



**BRIGHT AND EARLY
TOASTMASTERS**

Club No. 9623849

Hillsborough, New Jersey

MASTER YOUR MEETINGS

A Guide to Quality in the Club



**WHERE LEADERS
ARE MADE**

TOASTMASTERS
INTERNATIONAL



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A Guide to Quality in the Club

TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL

www.toastmasters.org

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**WHERE LEADERS
ARE MADE**

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 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

CONTENTS

Introduction	4
How This Manual Can Help	4
Creating the Right Environment	5
Treatment of Guests	5
Treatment of Members	5
Attitude	5
Physical Setting	5
The Meeting	6
Sample Agenda for a 90-minute Club Meeting	6
Sample Agenda for a One-hour Club Meeting	8
Invocations and Pledges	9
Lectern Etiquette	9
The Importance of Preparation	9
Quality Club Meetings	10
First Impressions	10
Program Planning and Meeting Organization	10
Fellowship, Variety, and Communication	10
New Member Orientation	10
Membership Strength	10
Recognition	11
Club Officer Roles	12
President	12
Vice President Education	13
Vice President Membership	13
Vice President Public Relations	14
Secretary	14
Treasurer	15
Sergeant at Arms	15
Additional Success Factors	17
Quality Speeches	17
Evaluations	17
Recognition	17
Buzzers and Bells	18
Club Programs	19
What Works for Us	19
Speech Contests	25
Table Topics®	25
Tools for Success	29

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.

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's 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. Find out about your guests' jobs, hobbies, families, etc. and ask why they chose to visit the club. Then explain how the club operates and how membership in the club will help them become better communicators and leaders. Pay special attention to guests who arrive alone and do not know anyone in the club.

Some clubs ask guests to participate in Table Topics or to comment on the meeting as it draws to a close. This should be done only with the guest's prior consent. Ask the guest before the meeting begins, privately, if he or she would like to participate in Table Topics and/or offer comments on the meeting. If the guest declines, respect his or her wishes. Never force guests to speak or embarrass them in any way. Also, if a guest does choose to speak, don't count "ahs" without the guest's prior approval.

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 member is important to the club. 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.

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. Usually at least three speakers are scheduled; this may vary 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 given 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.

Some clubs also 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. No one way is best.

The duration of each portion may vary, too, 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 **PRESIDING OFFICER**

Call meeting to order

Introduce member giving invocation or thought for the day (optional)

MEMBER

Give invocation or thought for the day (optional)

PRESIDING OFFICER

Introduce member leading pledge to flag (optional)

MEMBER

Lead pledge to flag (optional)

PRESIDING OFFICER

Welcome guests

0:05 Conduct business meeting

Call for reports:

Secretary's report

Treasurer's report

Officers' reports
Unfinished business
New business

- Introduce Toastmaster
- 0:15 **TOASTMASTER**
Make opening remarks
Identify meeting roles and ask for brief explanations of their duties:
Topicsmaster
General Evaluator
Evaluators
Grammarian
Ah-Counter
Timer
- Introduce Topicsmaster
- 0:20 **TOPICSMASER**
Explain Table Topics
Conduct Table Topics session
Call for timer's report
Call for vote for Best Table Topics Speaker (optional)
Return control to presiding officer
- 0:40 **Intermission**
- 0:45 **TOASTMASTER**
Introduce Speaker 1 (speaker gives speech)
Instruct members to give written feedback to speaker
Introduce Speaker 2 (speaker gives speech)
Instruct members to give written feedback to speaker
Introduce Speaker 3 (speaker gives speech)
Instruct members to give written feedback to speaker
Call for timer's report
Call for vote for Best Speaker (optional)
- 1:08 **GENERAL EVALUATOR**
Call for
Speech evaluators' reports
Timer's report
Vote for Best Evaluator (optional)
Grammarian's report
Ah-Counter's report
- Make general comments on meeting
Return control to Toastmaster
- 1:20 **TOASTMASTER**
Present awards (optional)
Return control to presiding officer
- 1:25 **PRESIDING OFFICER**
Thank guests for attending
Make closing comments/announcements
- 1:30 **ADJOURN**

SAMPLE AGENDA FOR A ONE-HOUR CLUB MEETING

TIME ACTIVITY

00:00 **PRESIDING OFFICER**

Call meeting to order
Invocation/Pledge (optional)
Welcome guests
Introduce Toastmaster

00:05 **TOASTMASTER**

Make opening remarks
Identify meeting roles and ask for brief explanations of their duties:
 Topicsmaster
 General Evaluator
 Evaluators
 Grammarian
 Ah-Counter
 Timer

00:10 **TOASTMASTER**

Introduce Speaker 1 (speaker gives speech)
Instruct members to give written feedback to speaker
Introduce Speaker 2 (speaker gives speech)
Instruct members to give written feedback to speaker
Introduce Topicsmaster

00:26 **TOPICSMASTER**

Explain Table Topics
Conduct Table Topics session
Return control to Toastmaster

00:43 **TOASTMASTER**

Introduce General Evaluator

00:45 **GENERAL EVALUATOR**

Call for reports:

Speech evaluators
 Timer
 Grammarian
 Ah-Counter

Make general comments on meeting
Return control to Toastmaster

00:55 **TOASTMASTER**

Present awards (optional)
Return control to presiding officer

00:57 **PRESIDING OFFICER**

Thank guests for attending
Make closing comments/announcements

01:00 **ADJOURN**

INVOCATIONS AND PLEDGES

Invocations and pledges are popular ways to open club meetings. 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.

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.

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.

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 done at all, meeting quality suffers, and the club doesn't fulfill its purpose. Members don't learn as much and it's difficult for them to achieve their goals.

When everyone arrives early at the meeting and is prepared, 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.

QUALITY CLUB MEETINGS

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.

1. FIRST IMPRESSIONS

- ▶ The meeting room is properly arranged by the sergeant at arms.
- ▶ Guests are greeted warmly and introduced to officers and members.
- ▶ Guests are given name tags and are invited to sign the guest book.
- ▶ The meeting location is pleasant, comfortable, and organized to meet speakers' needs.
- ▶ Guests are invited to address the club at the end of the meeting.
- ▶ Guests are invited to join the club or to visit again.

2. PROGRAM PLANNING AND MEETING ORGANIZATION

- ▶ The program and agenda are publicized at least a week in advance of the meeting.
- ▶ Members know their responsibilities and are prepared to carry out all assignments.
- ▶ Meetings begin and end on time.
- ▶ Meeting plans include creative Table Topics and activities.
- ▶ Evaluations are positive and helpful and are based on project objectives.

3. FELLOWSHIP, VARIETY, AND COMMUNICATION

- ▶ Guests are warmly greeted and welcomed.
- ▶ The vice president education plans enjoyable, educational meetings.
- ▶ Social events for members are scheduled regularly.
- ▶ Members participate in area, district, and international events.
- ▶ Club officers encourage members to participate in inter-club events.
- ▶ The club newsletter and/or website is published and updated regularly.

4. NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION

- ▶ New members are formally inducted and presented with a membership pin and manuals.
- ▶ Each new member is promptly assigned a mentor.
- ▶ A club officer or the member's mentor explains the education and recognition programs.
- ▶ New members are surveyed to determine their learning needs and educational goals.
- ▶ New members are encouraged to become involved in all aspects of the club's activities.

5. MEMBERSHIP STRENGTH

- ▶ The club has 20 or more members attending and participating in every club meeting.
- ▶ Members are retained.

- ▶ Regular public relations and/or publicity campaigns are performed in the community or within the club's sponsoring organization.
- ▶ Club programs are varied and exciting.
- ▶ Members who sponsor new members are formally recognized.
- ▶ The club conducts regular membership-building programs.

6. RECOGNITION

- ▶ Member achievement is tracked and acknowledged frequently.
- ▶ Club, district, and international leaders are formally recognized.
- ▶ The club publicizes member and club achievements to the public and to the district.
- ▶ The club uses the Distinguished Club Program planning and recognition.

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.

CLUB OFFICER ROLES

Good club meetings begin with the club officers. When the president, vice president education, vice president membership, vice president public relations, secretary, 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. 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 or the *Club Leadership Handbook* (Item 1310).

PRESIDENT

The office of president is the most important office in the club. The 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 president leads each club meeting, and sets the tone and pace of the meeting.

Before the Meeting

- ▶ Checks with the secretary to determine what business must be conducted at the meeting.
- ▶ Plans the business portion of the club meeting and reviews the necessary parliamentary procedure.
- ▶ Checks with the vice president education to see if any members are to receive special recognition at the meeting.
- ▶ Checks with the vice president membership to see if any new members are to be inducted at the meeting.

Upon Arrival at the Meeting

- ▶ Reviews the meeting agenda.
- ▶ Greets guests and members as they arrive and helps them feel welcome.

During the Meeting

- ▶ Calls the meeting to order promptly at the scheduled time.
- ▶ Welcomes guests and briefly explains the meeting's events for their benefit.
- ▶ Conducts the business portion of the meeting.
- ▶ Introduces the Toastmaster of the meeting.
- ▶ Toward the end of the meeting, thanks guests for attending and invites them to come again.
- ▶ Gives date, time, and place of next meeting and makes other special announcements.

VICE PRESIDENT EDUCATION

The vice president education has overall responsibility for club meeting programs. The vice president education plans all regular and special club meetings and other special events. At the beginning of the office term, the vice president education prepares a meeting schedule for the rest of the term and plans the program for each meeting.

Before the Meeting

- ▶ Schedules meeting assignments at least three weeks in advance and distributes the schedule to all members.
- ▶ Schedules alternates for each meeting (these people should be prepared to fill in should a scheduled participant be unable to attend) OR reminds members who cannot fulfill meeting responsibilities that they must find their own replacements.
- ▶ Sends out program assignment notices to participants one week before the meeting to remind them of their duties.
- ▶ Checks 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, writes down their names and accomplishments to give to the president at the meeting.
- ▶ Contacts the Toastmaster of the meeting several days beforehand and reviews the meeting agenda.

Upon Arrival at the Meeting

- ▶ Gives the president the names of those who are to be recognized.
- ▶ Reviews the schedule of assignments with the Toastmaster.
- ▶ Helps the Toastmaster confirm that all scheduled program participants (speakers, evaluators, etc.) have arrived.
- ▶ Greets all guests and members as they arrive and helps them feel welcome.

After the Meeting

- ▶ Reviews and approves completion of educational projects.
- ▶ Meets with guests to answer questions about the meeting and the Toastmasters education program.

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

- ▶ Makes a list of the new members who have joined the club since the last meeting and calls the club president and vice president education to coordinate an induction ceremony at the next meeting.

- ▶ Prepares a report on the club's membership-building program, telling which members have brought in new members, how many new members have joined, and how much time is remaining in the program. If no program is in effect, reports on the number of members in the club and announces the names of any new members.

Upon Arrival at the Meeting

- ▶ Greets all guests and members at the door and welcomes them to the meeting.
- ▶ Provides all guests with Toastmasters promotional literature and answers any questions they may have about the club.

During the Meeting

- ▶ Reports on the club's membership and encourages all members to bring guests to meetings. If the club has a membership-building program, the vice president membership reports on its progress.

After the Meeting

- ▶ Meets with guests to answer questions and explain the benefits of Toastmasters. Invites them to join the club or invites them to attend another club meeting if they are hesitant to join.
- ▶ Helps those guests who do wish to join to complete the Membership Application.

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 and public relations and for keeping club members informed of happenings in the club by producing a club newsletter or establishing and maintaining a club website.

Before the Meeting

- ▶ Prepares a public relations report to present to the club at the meeting. The report should include when the next club newsletter will be available and deadline for submitting articles for the issue. It also should include information about any publicity your club has received recently.

Upon Arrival at the Meeting

- ▶ Greets all members and guests as they arrive and helps them feel welcome.

During the Meeting

- ▶ Reports on public relations activities.

SECRETARY

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

Before the Meeting

- ▶ Prepares the minutes of the previous club meeting for reading at the next meeting.
- ▶ Prepares for the president a list of actions to be taken during the club's business meeting, including unfinished business, announcements, and correspondence. This list is taken from the minutes of previous meetings.

Upon Arrival at the Meeting

- ▶ Greets all members and guests as they arrive and helps them feel welcome.
- ▶ Circulates the attendance sheet for members to sign.

During the Meeting

- ▶ Reads the minutes of the previous meeting, and records minutes of the current meeting.

TREASURER

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

Before the Meeting

- ▶ Prepares a financial report at least once each month to be presented at the meeting.

Upon Arrival at the Meeting

- ▶ Collects any payable dues and fees from members.
- ▶ Issues checks to World Headquarters for new member fees, dues payments, and supply orders for the club.
- ▶ Greets all guests and members as they arrive and helps them feel welcome.

During the Meeting

- ▶ Presents the club financial report.

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.

Before the Meeting

- ▶ Confirms meeting room reservations a few days before the meeting, and acts as a liaison between the club and the meeting room management.
- ▶ Checks to see that plenty of blank ballots are on hand for voting.

Upon Arrival at the Meeting

- ▶ Arranges 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.
- ▶ Sets out the lectern, gavel, club banner, national flag (optional), timing lights, ballots, trophies, ribbons, buttons, and club charter.
- ▶ Places 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.
- ▶ Checks room temperature and adjusts the thermostat if the room is too hot or too cold.
- ▶ Greets all guests and members as they arrive and helps them feel welcome.

- ▶ Arranges for new members and guests to sit with experienced members who can answer any questions they may have during the meeting.
- ▶ Has all guests sign the guest book (Item 84) and gives each a name tag to wear during the meeting.

During the Meeting

- ▶ Sits near the door to welcome late arrivals and help them be seated, prevent interruptions, and perform any necessary errands.
- ▶ Arranges for food service, if any. Collects payment from members during a break or before the meeting. If coffee, tea, or water is available during the meeting, serves it to avoid having members moving around while someone is speaking.
- ▶ Collects ballots and tallies votes for Best Speaker, Best Evaluator, etc., if the club has such awards. Gives the results to the Toastmaster or personally announces them when called upon for the results.

After the Meeting

- ▶ Returns the room to its original configuration.
- ▶ Packs up all club materials and stores them in a safe place.
- ▶ Disposes of any stray items or trash.

ADDITIONAL SUCCESS FACTORS

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.

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.

Some clubs allow evaluators to require speakers to repeat a project if the evaluators feel the speakers did not fulfill project objectives. This practice is not recommended. Instead, 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. The evaluator could then, in private, suggest the speaker repeat the project and explain why. However, the decision to repeat a project always rests with the speaker.

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's why it's 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 inexpensive awards, such as ribbons, buttons, and mini-certificates, for your club's use.

Any recognition your club gives should be positive. Such recognition as "Bone" awards (for making the biggest blunder of the meeting) and "Most Long-Winded" award (for speaking beyond the recommended time) are not recommended, as they can embarrass members. People want to be recognized for their accomplishments, not for their mistakes. Keep awards positive and encouraging.

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 and should be used with discretion. When the Ah-Counter sounds the buzzer or bell with each "ah," the speaker is startled and confused and may use even more crutch words or sounds. The speaker finishes, perhaps embarrassed and humiliated. The fear of speaking is reinforced.

Instead of using buzzers or bells, the Ah-Counter should 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 he or she has exceeded speaking time. These, too, can frustrate novice speakers. Timing lights accomplish the same purpose without causing distractions.

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.

WHAT WORKS FOR US

It's easy to produce fruitful, dynamic, and appealing programs with some brainstorming and imagination. Try these program ideas that other clubs have used successfully.

Neighborhood Concerns

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 an issue that is currently a concern in your community, for example, schools, taxes, annexation, parks, or transportation. Then assign a club member to prepare a speech that presents one viewpoint of the issue. Schedule another member to prepare a speech that presents a different viewpoint.

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. What you need to do is 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

In a debate the purpose is to win and the winner is determined by a selected group of judges or by the audience. The decision is based on the points made and established in argument. The mechanics of each speaker's delivery should be rated lower than the actual arguments, but not disregarded.

The membership may vote to determine which team wins, but this is only one form of evaluation. An evaluation of each speech also is appropriate. Or use a panel evaluation to discuss the effectiveness of each part of the debate.

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 hostile 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. The program may replace your club meeting's regular speech program and evaluation period. 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 he or she 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 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 he or she is 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 just 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 paper 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. And 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.

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 salesmanship
Attracting new business and industry to our community
Playing the stock market
Our computerized society
What price progress?

Civic Affairs

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

Seasonal Topics

Christmas
New Year's Day
Independence Day
National Newspaper Week (or any special week)
Football season (or any other sports season)

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 meetings 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

Here's to Your Health

Maintaining an emotionally and physically healthy lifestyle is an important goal for everyone. You can plan a meeting around this theme by:

- ▶ Having scheduled speakers research health topics of their choice. Table Topics also will have a health theme.
- ▶ Calling community health organizations such as the Heart Association or the Cancer Society and requesting speakers.
- ▶ Requesting speakers who specialize in health-related topics from your district speakers bureau.

Celebrate Members' "Unbirthdays"

Chances are that your club meetings don't always fall on members' birthdays. Why not set aside a meeting to celebrate everyone's "unbirthday" instead? Begin by asking everyone to wear something that has birthday significance—their birthstone, zodiac sign, or something they have received as a birthday gift. Encourage your scheduled speakers to talk about birthday themes—a favorite birthday party, or what life was like in the year of their birth. The Topicsmaster can gear subjects specifically to this theme. Some possible topics are:

- ▶ Where would you like to celebrate your next birthday?
- ▶ You know you're growing old when...
- ▶ Do you believe in astrological forces?

Or, if you are aware of the birthdays of your club members, use an almanac to check them against the birthdays of famous people, then ask each person to tell what he or she does or does not have in common with any "birthday mates."

Have a Blast With the Past

Scheduled speakers can impersonate a famous person from the past. Table Topics questions can relate to specific historical figures, such as, "What advice would you give to the American General George A. Custer before the Battle of Little Bighorn during the United States Indian Wars of the mid-1800s?" Questions also can be general, for example, "What would you have been doing one hundred years ago?" or "What will the world climate be 50 years from now?"

Another possibility is to arrange about 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. If participants are asked not to announce the name of the individual they are impersonating, this activity can be turned into a guessing game involving the audience.

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. Why not conduct a meeting with this theme? If one or more of your club members is a member of the legal profession, schedule them

for a speech. Speeches also might be given about famous lawyers, such as Thurgood Marshall, or famous trials. For Table Topics, divide participants into two groups, one prosecuting, the other defending, and then present situations (traffic violations, a tax return omission, accidentally breaking someone's window, etc.) for each side to argue or state their plea.

Read All About It

You can find inspiration and ideas for speeches in books, newspapers, and magazines. But reading and literature are worthy of their own meeting theme. Members can give speeches on literary themes such as great authors and memorable books. Table Topics could ask for favorite, or least favorite, books, authors, and required reading assignments that we received while in school. The Topicsmaster also might bring in quotes from poems, fiction, or other works of literature to be discussed by participants.

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. Topics might include, "The Person Who Most Influenced My Life," "Friendship Helped Me Through a Difficult Time," and "Famous Romances/Partnerships" (e.g., Napoleon and Josephine, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, Gilbert and Sullivan, Pierre and Marie Curie). Table Topics could draw upon similar themes using inspirational quotes, historical figures, and anecdotes to add interest and stimulate imaginations.

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.

Give members experience speaking in large halls with and without public address systems by occasionally meeting in a different location. Community meeting rooms, church meeting rooms, the city council chamber, school auditoriums, civic theaters, and industry conference rooms can be great locations for these off-site meetings.

International Themes

People are more aware of the politics, customs, and environment of other nations through the internet, student and cultural exchange programs, world travel, and coverage of world events through printed and televised media.

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. These speeches offer an excellent opportunity to use visual aids: the crafts or costumes native to the country being discussed, visuals of the country's notable landmarks, and graphs and charts comparing that nation with others. Display miniature flags of many nations and travel posters. Decorate your meeting room to fit the occasion.

Expressing Opinions

Few topics evoke a more enthusiastic and sincere presentation than those which give us an opportunity to give our opinions. Not only do we say what we believe, but we amplify our convictions with emphatic gestures—hand, facial, and vocal. Our delivery is enhanced when we release repressed emotions.

Give members an opportunity to express their opinions. How one constructively expresses strong emotions can be the Table Topics theme and the focal point of each prepared speech. Announce the program several meetings in advance so the speakers can prepare their presentations. Invite members to speak out about their favorite subjects: sports, fashion, politics, community activities, hobbies, history, literature, and hundreds of others.

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've 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-to-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 he or she knows 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; don't wait until the last minute. Following are some suggestions for programs that provide variety in many kinds of impromptu speaking, debate, and discussion.

- ▶ Announce that the Table Topics discussion will be about the drive for the new hospital or local traffic control or another problem of community concern. Ask for volunteers to describe the problem, or do it yourself. After the problem has been explained, ask for possible solutions. When all reasonable solutions are before the group, invite evaluative discussion of them. Conclude with summary remarks indicating what the membership seems to feel about the problem.
- ▶ Draw upon members' personal experience. In business and community affairs, people often are called upon to offer a few remarks without opportunity to prepare, almost always on a subject about which they are well informed. Whether the subject is taxation, or bidding a hand at bridge, the group turns to the person who knows about it because of experience.

Before the meeting, make up a list of topics suitable for those who will participate, making sure there is an appropriate topic for each speaker. Then introduce each speaker by saying something like, "We have a problem of discoloration in our city water system, and we have someone who knows more about this problem than any of us. So I'm going to call on _____ to tell us about the problem."
- ▶ Ask members to discuss items in the daily news. The news is a frequent subject of conversation and a great place to find subjects for Table Topics talks. Write down a list of stories from the local newspaper (some of them may be humorous). Then call upon members to discuss them: "I know many of you have been reading about the automobile accident on Fourth Street. Who can tell us how it happened and perhaps suggest ways of avoiding such tragedies?"
- ▶ Hold a debate. Ask members to count off in groups of three, then declare a debate in which all the "ones" will be on the affirmative, all the "twos" on the negative, with the "threes" evaluating the quality of the debate presentations by the ones and twos with which they are grouped. Debate topics such as, "Strikes should be outlawed," or "Drivers licenses should be

automatically revoked for those convicted of drunk driving.” Make the topic different for every pair of speakers. A good discussion will develop after the debates end by inviting comments and responses to arguments that have been presented.

- ▶ Ask participants to resolve or discuss some everyday problems people encounter, such as:
 - A competing firm has offered my assistant a modest increase in salary which I am not prepared to match. What other inducements can I offer to keep him in his job?
 - We want to build a swimming pool but we don’t want neighborhood children to be using it, nor do we want to offend the neighbors by refusing its use. Any suggestions?
 - My boss used a memorandum I prepared for him to win a big salary increase for himself. What should I do about it?
 - Our fifteen-year-old daughter wants to “go steady” because that’s what all the other girls and boys her age are doing. Any solutions?
- ▶ Encourage creativity by asking members to react to imaginary situations, such as:
 - Ask members to describe a job, entirely different from their own, which they might like to have. Then have them tell why the job is appealing to them.
 - Ask members to assume that they are someone of national or international fame—preferably someone they don’t like—then speak in the guise of that person to try to win friends and favor.
 - Ask members, “If you only have one year to live, what would you do?”
 - Ask members, “If you were running for governor, why should people vote for you?”
 - Ask members, “If poverty were suddenly eliminated from the world, what would be the results?”
- ▶ Build a narrative that stops abruptly, then ask each participant to continue the story. For example, “The door of the flying saucer opened, and out of it stepped the strangest creature I had ever seen...”
- ▶ Conduct a general discussion of the prepared speeches. Members shouldn’t try to “second guess” or evaluate the speaker, but should react to the speakers’ ideas or suggest their own thoughts. Members also could suggest topics for future talks which they would like to hear.
- ▶ 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 he or she has recently seen. Or ask each participant to conceive a television show or movie, describing the plot and characters.

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. "The quality of education in our schools has declined in recent years. Studies show that a majority of high school graduates read only at a sixth grade level and cannot write complete sentences or spell simple words..."
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. "Last week our City Council voted to prohibit smoking in all city government offices for health and productivity reasons. This action is part of a growing trend in our country..."
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's 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. "Our national government is divided into three branches: legislative, judicial, and executive. The legislative branch consists of..."

TOOLS FOR SUCCESS

ITEM

- 1319 **Chat Pack**
Pack contains 156 question cards to spark conversation for Table Topics
- 1162 **New Member Orientation Kit for Clubs**
- 1167 **Toastmasters And You**
For new members who have just been admitted to membership
- 1167A **Package of 5 of above kit**
- 1167D ***A Toastmaster Wears Many Hats***
Tips for when you're the speaker, evaluator, Toastmaster, and other meeting roles
- 200 ***Chairman***
A guide to chairing meetings and performing parliamentary procedure
- 1310 ***Club Leadership Handbook***
- 1111 ***Distinguished Club Program and Club Success Plan***
- 1171 ***Speech Contest Rulebook***
- 382 **Lectern**
- 375 **Gavel**
- 234 **Club Banner**
- 84 **Guest Book**

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