourage one another.

## Physical Setting

Every club should strive to make a favorable impression upon everyone each time it meets. The meeting location should be pleasant, comfortable, neat, and clean. The room should be set up in a professional manner before members arrive, with agendas at each place. A table should be placed near the door to display manuals, a guest book, brochures, membership applications, and newsletters that members may find of interest. The **club banner** should be displayed at the front of the room.

All of these demonstrate pride in the club and create a good impression for each person who enters the room.

## **Accommodating Individuals with Disabilities**

As you select a venue and prepare for your events, be sure to provide appropriate accommodations for people with disabilities. Legal compliance in any context can seem like a scary thing to have to tackle, but most members with disabilities will be happy to help you understand their needs, and will be grateful for the accommodation. As in all things, communication is key: reach out to your guests prior to the event to determine any special needs that may be present, and incorporate those needs into your choice of venue. Remember, it is your responsibility to put on the best event possible for all your guests, and to ensure that everyone walks away having had a positive experience.

Some key areas to note, hotels should be barrier-free in all areas accessed by the public. Any person with a disability has the right to reasonable accommodations to allow them to participate as fully at conferences or other types of events. As you plan an event, it is your responsibility to ensure the selected venue complies with applicable laws in your jurisdiction related to accommodations for people with disabilities. See Policy and Protocol, **Protocol 2.0: Club and Membership Eligibility**, Section 2. Members with Disabilities.

Additionally, steps should be taken to ensure that your meeting space is free of potential safety hazards, before, during, and after meetings. Check your meeting space in advance for spills, sharp edges, electrical wiring, and other hazards; keep an up-to-date first-aid kit, or know where your facility keeps one; and review any safety or evacuation protocols for the meeting location, to ensure that you are prepared in the event of an emergency. You may wish to consider designating a particular member of your club—most frequently, the Sergeant at Arms—as the safety officer responsible for overseeing these items.

Proper care and attention to the meeting space demonstrates not only pride in the club, but also consideration for both members and guests—an invaluable element towards creating a good impression of the club and the organization it represents.

# The Meeting

The Toastmasters club meeting serves as the vehicle through which members become better speakers, listeners, thinkers, and leaders. Meetings are comprised of three basic parts.

## 1. Prepared speeches

During this portion of the meeting, several Toastmasters present speeches based on projects in the education program. (Note: Every speech presented during a club meeting should be based on a project, because the projects provide valuable guidance in preparing and presenting speeches.) At least two speakers should be scheduled; this may be more depending on the meeting program and length of the meeting.

## 2. Evaluations

Each prepared speech is orally evaluated by a fellow Toastmaster in a helpful, constructive manner using the applicable evaluation criteria. In addition, the evaluator prepares a written **evaluation** for the speaker, and all members are invited to submit written comments to the speaker, too.

## 3. Table Topics®

In this segment, members not otherwise scheduled as program participants have an opportunity to present one-to-two-minute impromptu talks.

Whether a club schedules this at every regular club meeting or outside the club meeting all clubs must conduct a business meeting at least once each month to handle club affairs. The business meeting provides an opportunity for members to practice parliamentary procedure and leadership skills.

The order in which these segments are conducted may vary. Some clubs conduct the business meeting first; others conduct it last. Some clubs conduct Table Topics before the prepared speakers give their presentations; others conduct Table Topics afterward. Whichever way works best for the club.

The duration of each portion may vary, depending on the meeting length. Some clubs meet for one hour or less, some clubs meet for 90 minutes, other clubs meet for two or more hours. But one thing is certain: each meeting should always begin and end on time.

## Sample Agenda for a 90-Minute Club Meeting

Time	Activity
0:00	<p><b>Presiding Officer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Call meeting to order</li><li>▶ Introduce member opening the club meeting or giving thought for the day (optional)</li></ul> <p><b>Member</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Open club meeting or give thought for the day (optional)</li></ul>
0:20	<p><b>Topicsmaster</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Explain Table Topics</li><li>▶ Conduct Table Topics session</li><li>▶ Call for timer's report</li><li>▶ Call for vote for Best Table Topics Speaker (optional)</li><li>▶ Return control to presiding officer</li></ul>
0:40	<p><b>INTERMISSION</b></p>
0:45	<p><b>Toastmaster</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Introduce Speaker 1 (speaker gives speech)</li><li>▶ Instruct members to give written feedback to speaker</li><li>▶ Introduce Speaker 2 (speaker gives speech)</li><li>▶ Instruct members to give written feedback to speaker</li><li>▶ Introduce Speaker 3 (speaker gives speech)</li><li>▶ Instruct members to give written feedback to speaker</li><li>▶ Call for timer's report</li><li>▶ Call for vote for Best Speaker (optional)</li></ul>
0:05	<p><b>Presiding Officer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Welcome guests</li><li>▶ Review minutes from previous meeting and vote to approve (if quorum is met)</li><li>▶ Conduct business meeting (if quorum is met)</li><li>▶ Call for reports:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Club Secretary's report</li><li>■ Club Treasurer's report</li><li>■ Other officers' reports</li><li>■ Unfinished business</li><li>■ New business</li></ul></li><li>▶ Introduce Toastmaster</li></ul>
1:08	<p><b>General Evaluator</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Call for reports:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Speech evaluators' reports</li><li>■ Timer's report</li><li>■ Vote for Best Evaluator (optional)</li><li>■ Grammatician's report</li><li>■ Ah-Counter's report</li></ul></li><li>▶ Make general comments on meeting</li><li>▶ Return control to Toastmaster</li></ul>
0:15	<p><b>Toastmaster</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Make opening remarks</li><li>▶ Identify meeting roles and ask for brief explanations of their duties:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Topicsmaster</li><li>■ General Evaluator</li><li>■ Evaluators</li><li>■ Grammatician</li><li>■ Ah-Counter</li><li>■ Timer</li></ul></li><li>▶ Introduce Topicsmaster</li></ul>
1:20	<p><b>Toastmaster</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Present awards (optional)</li><li>▶ Return control to presiding officer</li></ul>
1:25	<p><b>Presiding Officer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Thank guests for attending</li><li>▶ Make closing comments/announcements</li></ul>
1:30	<p><b>ADJOURN</b></p>

## Sample Agenda for a One-Hour Club Meeting

Time	Activity
00:00	<b>Presiding Officer</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Call meeting to order</li><li>▶ Opening of club meeting (optional)</li><li>▶ Welcome guests</li><li>▶ Introduce Toastmaster</li></ul>
00:05	<b>Toastmaster</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Make opening remarks</li><li>▶ Identify meeting roles and ask for brief explanations of their duties:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Topicsmaster</li><li>■ General Evaluator</li><li>■ Evaluators</li><li>■ Grammarian</li><li>■ Ah-Counter</li><li>■ Timer</li></ul></li></ul>
00:10	<b>Toastmaster</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Introduce Speaker 1 (speaker gives speech)</li><li>▶ Instruct members to give written feedback to speaker</li><li>▶ Introduce Speaker 2 (speaker gives speech)</li><li>▶ Instruct members to give written feedback to speaker</li><li>▶ Introduce Topicsmaster</li></ul>
00:26	<b>Topicsmaster</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Explain Table Topics</li><li>▶ Conduct Table Topics session</li><li>▶ Return control to Toastmaster</li></ul>
00:43	<b>Toastmaster</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Introduce General Evaluator</li></ul>
00:45	<b>General Evaluator</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Call for reports:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Speech evaluators' reports</li><li>■ Timer's report</li><li>■ Vote for Best Evaluator (optional)</li><li>■ Grammarian's report</li><li>■ Ah-Counter's report</li></ul></li><li>▶ Make general comments on meeting</li><li>▶ Return control to Toastmaster</li></ul>
00:55	<b>Toastmaster</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Present awards (optional)</li><li>▶ Return control to presiding officer</li></ul>
00:57	<b>Presiding Officer</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Thank guests for attending</li><li>▶ Make closing comments/announcements</li></ul>
01:00	<b>ADJOURN</b>

## Opening Club Meetings

There are many different ways you can open a club meeting and resources to help you do so, for instance; some of the more popular ways are **invocations and pledges**. They are usually one or two minutes in length, delivered by a designated club member, and are entirely optional. If your club chooses to open a meeting with an invocation or pledge, always take care to respect the diversity of cultures and religions in the audience.

The decision to open club meetings with an invocation or pledge is made by majority vote at a club business meeting, with a majority of active members present. Club leaders are responsible for arranging and abiding by this vote. Some clubs start their meetings by reading the Toastmaster's Promise, while other clubs invite a member to read aloud the Club Mission statement.

## Lectern Etiquette

A lectern is an important part of the **club**. The lectern should be placed at the front of the meeting room where it can be seen by all.

Generally, the only meeting **participants** who speak from the lectern are the presiding officer, Toastmaster, Topicsmaster, speakers, general evaluator, and the person giving the invocation. Others, such as the timer, grammarian, Ah-Counter, and Table Topics® speakers, usually rise and stand by their chairs when called upon to speak.

Someone should always be at the lectern during the meeting. For example, when the Toastmaster introduces a prepared speaker, they should give the introduction and wait for the speaker to arrive at the lectern before taking their seat. In addition, club members should remain clapping during lectern transitions until the participant reaches the lectern and shakes hands with whomever is currently there.

Speakers making presentations are not required to stand behind the lectern while speaking. They are free to move about the front of the room as they speak if they wish.

## Buzzers and Bells

When speaking, people often use "crutch" words or sounds such as "ah," "um," "you know," "well," etc. that can be annoying to listeners. The Ah-Counter notes these words and sounds and helps the speaker become aware of them.

Some Toastmasters clubs sound a buzzer or bell whenever a speaker uses a crutch word or sound. Theoretically, by immediately making the speaker aware of the faux pas, the speaker will not make the mistake again.

In reality, bells and buzzers often have the opposite effect. It is suggested the Ah-Counter simply record the number and type of crutches used and report their use to the speaker. In this way, the speaker is aware of them, but is not frustrated, embarrassed, or humiliated. As time passes and the speaker becomes more comfortable, use of crutches decreases.

Some clubs also use buzzers or bells to notify the speaker that they have exceeded speaking time. These, too, can frustrate novice speakers. Timing lights accomplish the same purpose without causing distractions.

## The Importance of Preparation

Meeting participants who are prepared are essential to a club's success. When things are done at the last minute, or not at all, meeting quality suffers, and the club does not fulfill its purpose. Members do not learn as much and it is difficult for them to achieve their goals.

When everyone arrives early at the meeting prepared and the meeting room is ready, the meeting will start on time, proceed according to schedule, and end on time. The meeting will be the educational experience it is intended to be, and no one's time will be wasted.

# Moments of Truth

During meetings your club should demonstrate a number of characteristics, activities, and behaviors which ensure that successful meetings are regular occurrences. Following is a list of six important areas of your meeting as identified in the **Moments of Truth (290)**.

## 1. First Impressions

- ▶ Greet each guest at the door. Introduce the guest to officers and members.
- ▶ Give each guest a name tag. Ask the guest to sign the guest book.
- ▶ Set up a professional-looking meeting room.
- ▶ Ensure the meeting location is conveniently located, accessible, and the meeting room is clearly marked.
- ▶ Encourage guests to participate in the meeting and to comment on their experience at the end.
- ▶ Invite guests to join the club on the day they visit.

## 2. Membership Orientation

- ▶ Induct new members formally and provide a membership pin and certificate
- ▶ Assign a mentor for one-on-one assistance. If you have members who have completed the Pathways Mentor program, assign them first.
- ▶ Discuss how the educational program helps develop speaking and leadership skills.
- ▶ Survey all new members' learning needs.
- ▶ Assign a speaking role for the new member as soon as possible.
- ▶ Continue to make new members feel welcome and encourage their participation in meetings.

## 3. Fellowship, Variety, and Communication

- ▶ Members greet guests and make them feel welcome.
- ▶ The Vice President Education (VPE) regularly plans enjoyable, dynamic educational programs with exciting, thought-provoking themes with the help of the Toastmaster of the Day.
- ▶ The club enjoys regularly scheduled social events.
  - Encourage club members to participate in Area, District, and international events.
  - Promote and encourage inter-club events.
  - Issue a club newsletter regularly and maintain a website.

Be sure these ideals are promoted within your club. Periodically conduct the club self-evaluation **Moments of Truth (Item 290)** to identify opportunities to improve.

## 4. Program Planning and Meeting Organization

- ▶ Publicize the program and agenda in advance.
- ▶ Ensure all members know their responsibilities for each meeting and are prepared to carry out all assignments.
- ▶ All speaking and leadership projects are from Toastmasters Pathways learning experience.
- ▶ Begin and end meetings on time.
- ▶ Feature creative Table Topics® and exciting meeting themes.
- ▶ Base positive, helpful evaluations upon project objectives and speakers' learning goals.
- ▶ Ensure that your club's meeting location and contact details are up to date on **Club Central**.

## 5. Membership Strength

- ▶ Maintain a minimum of 20 or more members.
- ▶ Work to retain members.
- ▶ Actively promote your club in the community or within the sponsoring organization.
- ▶ Continually plan varied and exciting club meetings.
- ▶ Recognize Toastmasters who sponsor new, dual, or reinstating members.
- ▶ Participate regularly in **membership-building programs**.

## 6. Achievement Recognition

- ▶ Send award applications to World Headquarters or apply for awards online immediately in Club Central when members complete educational requirements.
- ▶ Maintain and post member **progress charts** at every meeting.
- ▶ Formally recognize member achievements, including those that are created by the club.
- ▶ Recognize club, District, and international leaders.
- ▶ Publicize member and club achievements.
- ▶ Use the **Distinguished Club Program (DCP)** for planning and recognition.

# Club Officer Roles

Good club meetings begin with the club officers. When the Club President, Vice President Education, Vice President Membership, Vice President Public Relations, Club Secretary, Club Treasurer, and Sergeant at Arms know their roles and fulfill their responsibilities, it shows in the club meeting. Club officers establish the goals and ideals for club meetings and they act as role models for other members.

Much of the officers' work is done outside of the club meeting; some is done immediately before the meeting begins, during the meeting itself, and immediately after the meeting. The following are explanations of each club officer's duties for each club meeting. Of course, officers have other duties that are important to the club's success; for more information on club officers' responsibilities, see [www.toastmasters.org/ClubOfficers](http://www.toastmasters.org/ClubOfficers) or the *Club Leadership Handbook* (Item 1310).

## President

The office of Club President is the most important office in the club. The Club President provides the leadership and guidance the club needs to be successful and makes sure the club supplies the positive, supportive environment its members need to fulfill their self-development goals. The Club President leads each club meeting, and sets the tone and pace of the meeting.

If you are holding an online meeting, the Club President should coordinate with the other club officers to open the meeting prior to the scheduled time. This will allow members the opportunity to welcome guests prior to the start of the meeting.

## Before the Meeting

- ▶ Ask the Vice President Education if any members are to receive special recognition at the meeting.
- ▶ Ask the Vice President Membership if any new members are to be inducted at the meeting.
- ▶ Plan the business portion of the meeting.
- ▶ Review necessary parliamentary procedure.

## Upon Arrival at the Meeting

- ▶ Review the meeting agenda.
- ▶ Greet guests and members as they arrive to help them feel welcome.

## During the Meeting

- ▶ Call the meeting to order promptly at the scheduled time.
- ▶ Introduce guests.
- ▶ Briefly explain the meeting's events for the benefit of guests.
- ▶ Introduce the Toastmaster of the meeting.
- ▶ Conduct the business portion of meeting.
- ▶ Give the date, time, and place of the next meeting.
- ▶ Make any announcements.
- ▶ Adjourn the meeting on time.

## Vice President Education

The Vice President Education (VPE) has overall responsibility for club meeting programs. The Vice President Education plans all regular and special club meetings and other special events. The Vice President Education has the primary responsibility as Base Camp manager. At the beginning of the office term, the Vice President Education prepares a meeting schedule to plan meetings for the rest of the term. Have your current Vice President Education check with the outgoing VPE to see if they have a template that has been used in the past. The Vice President Education should be mindful when scheduling meetings around holidays, but to not forget these special occasions can also be the basis for a fun theme for a club meeting.

**When conducting online meetings, it is important that the same care and attention is given as if it was an in person meeting.**

- ▶ Having an agenda
- ▶ Ensuring speakers are present
- ▶ Confirming that all meeting roles are filled
- ▶ Messaging guests individually and asking if they are willing to participate or would prefer to observe

When onboarding new members, use the **New Member Orientation** page for helpful resources and a PowerPoint presentation that can be customized for your member.

## Before the Meeting

- ▶ Schedule meeting assignments at least three weeks in advance and distribute the schedule to all members.
- ▶ Schedule alternates for each meeting (these people should be prepared to fill in should a scheduled participant be unable to attend) OR remind members who cannot fulfill meeting responsibilities that they must find their own replacements.
- ▶ Have extra **evaluation forms** on hand in case they are needed.
- ▶ Send out program assignment notices to participants one week before the meeting to remind them of their duties.
- ▶ Check to see if any members achieved milestones in the education program or received other recognition that should be mentioned at the meeting. If members are to be recognized, write down their names and accomplishments to give to the Club President at the meeting.
- ▶ Contact the Toastmaster of the meeting several days beforehand and review the meeting agenda.
- ▶ Check Base Camp as a Base Camp manager on a daily basis to approve completed levels as needed.

## Upon Arrival at the Meeting

- ▶ Verify that the members assigned to meeting roles have arrived and are prepared to perform their duties.
- ▶ Remind members with meeting roles to select an evaluator for their project.
- ▶ Assist the Toastmaster in filling meeting roles for absent members.
- ▶ Greet guests by asking them if they are willing to participate in the meeting or if they would prefer to observe.
- ▶ If guests agree to participate, inform the Topicsmaster that they can call on those guests as Table Topics speakers and ask the Club President to introduce the guests at the beginning of the meeting.

## **During Club Meetings**

- ▶ Ask members if anyone is waiting to have a level completion verified on Base Camp.
- ▶ Recognize members when they reach educational achievements.
- ▶ Preside over the meeting when the Club President is absent.
- ▶ Answer member questions about the Toastmasters education program or speech contests and agree to research questions you do not know the answers to.

## **After the Meeting**

- ▶ Review, approve, and submit completion of educational achievements.
- ▶ Meet with guests to answer questions about the meeting and the Toastmasters education program.
- ▶ Collect any **Project Completion Forms**. (This is rare. For more information on project completion forms, refer to the Base Camp manager tutorials on Base Camp).
- ▶ Visit Base Camp as a member to award any badges to members in your club.
- ▶ Visit Base Camp as a manager to confirm any completions that might need your attention.
- ▶ If able, leave feedback for the day's speakers, the Toastmaster of the Day, Topicsmaster, grammarian, evaluators, and any other member contributing to the meeting.

## **Vice President Membership**

The Vice President Membership is responsible for bringing new members into the club and ensuring that the club always has a minimum of 20 members. New members add to the club's roster to minimize the effects of normal membership turnover and they provide the club with a continuous flow of fresh, new ideas and personalities. The Vice President Membership also makes sure that all members are satisfied with the club and works with the Vice President Education to keep meetings diverse, entertaining, and educational.

## **Before the Meeting**

- ▶ Make a list of the new members who have joined the club since the last meeting and contact the Club President to coordinate an induction ceremony at the next meeting.
- ▶ Make **Guest Packets** to distribute to guests at the meeting.
- ▶ Contact former guests who have not joined and members who have not been attending recent meetings and gently persuade and encourage them to come to the next club meeting.
- ▶ If applicable, prepare a report on the club's membership, including an update on the club's own membership-building program or the **Toastmasters International membership-building programs** for clubs. Share **who** has brought in new, dual, or reinstating members and how many members have joined, etc.

In addition to any other materials you may share with prospective members, the **digital guest packet** is also available on our website to teach them more about the organization and how it can help them grow.

## **Upon Arrival at the Meeting**

- ▶ Greet all guests and members at the door and welcome them to the meeting.
- ▶ Provide all guests with **Guest Packets**.
- ▶ Answer any questions guests may have about the club.

## **During the Meeting**

- ▶ Report on the club's membership and encourage all members to bring guests to meetings. If the club has a membership-building program, you would report on its progress. (if 90 minute meeting)

## **After the Meeting**

- ▶ Meet with guests to answer questions and explain the benefits of Toastmasters.
- ▶ Invite guests to join the club or to attend another club meeting if they are hesitant to join.
- ▶ Help guests who do wish to join to complete the **Membership Application** ([www.toastmasters.org/MembershipApps](http://www.toastmasters.org/MembershipApps)).

## **Vice President Public Relations**

While the Vice President Membership is responsible for persuading guests to join the club, the Vice President Public Relations is responsible for attracting guests to the meeting through publicity, social media, and public relations. They are also responsible for keeping club members informed of happenings in the club by producing a club newsletter or establishing and maintaining a club website.

One of the Vice President Public Relations' most significant responsibilities is to ensure access to the online meeting platform is readily available for guests.

## **Before the Meeting**

- ▶ Verify that the club's themes, meeting times, and location are current for the following week.
- ▶ Order promotional materials for distribution by members at [www.toastmasters.org/Marketing](http://www.toastmasters.org/Marketing).
- ▶ Review the free marketing resources available in the **Resource Library**.
- ▶ Prepare a public relations report to present to the club at the meeting. The report should include when the next club newsletter or other communication will be available and deadlines for submitting articles. It also should include information about any publicity your club has received recently as well as other public relations activities.

## **Upon Arrival at the Meeting**

- ▶ Greet all members and guests as they arrive and help them feel welcome.

## **During the Meeting**

- ▶ Provide promotional materials to members for distribution at their workplace, school, social media, etc.
- ▶ Report the results of public relations efforts, bringing newspaper clippings, printouts, social media posts, and so on to share with the club.
- ▶ Announce the commencement of public relations campaigns.

## **Secretary**

The Club Secretary is responsible for keeping clear and accurate records of club meetings and club business, including membership records and correspondence.

### **Before the Meeting**

- ▶ Post the minutes of the previous club meeting online and notify club members that the minutes are available for review.
- ▶ Prepare for the President a list of actions to be taken during the business meeting, including unfinished business, announcements, and correspondence.
- ▶ Order supplies for the club, as needed.

### **Upon Arrival at the Meeting**

- ▶ Greet all members and guests as they arrive and help them feel welcome.
- ▶ Circulate the club's attendance sheet and **Guest Book (Item 84)** for members and guests to sign.

### **During the Meeting**

- ▶ Read the minutes of the previous meeting, note any amendments, and record the minutes of the current meeting.

## **Treasurer**

The Club Treasurer keeps clear and accurate financial records of club business and ensures the club remains financially stable.

### **Before the Meeting**

- ▶ Prepare a financial report as necessary to be presented at the meeting.

### **Upon Arrival at the Meeting**

- ▶ Collect any payable dues and fees from members.
- ▶ Submit payments to World Headquarters for new member fees, dues payments, and supply orders for the club.
- ▶ Greet all guests and members as they arrive and help them feel welcome.

### **During the Meeting**

- ▶ Collect any payable membership dues and fees from members.
- ▶ Present the club financial report when necessary.

## **Sergeant at Arms**

The Sergeant at Arms maintains all club materials and equipment between meetings, arranges the room and equipment for the meeting, welcomes all guests and members to the meeting, and, in some clubs, collects and tallies votes for Best Speaker, Best Evaluator, etc.

In the online environment, the Sergeant at Arms can act as the moderator for the meetings. This will allow them to set the expectations at the beginning of the meetings to ensure they are conducted with the professional atmosphere of a Toastmasters club meeting.

## **Before the Meeting**

- ▶ Confirm meeting room reservations a few days before the meeting, and act as a liaison between the club and the meeting room management.
- ▶ Check to see that plenty of supplies are on hand, such as **Ballots and Brief Evaluations**, name badges, **Guest Packets**, **Member Welcome Kits**, pens and paper, etc.

## **Upon Arrival at the Meeting**

- ▶ Arrange the meeting room and equipment at least 30 minutes before the meeting is to begin, placing tables and chairs appropriately, so the meeting will be able to start on time.
- ▶ Set out the lectern, gavel, club banner, national flag (optional), timing lights and/or cards, ballots, trophies, ribbons, buttons, and club charter certificate.
- ▶ Place a table near the door to display promotional brochures, name tags, guest book, and educational materials such as manuals, club newsletters, the *Toastmaster magazine*, etc., for members to see.
- ▶ Check room temperature and adjust the thermostat if the room is too hot or too cold.
- ▶ Greet all guests and members as they arrive and help them feel welcome.
- ▶ Arrange for new members and guests to sit with experienced members who can answer any questions they may have during the meeting.
- ▶ Have all guests sign the **Guest Book (Item 84)** and give each a name tag to wear during the meeting.

## **During the Meeting**

- ▶ Sit near the door to welcome late arrivals and help them be seated, prevent interruptions, and perform any necessary errands.
- ▶ Arrange for food service, if any. Collect payment for food service if applicable from members during a break or before the meeting. If coffee, tea, or water is available during the meeting, serve it to those in attendance to avoid having members moving around while someone is speaking.
- ▶ Collect ballots and tally votes for Best Speaker, Best Evaluator, etc., if the club has such awards. Give the results to the Toastmaster or personally announce them when called upon for the results.

## **After the Meeting**

- ▶ Return the room to its original configuration.
- ▶ Take inventory of club supplies to prepare for the next meeting.
- ▶ Pack up all club materials and store them in a safe place.
- ▶ Dispose of any stray items or trash.

# Quality Club Meetings

The proper environment, knowledgeable club officers, and meeting participants who are prepared to fulfill their responsibilities are all important aspects of a successful club. But several other factors contribute to a club's success, too.

## Quality Speeches

Members must be encouraged to present quality speeches—speeches that are well prepared and appropriate and that fulfill project objectives. Poorly prepared speeches do not benefit the speaker, the other club members, or the organization. When you see club members repeatedly giving poorly prepared speeches, speak up and explain the importance of quality speeches. Make your own speeches an example. In situations where you do not have enough speakers or your scheduled speaker cancels at the last minute, consider having a club officer present from the **Better Speakers Series, Successful Club Series, or Leadership Excellence Series**. Your goal is to ensure the time your members spend at the club meeting is a worthwhile investment.

## Evaluations

Evaluations are the most important part of the Toastmasters program. They are the means through which members improve their speaking and leadership skills. They also play a part in creating the positive environment the club needs for members to learn.

Every member must know how to evaluate effectively. Good evaluations point out a speaker's strengths and offer specific suggestions for improvement. Good evaluations are offered in a positive, supportive manner that helps the speaker maintain self-esteem. No evaluation should ever be harsh or negative or attack the speaker personally. A required project in Level 1 of Pathways is Evaluation and Feedback that will help each member become a more effective evaluator.

An evaluator should point out what the speaker did well and also point out the areas where the speaker could improve, with specific examples, as in a normal evaluation. If the club allows and the evaluator feels the speaker did not fulfill the project objective, they could in private, suggest the speaker repeat the project and explain why. However, the decision to repeat a project always rests with the speaker. Some additional resources that an evaluator can use are **Evaluate to Motivate** and **Effective Evaluation**.

## Meeting Roles

Toastmasters club meetings provide an opportunity for members to learn and practice communication and leadership skills by assuming a variety of roles. Each meeting role has a unique set of responsibilities and skills for you to explore. More information on the different meeting roles can be found in *A Toastmaster Wears Many Hats*.

- ▶ **Speaker** - Giving a prepared speech provides an excellent opportunity to practice your communication and leadership skills, including planning, organization, and time management.
- ▶ **Evaluator** - Serving as an evaluator of a speaker is an opportunity to practice leadership skills, including listening, critical thinking, providing feedback, and motivation.
- ▶ **Timer** - Members rely on the timer to pace speeches and practice adhering to a time frame. The timer is also responsible for tracking every part of the meeting agenda. The timer's role is fundamental to the success of every meeting.

- ▶ **Topicsmaster** - The Topicsmaster is responsible for preparing and issuing an original, creative topic or topics for Table Topics. Serving as Topicsmaster supports leadership skills including planning, preparation, organization, time management, and facilitation.
- ▶ **Table Topics Speaker** - Table Topics helps develop your ability to organize your thoughts quickly and respond to impromptu questions or topics.
- ▶ **General Evaluator** - The General Evaluator is the member who evaluates everything that takes place throughout the meeting. This role provides excellent practice in leadership skills such as critical thinking, planning, preparation, organization, time management, motivation, and team-building.
- ▶ **Toastmaster** - The main duties of the Toastmaster are to coordinate and conduct the entire meeting, introduce participants, and act as a genial host. The Toastmaster sets the tone for the meeting. Serving as Toastmaster is an excellent way to practice planning, preparation, organization, time management, facilitation, motivation, and team-building skills as you strive to make the meeting one of the club's best.
- ▶ **Grammarians** - The responsibilities of the grammarians are to introduce new words to members, comment on the language used during the course of the meeting, and to provide examples of good grammar and word usage.
- ▶ **Ah-Counter** - The purpose of the Ah-Counter is to note unnecessary words and sounds used by members who speak during the meeting. Serving in the Ah-Counter role provides an excellent opportunity to practice listening skills.
- ▶ **Introducer** - The role of introducer is not required, but it is found in many clubs. It is the responsibility of the introducer to develop an introduction for each speech and present it well to the club.

## Recognition

Positive reinforcement is important in helping members increase their self-confidence and self-esteem. When members feel good about themselves, they are encouraged to set new goals and try harder to achieve them.

That is why it is vital that your club provides time during its meeting for recognition of members' accomplishments. Members can be recognized for their Toastmasters accomplishments and for their personal and professional accomplishments, such as the following:

- ▶ Completing a milestone project in the education program.
- ▶ Sponsoring a new member.
- ▶ Appearing on a radio or television show.
- ▶ Receiving a promotion at work.
- ▶ Getting married or becoming a new parent.

Many clubs vote for and give awards at each meeting for Best Speaker, Best Evaluator, Best Table Topics Speaker, etc. These awards are optional for clubs, but they do provide recognition opportunities. In some clubs, only those who present project speeches are eligible for Best Speaker awards, and only those who do not speak beyond the allotted time qualify for Best Speaker, Best Evaluator, and Best Table Topics awards. **The Toastmasters Online Store** contains awards, such as ribbons, buttons, and certificates for your club's use.

Any recognition your club gives should be positive, and encouraging. It is not recommended to give awards for speaking too long or making mistakes as this can embarrass or demotivate members.

## Mentoring

Most new members join a club because they have problems and/or needs that relate to speaking and leadership. They believe that improving their speaking and leadership skills will help them advance in their career or offer them greater personal satisfaction. They expect the club to help them solve their problems and meet their needs. With the aid of a mentor, new members:

- ▶ Learn the program. Mentors help new members become familiar with the Toastmasters Pathways learning experience, club meeting roles, and opportunities available through membership.
- ▶ Learn club standards and customs. Mentors help new members learn about the club and its activities.
- ▶ Develop confidence. Armed with the knowledge mentors provide, new members' self-confidence increases.
- ▶ Participate more. Mentors help new members become familiar with and enjoy the club and its members. As a result, new members become more involved in club activities.
- ▶ Quickly learn speaking skills. Mentors familiarize new members with the resources available to them and coach them with their speeches, enabling the new members to advance faster.

If you have anyone that has completed the Pathways Mentor program, assign them as a mentor first. Those assigned as a mentor next should be experienced members and able to assist with Pathways and Base Camp.

## Club Programs

Lively, interesting, and productive club programs are essential to your club's success. Attending meetings with the same format week after week can become monotonous, and members are more likely to skip meetings or to stop attending altogether. Regularly plan special programs for meetings to provide new experiences and break the routine.

### Program Ideas

It is easy to produce fruitful, dynamic, and appealing programs with some brainstorming and imagination. Try these program ideas that other clubs have used successfully and remember that clubs are different. What works for one club, may not work for yours—and vice versa.

### Community Topics

Are your club members concerned about what goes on in their town or city? Would they like to have a better understanding of how and why decisions are made by local governing bodies? An educational program focusing on neighborhood issues encourages members to be more proactive in their communities.

Select issues that are currently a concern in your community; for example, schools, taxes, annexation, parks, or transportation. Have a town hall style discussion where you assign club members to prepare speeches that present their viewpoint on some of these issues.

Use the speeches as the basis for a club symposium. All members participate by asking questions.

### Club Improvement

If your club is having difficulty achieving or maintaining a standard of excellence, consider it an opportunity to grow and improve. As outlined in the **Moments of Truth**, diagnose the problem, put it into words, and turn to your club members for the solution.

Begin by determining which aspects of club operations you will explore. Some topics the club could discuss are:

- ▶ What I Expect from My Club
- ▶ Educational Programs
- ▶ The Business Meeting
- ▶ Speech Evaluation
- ▶ Parliamentary Sessions
- ▶ Our Membership-building Program

Ask a member to present a speech and lead a discussion on the chosen topic. Let the entire membership respond to what has been said by offering suggestions for improvement.

The speaker concludes the program by summarizing the discussion and stating the action agreed upon.

### **Debate the Issue**

Develop better listening, thinking, and speaking for participants and spectators alike by staging a debate.

Select and announce the proposition to be debated, assign participants for the opposing teams, and establish the timing and procedures to be followed. Speakers and listeners should review the **Debate Handbook (Item 104)**. Then select a pair of two-member teams to present the opposing sides of the proposition, using the following format:

#### **Constructive Speeches:**

Affirmative Speaker 1 Five minutes

Negative Speaker 1 Five minutes

Affirmative Speaker 2 Five minutes

Negative Speaker 2 Five minutes

#### **Cross-examination and Refutation:**

Negative Speaker 1 cross-examines Affirmative Speaker 1 Three minutes

Affirmative Speaker 2 cross-examines Negative Speaker 2 Three minutes

Negative Speaker 1 refutation and summary Three minutes

Affirmative Speaker 1 refutation and summary Three minutes

A debate requires more preparation than many other types of speech. Your club should undertake the project only if members are interested.

### **Meet the Media**

Think of the interview segments on any interview show. Then set up a format in which the speaker or speakers discuss a controversial subject and answer challenging questions from the interviewer or club audience. Interviews require members to know what message they want to furnish. Giving an interview is about more than just answering questions. Members need to know what their point is and work this message into their responses to the interviewer's questions.

## **Group Discussion**

Discussion groups provide an opportunity to improve listening, thinking, speaking, and leadership skills. Members can work together, or form small groups to discuss different phases of one main subject.

Announce the discussion topic and individual assignments in advance so members may prepare. If pre-meeting preparation is not practical, select a discussion topic which lends itself to impromptu speaking. Assign a chair and a reporter to each discussion group. The group chairs encourage group members to participate in a free and open discussion, but they also explain that each speaker is limited in the amount of time they may speak.

Some topics clubs can discuss are:

- ▶ Ways to publicize our club to other community members
- ▶ Activities and themes for club meetings
- ▶ Activities and themes for club parties
- ▶ Preparing for contests
- ▶ Speaking opportunities outside of Toastmasters

After the small group discussions conclude, the members reassemble and each reporter summarizes its group's discussion and reports its conclusions to the entire club. If appropriate, each discussion group's recommendation is assigned to the proper club committee for further planning and implementation.

A variation of this program would be that of an Advice Meeting. This type of meeting would begin with a member stating a problem (e.g., "My co-worker claims credit for my ideas. What should I do?"), followed by small group discussion and representatives reporting back to the group at large.

## **Performing Without Preparation**

An impromptu program—one in which participants perform without preparation—is educational, exciting, and challenging because it gives members experience in flexible thinking and adaptive speaking.

Only the Toastmaster of the meeting and the prepared speakers know their assignments in advance. Using index cards write one meeting assignment (i.e., Topicsmaster, Ah-Counter, etc.) on each card and distribute one card to every member just before the call to order. The presiding officer opens the meeting as usual, then the Toastmaster of the day conducts the meeting after they are introduced.

If the speaking portion of the meeting comes first, the Toastmaster calls the name of each speaker. Speakers' names and speech titles have been provided in advance. The Toastmaster of the meeting then calls on the Topicsmaster, and the member holding the Topicsmaster card rises and conducts that part of the meeting. Use this procedure for the rest of the meeting.

## **Grab Bag Meeting**

A variant of the impromptu meeting described is the grab bag meeting. Tell members to be prepared to take on any meeting role. Write down the names of each role on separate pieces of paper and place them in a bag. If you normally have two speakers, be sure to write down "speaker" twice. Also be sure to create as many pieces of paper as you need to account for all speech evaluators and leadership project evaluators. Have each participant draw a paper slip naming his or her assignment for that meeting.

Grab bag meetings are challenging and amusing. Moreover, grab bag meetings encourage planning, preparedness, and spontaneity—all excellent traits that Toastmasters should cultivate.

## **Video Recorded Programs**

One of the most effective ways for members to gain valuable feedback on their speaking skills is to record their presentations. Speech evaluators will find that playing back a video demonstrates the effectiveness of a speaker's hand gestures, poise, eye contact, speed of delivery, enunciation, and pitch.

Record the meeting's prepared speeches and replay portions of the recording during the evaluation of each speaker's performance. Or, if the majority of members prefer to view their presentations privately, the recordings can be sent to them individually.

Prior to scheduling this type of meeting ensure that everyone participating has signed and returned the [video release form](#).

## **Theme Programs**

A theme meeting provides program continuity and gives purpose and direction to the speakers.

When selecting a theme, strive for originality. The theme should be broad enough to permit the presentation of several interesting speeches and important enough to hold attention.

Following are some of the many topics around which you can build your meetings:

### **Historic Events**

Events that were the first or the last of their kind

Our community, state/province, or national history

Toastmasters International's history

How space exploration has affected modern life

Overlooked history

How historians will report today's events

### **Patriotic Occasions**

National ideals

Why our community (or nation) is great

How our community's (or nation's) greatness can be maintained and increased

Living a patriotic lifestyle

Patriots from the past

### **Business Activity**

Effective sales and marketing techniques

Attracting new business and industry to our community

Playing the stock market

Our computerized society

The price of progress

## **Civic Affairs**

Environmental improvements  
Opportunities for civic involvement  
Recreation in our community  
Our community needs a ...  
Intra-community communication

## **Seasonal Topics**

Holidays and traditions  
New Year's Day  
Independence Day  
Special days or weeks

## **International Issues**

Human rights  
Our nation's influence on ...  
Conflicts between nations  
World health concerns  
Political ideologies  
Impact of natural disasters on world economy

After selecting a theme, list as many topics as possible that relate to the theme. Choose those topics offering the greatest interest and the best speech treatment potential for theme-program talks.

Other tips to remember:

- ▶ Always assign speech topics at least two or three weeks in advance. This provides time for the speakers to prepare their talks.
- ▶ Coordinate your theme program plans with the member who serves as Toastmaster so they can facilitate the meeting with grace.
- ▶ Keep them interesting. Theme program speeches may be humorous, informative, educational, or descriptive, as long as they are interesting to the audience and offer speakers opportunities to develop their communication skills.

## More Themes

If your club is still looking for more ideas you can always ask your club members for suggestions. In choosing a theme remember to be sensitive to the cultural differences of your audience. Here are a few more themes to consider:

- ▶ **Here's to Your Health** - Maintaining an emotionally and physically healthy lifestyle is an important goal for everyone. Have scheduled speakers research health topics of their choice and the questions for Table Topics® can share this theme as well.
- ▶ **Celebrate Members' "Unbirthdays"** - Chances are that your club meetings do not always fall on members' birthdays. Why not set aside a meeting to celebrate everyone's "unbirthday" instead? Encourage your scheduled speakers to talk about birthday themes—a favorite birthday party, or what life was like in the year of their birth.
- ▶ **Have a Blast With the Past** - Scheduled speakers can impersonate a famous person from the past. Arrange 10–15 cards on the lectern, each bearing the name of a different famous person then ask participants to choose one of the famous people to impersonate.
- ▶ **People's Court** - Whether serving on a jury, testifying in court, or simply watching a famous trial on television, most of us will have some sort of contact with the judicial system. Speeches can be given about famous lawyers or famous trials.
- ▶ **Read All About It** - Reading and literature are worthy of their own meeting theme. Members can give speeches on literary themes such as great authors and memorable books.
- ▶ **Regarding Relationships** - Encourage everyone to bring a friend, relative, or co-worker, and to have a special introduction for their guest. The speech portion of the meeting should feature themes that underline the value of relationships in one's life.
- ▶ **New Places/New Faces** - Meetings with other clubs provide speaking experiences in new surroundings with new audiences and give members an opportunity to practice new ideas and techniques. Conduct joint club meetings regularly with several clubs in your community. Alternate between being the host club and the visiting club.
- ▶ **International Themes** - Build your Table Topics session around the culture, economy, and history of the countries of members' origin or of countries they have visited. Speakers may discuss the same country or each may discuss a different nation.

# Speech Contests

Speech contests are another way to add variety to your club meetings. In these contests, several members speak competitively and are judged by some of their fellow club members. Contests are fun, challenging, and educational.

Your club can conduct contests on its own, or it can conduct them in conjunction with District-sponsored contests. Districts will notify your club about these contests and provide a schedule. Information about how to conduct speech contests is in the *Speech Contest Rulebook (Item 1171)*.

Your club may also want to participate in the annual International Speech Contest, which is open to all members of districted clubs. The contest culminates at the international level, where finalists compete for the title of World Champion of Public Speaking. The contest is held each August during the International Convention.

Details appear in the *Speech Contest Rulebook (Item 1171)* and the **Leader Letter**, the newsletter for club officers.

The club also can present the *Speech Contest Judges Training (Item 1190A)* for members. Participants learn how to judge a speech and have the opportunity to practice what they have learned.

# Table Topics®

Table Topics provides members with an opportunity to gain experience and polish in impromptu speaking. Each program should be stimulating, provocative, and enjoyable. Table Topics is ineffective when the session is built around an obscure subject of limited interest or the questions are intended to stymie respondents.

Table Topics enhances educational programs by:

- ▶ Providing opportunities for members to respond when called upon unexpectedly.
- ▶ Helping members learn to present their thoughts concisely and effectively.
- ▶ Encouraging cooperative thinking through group discussion and debate.
- ▶ Helping members develop listening skills to encourage flexible thinking and adaptive speaking.
- ▶ Helping members express their knowledge of a subject in terms of what the audience needs to know.

## How It Works

Table Topics usually begins after the prepared speech presentations. The Topicsmaster presides over the program, which usually lasts 10–20 minutes. The Topicsmaster states the question or announces a topic and calls on several members, one at a time, who give impromptu one–two minute talks on the topic. Or the Topicsmaster may assign subjects individually.

By participating in Table Topics, members become more fluent. They learn to listen carefully and to relate their remarks to what previous speakers have said. They also draw on their own experiences or knowledge on the topic in relation to the needs and interests of those present.

## As Topicsmaster

A Table Topics session should not take more than 30 minutes. Avoid lengthy introductions of speakers and remarks on what they say. The task is to introduce topics and guide the discussion. Give all possible time to the members for their comments. Be sure to coordinate the Table Topics theme with the Toastmaster of the meeting.

Plan the introduction to the Table Topics session to take less than one minute. The purpose of Table Topics is to give all members not already scheduled on the program a chance to speak, not for the Topicsmaster to deliver a speech.

Provide each speaker with a topic that they know something about. Try not to embarrass the speaker. Only call on guests if they agreed earlier to participate.

When the program is concluded, summarize the main points that have been presented, or evaluate the total discussion. Avoid individual evaluation. When the summation has been completed (between one and two minutes), return control of the meeting to the Toastmaster.

Set a time limit of one minute, a minute and a half, or two minutes per speaker, depending on the available time in the meeting. Be sure to enforce the time limit.

## **Planning the Program**

Be creative when planning the Table Topics program. Prepare for it several days before the meeting; do not wait until the last minute. Following are some suggestions for programs that provide variety in many kinds of impromptu speaking, debate, and discussion.

- ▶ Community concerns or affairs
- ▶ Current news stories
- ▶ Build a narrative that stops abruptly, then ask each participant to continue the story.
- ▶ Bring a bowl of fortune cookies to the meeting. Have each participant select one, open it, read the fortune aloud, then discuss it.
- ▶ Ask each participant to review a movie or television show they have recently seen.

## **As the Speaker**

When called upon to speak during Table Topics, members should keep remarks brief and try to present sensible, worthwhile ideas that add to the knowledge of others. Comments should be appropriate to the trend of the general discussion, possibly refuting or elaborating on ideas and information already presented by other participants.

Members will be able to talk comfortably on virtually any subject—even those about which they know little—if they have several mental outlines to follow. Following are some outlines to remember:

1. Give an opinion, then justify it with two or three specific reasons. "It is important to keep your car well maintained because you will ensure a long life for your car, save money on costly repairs over time, and..."
2. State a problem and show its causes. "Last year, 15 people were killed in automobile accidents on a five-mile segment of Highway 25. This segment has long been dangerous because of its sharp curves and steep hills. Now new housing developments have increased traffic on the road..."
3. Offer a viewpoint and elaborate on it. "This weekend there were several events at the same park which caused a lot of congestion on the city streets around our neighborhood. It is time for the city council to design a better plan for scheduling..."
4. State a goal or problem, and tell what must be done to achieve that goal or solve that problem. "Our club's goal for this year will be to induct ten new members. Here is what each of us can do to help the club achieve this goal..."
5. Describe a process. "What happens when you telephone the volunteer fire department to report a fire? First, the firefighter answering the telephone records the information..."
6. Break a problem, situation, or object into its components and discuss them. "The Toastmasters organization is divided into Regions, Districts, and Areas. The Districts are responsible for..."

# Advanced Clubs

Advanced clubs are designed for members who are looking to build on their community club experience. Most advanced clubs expect their members to come in knowing the structure of a meeting, understanding how to give an excellent evaluation, and willing to receive constructive feedback. This knowledge allows advanced clubs to focus on higher level skills and more complex goals. Though the organization of an advanced club is up to the members, there are several things you might want to consider as you design your club.

## Setting Goals

Most members who choose to join an advanced club do so because they have an important goal in mind. It might be that they have reached a point in their public speaking journey that their regular club evaluations are not as helpful as they once were. They may feel that they need someone who can give them stronger feedback and not only recognize the areas where they can improve, but push them harder to make changes than evaluators in their regular club might be willing to do. It may be that they need evaluators who have as much or more experience than they do to evaluate them effectively.

They may have an important educational or leadership goal such as completing their Distinguished Toastmaster award (DTM) or developing the skills they need to advance at work that they can achieve more effectively in an advanced club.

Recognizing and fulfilling the goals of club members is an important component of advanced clubs.

## Mentoring

Mentoring is a powerful tool in all clubs and in advanced clubs in particular. When experienced Toastmasters come together, they bring a broader and more specific set of skills. Advanced clubs often include members who have held higher leadership roles in the organization, completed their DTM, or have spent years building speaking skills that have advanced them into a career as a speaker or into the World Championship of Public Speaking™.

When organizing an advanced club, it is important to draw out the skills and successes of all members and to direct those skills into mentoring relationships that are mutually beneficial and contribute to the overall success of the club.

## Meeting Structure

Though advanced clubs often run like traditional clubs, there might be some organizational decisions that look a little different. For example, some advanced clubs have separate meetings that include time to set goals, meet with mentors, or review feedback in a deeper and more complex way than in a regular club meeting. These separate meetings, or time set aside in a regular meeting, serve the needs of advanced club members better than they might be served in a regular club. An advanced club might decide to have a set schedule for speaking, or focus on a single speaker at each meeting.

The ability to organize meetings that focus on the success of members can make these clubs unique and more conducive to supporting the specific needs of their members.

However you and your fellow club members decide to organize your advanced club, the same core value of a safe space to learn is at the heart of all Toastmasters clubs.

# Tools for Success

## Item

- 84      **Guest Book**
- 104     *Debate Handbook*
- 163     **Ballots and Brief Evaluations**
- 200     *Chairman*  
A guide to chairing meetings and performing parliamentary procedure
- 202     *Effective Evaluation*
- 290     **Moments of Truth**
- 292     *Evaluate to Motivate*
- 322     **Club Banner**
- 375     **Gavel**
- 382     **Portable Lectern**
- 387     **Guest Packet**
- 800     **Membership Application**
- 1111    *Distinguished Club Program and Club Success Plan*
- 1167    **Member Welcome Kit**
- 1167D   *A Toastmaster Wears Many Hats*  
Tips for when you are the speaker, evaluator, Toastmaster, and other meeting roles
- 1171    *Speech Contest Rulebook*
- 1310    *Club Leadership Handbook*
- 1319    **Chat Pack**  
Pack contains 156 question cards to spark conversation for Table Topics®
- 8950    **Pathways Level Completion Verification**
- Club Sign In Sheet**
- Evaluation Resources**
- Leader Letter**
- Better Speakers Series**
- Leadership Excellence Series**
- Successful Club Series**
- Video Release**
- Visit [www.toastmasters.org/Shop](http://www.toastmasters.org/Shop) for prices and shipping costs.

# NOTES



[www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org)