

# TRAINING FOR TOASTMASTER OF A SPEECH TABLE TOPICS OR EVALUATION CONTEST

Contests are a great opportunity to showcase not only the contestants but Toastmasters leadership in all the roles. Following these steps can help you be a successful Toastmaster. Remember to think of creating an “opening,” “body,” and “conclusion” to the contest as you would a speech. Some of that flow is the responsibility of the Contest Chair but the Toastmaster has an important part, too.

## BEFORE THE CONTEST

**Before the Contest:** Preparation is the key to a successful experience for you and the contestants. Contests can showcase the proficiency of Toastmasters leaders as well as the contestants and can be a great membership building event.

- 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. This may actually be done by the Contest Chair.
- Table Topics prompt should be **no more than five or six words**. For Example: “In the Spring. . .,” “I will leave the world. . .,” “Future Americans will. . .,” “After hurricane Katrina. . .,” “I should have. . .” and of a universal nature that everyone can answer.
- 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 complete the counting)
- For the Evaluation Contest—Interview of Model Speaker. Check out the model speaker's bio and/or talk to them before the contest so you can think of some questions to ask them. You need to interview them during the five minutes that contestants are allowed to write their evaluations.

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## AT THE CONTEST

**At the Contest Venue:** Arrive early to check in with the Contest Chair, meet the contestants, learn to pronounce names, and in some cases, prepare the contestants and draw for order.

- Check in with the contest chair.
- Look at the program for your part of the contest.
- Make sure everything seems clear to you.
- Note if there are any contestants that are in both contests. **You will not interview a contestant who still needs to compete but you can give them a certificate of participation.**
- Check the pronunciation of all names before the contest. **People deserve to have their names pronounced correctly.**
- Get Contestant Profile (Bio sheets) from the Chief Judge and participant certificates from the Contest Chair.
- When the order of the contestants is determined by the Chief Judge (or you as Toastmaster), mark your agenda with the numbers and place the profiles and certificates in order. This is the order in which they will compete and the order in which 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.
- Ask the contest chair if they want you to help present awards at the end of the contest so you can be ready.

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## ALL CONTESTS: INTRODUCTION

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

- 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.

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.*

*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 the **Inspirational Thought**. (If used. Some contests exclude this part to shorten it.)
- Introduce **Humorist or Jokemaster** (If used).
- Introduce the **Chief Judge** to explain the rules. Many times the Chief Judge will just say that the contestants and judges have been briefed and move on to the contestant order. Note: *The chief judge should read the order of the contestants. If they do not, please be prepared to ask for the order.*
- For the speech contests start introducing the contestants in the order determined before the contest. Introduce them as follows with no additional embellishment to make it an even playing field.
- All speech contestants can remain in the room.

### FOR HUMOROUS AND INTERNATIONAL SPEECH CONTESTS

***Name, Title of Speech, Title of Speech, Name***

**SEE NEXT SECTIONS FOR EVALUATION AND TABLE TOPICS INFORMATION.**

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## EVALUATION CONTEST

**Evaluation:** The model speaker will be introduced by name, speech title, speech title and name. No other introductory remarks are made. After the speech all contestants leave the room and the Model Speaker is interviewed for about five minutes.

After the introductory comments and announcement of rules, introduce the model speaker on whom the contestants will form their 2-3 minute evaluations.

The model speaker's name will not be in the agenda.

Model speaker is introduced: **Name, Speech Title, Speech Title, Name**

- After the speech, contestants go to a pre-arranged room to write their evaluations for five minutes.
- Ask the timers to put 5 minutes on the clock.
- While contestants are writing, invite the model speaker to come up and present them with a certificate of appreciation.
- Thank him or her for their participation and ask the name of their club.
- Interview her or him for the next five minutes. Be prepared to insert a joke or story if the interview does not go for the full five minutes and be prepared to end if time is up before you're finished talking.
- Contestants come back into the room one at a time and are introduced as below.

### ***Contestant # 1, Name, Name, Contestant #1***

- When the contestant comes to the lectern, shake hands and then move to the chair you identified 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, remind the audience and timer about the one minute of silence. Say something like, "Timers, may we have one minute on the clock."
- This is a good time to look at the next contestant's name to be ready to introduce them.
- 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.

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<b>TABLE TOPICS</b>	<b>Table Topics:</b> All contestants will speak from the same prompt of about five words or less and of a general nature not requiring specialized knowledge.
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>TABLE TOPICS CONTEST</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After the opening remarks and rules, the contestants are escorted from the room except for the first contestant.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Say the contestant’s name. Give the Prompt.</i></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Repeat the Prompt. Repeat the contestant’s name.</i></b></p>

<b>INTERVIEWS</b>	<b>Contestant Interviews:</b> Note: If a contestant is in both contests they are NOT interviewed until the second contest. Just present the certificate of participation at this time if you are the Toastmaster of the first contest.
	<p><b>TIP:</b> Ask all contestants to come up to the front of the room in the order they competed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All contestants should be asked the <b>name of their club and where and when the club meets.</b></li> <li>• Choose no more than <b>one or two items</b> from their response or their bio to ask them about or you can ask all contestants the same question.</li> <li>• Pay attention to the time and <b>shorten this portion</b>, if necessary.</li> </ul> <p><i>Example: I see that you are a skydiver, tell us how that fear compares with public speaking.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When done with the interview, thank each contestant and present them with a certificate of participation. Dismiss them to sit back down.</li> </ul> <p><b>TIP:</b> Pick up the certificate with your left hand so it faces the audience and then shake the contestant’s right hand. This shows the certificate well in pictures.</p>
	<b>Interview suggestions:</b> Prepare a couple of items from the contestants’ profiles. Make sure you ask them an open-ended question to allow them to speak. You can make a quick comment based on their response but remember it is not about you, but about the contestant.

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## CLOSING

### Closing:

***If this is the first contest of the evening***, after 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)

***If this is the second contest***, after the ballot counters are back in the room, close and return control to the Contest Chair who will present the awards. Be prepared to join the Contest Chair to present the awards for your contest, if they request it.

### 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.*

**TIP:** *If there are four or fewer contestants you will announce only runner up and winner in that order. If there are more contestants a certificate is awarded for third place.*