

PUTTING ON A GOOD TOASTMASTERS SPEECH CONTEST



District 39 – Where Leaders Are Made

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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)

When You Are the Toastmaster of a Table Topics or Evaluation Contest

Before the Contest:

- Prepare a 1-2 minute introduction about the usefulness of contests, how courageous people are to stretch themselves, how entertaining it is to hear Table Topics, or your choice. It is a good time for a well-developed quote but make it unrelated to the eventual topic to be given to the contestants.
- Prepare a table topic in large print that can be placed on the lectern for the contestants' reference, if needed. Check with the contest chair in advance to see if it is appropriate. Keep this confidential so there is no chance of a contestant accidentally seeing it early.
- Table Topics prompt should be **no more than five or six words**. For Example: %n the Spring. . .,+%w will leave the world. . .,+%Future Americans will. . .,+%After hurricane Katrina. . .,+%s should have. . .+
- Prepare a joke or short story (about 1-2 minutes) in case of a delay in the flow of the meeting. It is also okay to just be quiet for a minute or two (usually for the vote counters to do their thing).

At the contest:

- Check in with the contest chair.
- Look at the program for your part of the contest.
- Make sure everything seems clear to you.
- Check the pronunciation of all names before the contest. People deserve to have their names pronounced correctly.
- Get Bio sheets for contestants from chief judge and participant certificates from the contest chair.
- When the order of the contestants is determined by the chief judge, mark your agenda with the numbers and place the bios and certificates in order. This is the order they will compete and the order they will be interviewed.
- Find a seat that is close enough to the front of the room that you can make easy transitions from audience to lectern.

During the Contest:

- Sergeant at Arms opens the meeting and leads the pledge.
- Area Governor or contest chair is introduced to present opening comments.
- Toastmaster comes to the lectern when introduced.

Intro:

- Keep the introductory remarks about 1-2 minutes. The contest is about showcasing the contestants.

Sample of a contest intro.

Fellow Toastmasters, contestants, guests: Welcome to the (Division E Table Topics contest for 2004). You can look forward to an exciting evening. Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "It was high counsel that I once heard given to a young person—"Always do what you are afraid to do." What makes you afraid? Most of us Toastmasters would probably agree that public speaking once scared us to death. For many of us there are still times when it does. For those guests, fear is probably one of the barriers that keeps you from joining. We are here to celebrate those who conquer their fears—the best of our extemporaneous speakers.

When You Are the Toastmaster of a Table Topics or Evaluation Contest

One of the definitions I found for extemporaneous is "makeshift." Too many times makeshift is exactly what we hear from people in interviews. Toastmasters on the other hand get the training and practice to present well-formed and eloquent speeches on a moment's notice. I am honored to preside over our Table Topics contest tonight where we will enjoy some of those quality off-the-cuff speeches.

- Introduce **Thought of the Day**.
- Introduce **Humorist**
- Introduce the **Chief Judge** to explain the rules. The chief judge should read the order of the contestants. If they do not, please be prepared to ask for the order.

FOR THE EVALUATION CONTEST

- Introduce the model speaker by: **Name, Speech Title, Speech title, and Name**
- After the speech, evaluation contestants are escorted by the Sgt @ Arms to a prearranged room to write their evaluations. Ask the timers to give 5 minutes on the clock.
- Invite the model speaker to the front of the room after the contestants have left. Conduct an interview, keeping in mind that you need to fill the entire 5 minutes. Check the model speaker's bio or even talk to them beforehand to determine some ideas for questions.
- Hand the contestant a certificate after you thank them for their contribution.
- Invite the first contestant into the room using the form: Contestant #1, Name, Name, Contestant #1. Be sure to pronounce their name correctly. Remember that there is no set-up or acknowledgement of the contestant such as, "help me welcome our wonderful president" + The idea is to give all people an even playing field
- When the contestant comes to the lectern, shake hands and then move to the chair you scoped out before the meeting.
- Be ready to return to the lectern after the presentation. *It is okay to say, thank you but don't elaborate on how you thought the contestant performed.*
- After each contestant ask for one minute of silence for the judges to mark their ballots. Say something like, "timers, may we have one minute on the clock.+ *It is sometimes hard to stand still for a whole minute but should be attempted. It is a good time to look at the next contestant's name to be ready.*
- Repeat until all contestants have had an opportunity to evaluate.

FOR THE TABLE TOPICS CONTEST

Contestants are escorted from the room **except** for the first contestant.

- When the first contestant is in the back of the room, give the topic on which contestants will speak. Remember that there is no set-up or acknowledgement of the contestant such as, "help me welcome our wonderful president" + The idea is to give all people an even playing field so the following form is used.: **Say the contestant's name. Give the Prompt. Repeat the Prompt. Repeat the contestant's name.**
- When the contestant comes to the lectern, shake hands and then move to the chair you scoped out before the meeting.

When You Are the Toastmaster of a Table Topics or Evaluation Contest

- Be ready to return to the lectern after the presentation. *It is okay to say, thank you but don't elaborate on how you thought the contestant performed.*
- After each contestant, be prepared to remind the audience and timer about the one minute of silence after each presentation. Say something like, %timers, may we have one minute on the clock.+ *It is sometimes hard to stand still for a whole minute but should be attempted. It is a good time to look at the next contestant's name to be ready.*
- After all contestants have been introduced, ask the timers for two minutes of silence for the judges to complete their ballots. This sometimes stretches to three or four minutes. When all ballots are collected, you may start the interviews.

Interviews:

You can ask all contestants to come up to the front of the room in the order they competed or you can ask them to come up one at a time. It has been done nicely both ways.

- All contestants should be asked about the name of their club and where and when they meet.
- Choose one or two items from their TT response or their bio to ask them about.

Example: I see that you area skydiver, tell us how that fear compares with public speaking.

When done with the interview, thank each contestant and present them with a certificate of participation. *If you pick up the certificate with your left hand so it faces the audience and then shake the contestant's right hand, it usually looks the best, especially if people are taking pictures.*

Watch the time. If the contest is running long make the interviews shorter.

Closing:

By the time all contestants are interviewed, the ballot counters should be back in the room. Make your closing statements and adjourn the meeting for refreshments. (10-15 minutes for Area, 15-20 for Division contests)

Note: This assumes that the Evaluation and Table Topics Contests are first and the Speech Contests, the main event, will follow. Some Contest Chairs reverse this order.

Sample of closing statement:

I want to leave you with an anonymous quote I read today—"what lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us." Our Table topics contestants tonight have been fearless in showing some of what lies within them. I want to congratulate them for facing what made them afraid. The results speak for themselves and have given us an entertaining evening. Help me give them another rousing round of applause as we adjourn for a 15 minute break.

Script for Sergeant at Arms at a Contest

Fellow Toastmasters and Guests, please take your seats. This contest will now come to order. (Bang the gavel if there is one.)

(Allow a few moments for people to sit but probably not a full minute. See how it goes.)

Everyone please take a moment to silence your cell phones, pagers, and other noise making devices.

(Allow a few seconds for this to happen.)

Please stand for the pledge of allegiance.

(Stand and model the behavior by placing your hand over your heart. Wait for people to stand before starting the pledge.)

(Begin)

I Pledge allegiance. . .

Please help me welcome our contest chair, (insert name of area or division governor.)

(Lead the applause and be sure to wait at the lectern to shake hands)

Notes for Sergeant at Arms at an Evaluation or Table Topics Contest

Evaluation:

- Before the contest, make sure there is a designated room for the contestants to wait.
- After the model speaker, escort the contestants into the designated room where they can have five minutes to write their evaluations.
- When time is called, collect all of the notes and escort contestant number one to the main room, just inside the door. Hand the first contestant her notes and find a seat for the contest. (You may remain in the room.)
- The Toastmaster will introduce the contestant and the contestant will return to her seat after the evaluation.
- While the audience is observing the one-minute of silence, leave the room and escort the next contestant to the back of the room. Repeat the same process as with the previous contestants.

Table Topics:

- The process is the same as above except there will be no five-minute period to write notes, nor a time to collect or return notes.

Note: The Sergeant at Arms may remain in the room to hear the contestants. When a contestant is done, the contestant is able to stay in the main room and hear the remaining contestants.