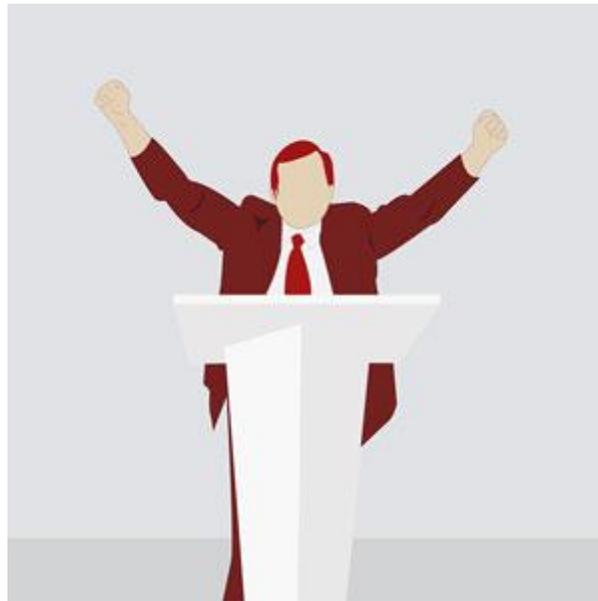


Putting On a Good Toastmasters Contest



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Contests are an enrichment of the Toastmasters experience. They enable contestants, participants, and those attending the event the opportunity to get beyond their individual clubs.

They can provide those Toastmasters not participating an opportunity to learn from more proficient speakers and evaluators.

As the contest chairman, you are responsible for ensuring that the contest is fair and equitable for all the contestants but also that it is a fun and enjoyable experience for all those in attendance. You, more than any other person, set the tone of the event. This all begins long before the contest begins.

There are two keys to putting on a good contest: preparation and communication. Preparation involves making sure you have the right location, the right people and the right materials. Communication involves ensuring that all those involved understand their roles and responsibilities.

This guide is to help you plan, organize and conduct a well-run contest. We will first discuss different aspects of planning for the event and then how to conduct the contest. The advice contained in this guide has been gleaned from the experience of conducting and attending numerous contests and observing what worked well and what didn't.

BACKGROUND

Toastmasters contests are conducted twice each year. Two contests are conducted during each of these periods, though which two are conducted during each period may vary depending on the District. In District 39, the contests conducted during the Fall are the Humorous Speech and Table Topics contests. In the Spring, the District conducts the International Speech and Evaluation contests. Most often, particularly at the Club, Area and Division levels, the two contests are conducted during the same event.

There are two basic formats for a contest in relation to who emcees the event. One format is for the contest chairman to act as the Toastmaster for both contests. This format is frequently used at the Club level. The other format is to have one or two Contest Toastmasters. This format works especially well for Area and Division contests. Having a Contest Toastmaster to oversee each contest frees up the chairman to tend to any issues that may arise during the contest.

PREPARATION

Timeline

One-to-two months before

** Select a date*

The date for the contest should be selected as early as possible. It is possible to select the date several months in advance as each contest level falls within a certain month. For example, during the Fall contest season, the Club contests take place during August, the Area contests during September, the Division contests during October and the District contest in November. During the Spring contest season, the club contests are conducted during February, the Area contests during March, the Division contests during April and the District contest in May.

When selecting the date for the contest, you should coordinate with other Clubs, Areas and Divisions. Club contests are usually held during a regular meeting time. However, should it be necessary to hold a special contest event, the date chosen should not conflict with the meeting time of another club in the Area. Likewise, for an Area contest, the contest should not conflict with the meeting time of a club within that Area, unless the club volunteers to host the event in place of their regular meeting. The Area contest should also not conflict with that of another Area within the same Division. Division Contest dates are set by the District. The District should approve any changes to the date for a Division contest in advance.

** Select a location*

There are several things that need to be considered when selecting a location. For an Area or Division contest, the location should be central to the Area or Division or should be easily found. It also must be large enough to seat the expected attendance. The speaking area should also be relatively open and free from too many constraints. There should be room for adequate separation between the speakers and the audience.

The average Area Contest has 30 to 40 guests. The average Division Contest has 50 to 60 guests or more depending on the Division. Your space should have adequate seating as well as areas for the food and a table for announcements and the chief judge.

The Table Topics and Evaluation contests require an additional area removed from the actual room in which the contest will be held, at which the contestants can be sequestered. This location should be indoors and relatively free of distractions. This is especially important for the Evaluation contest. These contestants should be provided with a place to sit down in order to prepare their evaluations.

It is recommended that refreshments be provided either prior to the contest or during an intermission between the contests. Therefore, you will need to confirm whether food will be allowed, if they don't serve food at the location.

** Establish a Committee*

This is not an individual effort. You will need a team to support the program. One means of getting volunteers is to identify people looking to complete an HPL or CL. Leading this project qualifies for one of those projects if done correctly. HPL requires more tracking and prework. Acting as contest chair could qualify for the HPL. CL project number 6 or 10 require less prework and acting as a committee chair can qualify for CL manual credit.

The committee can consist of the following positions:

- Contest Chair
 - Food Coordinator
 - Judging Chair
 - Program Chair
 - Certificates Chair
 - Participant Coordinator

Contest Chair: This person is responsible for making sure all of the activities to support the contest are completed. If one of the support activities does not have a volunteer you are expected to take care of that portion of the Contest.

Solicit a Food Coordinator: If food is to be a part of the contest, a Food Coordinator should be designated. They should seek donations or determine how food will be provided and or paid for. Food can be done as a potluck, catered, or if contest is at a restaurant, the guests could be expected to purchase their own. This needs to be understood in advance so guests know what to expect.

Judging Chair: This person is responsible for finding the required number of qualified judges. For an Area Contest, there should be a minimum of 5 and for a Division contest there should be a minimum of 7 judges. The Chief Judge should have attended judges training so they understand the requirements for judges. Those requirements are not covered in this handbook.

The Division Chief Judge is usually responsible for serving as the Chief Judge at the Area contests within his/her Division as well as for the Division Contest. If a Chief Judge is not already designated - i.e. for a Club contest - a Chief Judge needs to be selected as early as possible in order to begin enlisting judges.

Program Chair: This person is responsible for designing and producing the program and insuring enough copies are available for the guests. This will involve coordinating with the other subcommittee chairs and getting the names of participants and contestants. See below for the full list of participants that need to be included in the program.

Certificates Chair: This person is responsible for printing certificates for all of the participants and the contestants. The Chief Judge may choose to print his or her own judges certificates. That is at their discretion.

Participant Coordinator: This person is responsible for filling the various roles required to conduct the contest. Priority should be given to getting volunteers from the clubs within the area or division. The goal is to ensure all clubs are involved.

Start with the critical roles. The two most critical roles are the Toastmasters. These should be selected first. For an Area contest, we recommend using Club Presidents or Area Governors. This is a good introduction to conducting a contest for any Club Presidents who may plan to become an Area Governor at some point. For a Division contest, we recommend using Area Governors. See below for the complete list of roles to be filled.

Participants

- * Toastmasters: 2 (1 per contest as a rule)
- * Sergeant-at-Arms: (2 – 3)
- * Inspiration and Pledge
- * Joke Master: 2 (1 per contest as a rule)
- * Model Speaker (for Evaluation contest)
- * Timers: 2
- * Ballot Counters: 3
- * Greeters (optional): 2

During the month before

- * *Identify the contestants*

During the month before your contest, you should collect the names of the contestants as they are selected. You should try to attend the Club or Area contests at which they are selected. If unable to attend the contest, or if a Club does not hold a contest to select its representative to the Area contest, you should contact the Club Presidents or Area Governors to obtain this information as soon as possible.

- * *Ensure participants are enlisted*

E-mail and/or visit the clubs within the Area or Division to request volunteers. Encourage the club officers to participate. Work with the participant coordinator to ensure all roles are filled.

One week before

Confirm their attendance with the contestants and all participants. Remind everyone of the date, time and location of the contest. Provide directions if necessary. Advise the contestants and other participants by which time they need to arrive in order to complete the paperwork and have any necessary briefings. Confirm the spelling of the names that are to appear on the program and certificates.

Two days before

Print the programs and certificates. Bring additional blank certificates for participants and contestants in case substitutions have to be made.

Materials Needed

- * Lectern and Gavel
- * Timing lights or cards - If using lights, bring 2 sets of cards as back-up.
- * Timing devices (stop watches) - 2 (bring back-ups as well)
- * Programs (see below)
- * Dignitaries list. (See District39.org for a current list)
- * Certificates - Participants and contestants. Bring additional blank spares.
- * Plaques or Trophies - For Area and Division contests
- * Judging Kit - See judging kit contents in Appendix A.
- * Flag

Program

- * Keep it simple.
- * Contestants should be listed in alphabetical order.
- * Do not include contestant designations (i.e. CC, DTM ...) or club affiliations
- * List all participants except judges.
- * Allow time for announcements and comments from District officers – this can be done at the intermission or end of the contest and announcements should be limited to 1 minute or less.

CONDUCTING THE CONTEST

There are many components of a Toastmasters contest, things that must be said and/or done. Some of these are mandatory - i.e. the manner in which a contestant is introduced - in order to ensure the contest is equitable and fair. Other aspects - i.e. the time at which announcements are made - are more at the discretion of the chairman. It is your responsibility to make sure that everyone understands his/her roles and responsibilities and how you would like the optional aspects to be done. Some of these may be delegated to the Contest Toastmaster or the Chief Judge.

Contest Chairman

Prior to the contest

- * Meet with the various participants. Make sure they understand their responsibilities (see below). Make sure they have the appropriate equipment and forms (i.e. stop watches, timer's and ballot counter's forms).

- * Make sure the Sergeant-at-Arms know where the Table Topics or Evaluation contestants are to be sequestered.
- * Make sure the contestants know where they should stand to be introduced (particularly for the Table Topics and Evaluation contests).

During the contest

- * Welcome guests.
- * Welcome dignitaries - use the dignitaries list.
- * Remind the audience that flash photography is not permitted during the speeches.

At the contest conclusion

** Participant recognition*

After the conclusion of the last contest and announcements (if done at the end), recognize the participants. Present each participant with a certificate of appreciation, if desired. A certificate can be presented to the Chief Judge, who then recognizes the judges. The Toastmasters should be recognized last and asked to remain for the presentation of the awards. Remind all contestants to attend the next level of contest in case the winner is not available and an alternate is needed.

Pay attention to the time. The overall contest should not take longer than 2 hours. If needed hand out participant certificates after the contest is over and limit announcements to 1 minute.

** Award presentation*

Prior to announcing the results, announce if disqualifications occurred. No contestant names are given.

In contests with five or more participants, announce the third place winner, second place winner and first place winner, in that order. In contests with four or fewer participants, announce only the second and first place winners.

There are several possible methods for the actual presentation of the award. One method is for the announcement and presentation of the award to be made by either the Chairman or the Toastmaster. The other, the recommended, method is for the Toastmaster to announce the winners for his/her particular contest and the Chairman to present the award. This is appropriate, as the Chairman is generally the highest-ranking officer of that level - i.e. the Area Governor for an Area contest or a Division Governor for a Division contest.

When presenting the award, consider the following:

- * Take off any wrapping on the award prior to starting the contest. The award should be clearly visible when handed to the winner.

* Take pictures of the presentation. The contestants may want a copy. These may also be used in news releases to promote Toastmasters.

We will now take a look at the various roles involved in the contest and provide recommendations as to how they should be done. As the Contest Chair, it is your responsibility to ensure all participants understand what is expected during the contest. Below we have provided some guidance on the roles that you will need to communicate to the participants.

Contest Toastmaster – 1 per contest

Prior to the contest

- * Meet with the contestants and confirm pronunciation of their names and their speech titles.
- * Gather the biographical information forms. Review them to prepare for the interview to follow the competition.
- * For the Table Topics contest, prepare a topic to ask the contestants. The topic should be no longer than 5 words. A “finish the question” format is best. The topic should be answerable by all contestants. It is not supposed to stump the participant. The topic should be written so that you can repeat it exactly the same for each contestant. The Contest Chair and/or Chief Judge should approve the topic.

Good Topics:

- “Last Night I Dreamed”
- “I Remember When”

Bad Topics:

- “When I Was In The Army”
- “My Favorite Sister”

During the contest

- * Request the audience turn off cell phones or pagers, if not told to do so by the Sergeant-at-Arms.
- * Make any corrections to the list of contestants at the beginning. Advise the audience where to make the change (i.e. “Replace . . . with . . .” or “Insert . . . at the bottom.”)
- * Be consistent in introducing the contestants. For the speech contests, the speakers are introduced as contestant’s name, speech title, speech title, contestant’s name. For the Evaluation contest, the contestants are introduced by stating the contestant’s name twice. The contestant’s number may also be included. For the Table Topics contest, the contestants are introduced by contestant’s name, topic, topic, contestant’s name. No other preliminary remarks are to be made.
- * For the Table Topics and Evaluation contests, instruct the Sergeant-at-Arms to escort the contestants from the room at the appropriate time.

- * No comments on the speeches or contestants are to be made after the speaker has finished. As soon as the applause has ceased after each speaker, request the audience to observe one minute of silence for the judges to mark their ballots. The silence includes the TM!!
- * After the last contestant, request silence until all ballots have been collected and the Chief Judge has left the room with the ballot counters.
- * Contestant interviews should be short, one minute or less. During the interviews, the contestants may be asked about their clubs. They should be asked one or two questions based upon their biographical information. They should be presented with a certificate of participation at this time.
- * If two contests are being conducted at the same event, any contestants competing in both contests are not interviewed following the first contest. They may be given their certificate and the audience informed that they will be interviewed following the second contest. Be sure you know who these contestants are in advance in case there are any last minute changes.

Contestant

- * Arrive early!!!!
- * Check in with the Chief Judge upon arrival
- * If you cannot make it, contact the Contest Chair as soon as possible so the alternate speaker can be identified.
- * Contestants may not wear TI badges. Unless it is part of their speech, the audience should not be made aware of the speaker's affiliations or TI rank.

Judges

- * Arrive early!!!!
- * Check in with the Chief Judge upon arrival
- * If you cannot make it, contact the Chief Judge as soon as possible so the alternate judge can be identified.

Sergeant-at-Arms – 3

- * The Sergeant-at-Arms will make sure access to the speaking area is clear and all contestants have equal access including those with special needs.
- * One Sergeant-at-Arms will open each contest. This would be an appropriate time to request the audience turn off cell phones or pagers.
- * During the contest, one Sergeant-at-Arms should remain at the door to keep people from entering while a contestant is speaking. People may be admitted during the time of silence between speakers. There are special responsibilities for the TT and Evaluation Contests.

Table Topics Contest

- * One Sergeant-at-Arms will escort all but the first contestant to the holding area. Another Sergeant-at-Arms will remain in the room and will instruct the first contestant where to stand to be introduced.
- * When the Toastmaster requests one minute of silence, the Sergeant-at-Arms should go to retrieve the next contestant. Each contestant is instructed to stand in the same place to be introduced.

Note: The Sergeants-at-Arms can alternate being in the room and being with the contestants so that each Sergeant-at-Arms gets to hear some of the contestants. When the Toastmaster requests a minute of silence, the Sergeant-at-Arms in the room proceeds to the holding area. The Sergeant-at-Arms in the holding area then escorts the next contestant back to the room.

Evaluation Contest

- * Following the model speaker, the Sergeants-at-Arms will escort all of the contestants to the holding area. One Sergeant-at-Arms should have a timing device.
- * Upon reaching the holding area, begin timing the five-minute period for evaluation preparation.
- * During the 5-minute preparation period the Model speaker should be interviewed and presented with a certificate. The interview must be complete before the first contestant enters the room.
- * Contestants should be given updates on how much time is left.
- * After five minutes, all written materials are collected from all but the first contestant.
- * Once the Model speaker interview is complete the first contestant is escorted back to the contest room and instructed where to stand to be introduced.
- * When the Toastmaster requests a minute of silence following each contestant, the Sergeant-at-Arms should go to retrieve the next contestant. See the note above about alternating Sergeants-at-Arms.

Timer - 2

- * Ensure the timing lights or cards are visible to the speaker from the center portion of the speaking area.
- * Whether lights or cards are used (or both), the green and yellow signals are displayed until the next signal is to be given. The red signal is displayed until the speaker finishes. No indication is given that the speaker has exceeded the time limit.
- * When the Toastmaster requests one minute of silence following a contestant, start the time. After one minute, cue the Toastmaster.
- * If a speaker does not meet the time constraints, indicate this by circling the name on the timer's sheet.
- * After the last contestant, hand the timer's sheet to the Chief Judge or one of the ballot counters.

Ballot Counter - 3

- * Ballot counters will remain seated during the contest.
- * Following the last contestant, the ballot counters should stand and position themselves around the room in preparation for collecting the ballots.
- * The ballot counters should collect the completed ballots as the judges hold them up.
- * The ballot counters will accompany the Chief Judge out of the room once all the ballots have been collected. The Chief Judge will instruct the ballot counters as to the counting procedure.

Inspiration and Pledge -1

- * The inspirational thought should be short and uplifting. If the Contest Chair has declared a theme for the event, the thought should be related to that theme.
- * Remember to follow the protocol: God before country, country before all else.
Ex. Prayer before Pledge or
Pledge before thought

Joke Master: 2 (1 per contest as a rule)

- * Jokes should be tasteful and short.
- * Jokes should not be read.

Model Speaker (for Evaluation contest)

- * Ideally, the model speaker should not be a member of one of the clubs in the Area or the Division in order to reduce the possibility that a contestant might be from the same club.
- * The model speech needs to be 5-7 minutes.
- * It can be used to complete a manual project. A written evaluation can be provided by a neutral audience member.
- * The model speaker should be introduced in the same manner as the speech contestants (i.e. Speaker's Name, Speech Title, Speech Title, Speaker's Name).

Greeters (optional): 2

- * Greeters should arrive early and welcome guests. If any guests have special needs work with the Sergeant-at-Arms to accommodate them.
- * Greeters are responsible for handing out programs and having dignitaries sign in.
- * Greeters should know who the Contest Chair and Chief Judge are so they can direct participants to the appropriate person.
- * Greeters should be able to provide directions to where food should be delivered and where the restrooms are.

APPENDIX A

Judges Kit (downloadable contest forms)

Judging Guide and Ballot (There is a separate form for each contest. Don't try to use an International Speech contest judge's form for a Humorous Speech contest.)

Tie-Breaking Judge's Guide and Ballot (This ballot is contest specific as well.)

Speech Contest Time Record Sheet

Counter's Tally Sheet

Speech Contestant Biographical Information form

Speaker's Certification of Eligibility and Originality form

Notification of Winner (to be forwarded to Area or Division Governor or Chairperson for next contest level)