

**The
Inside Secrets
of
Planning a Club Speech Contest**

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For

District Two Toastmasters

How to Organize a Speech Contest

Use this guide as a foundation for your speech contests. Don't be afraid to modify it to fit your needs.

Contest Planning for the Contest Chair & Team

- 1. Purpose:** Are you holding the contest just to select who will represent your club at the area contest or is your contest a special event for your members? Do you use it as a way to recruit new members? *Why you are holding the contest and what you want to accomplish are important questions. The answers will help you determine your budget.* Keep one thing in mind. The contest should be a level playing field for all of the contestants. That means; a guest speaker for the evaluation contest that the contestants haven't heard, judges that understand they are supposed to pick the person that does the best job, and no special recognition is given to any contestant before the contest begins.
- 2. Budget:** How much money do you have to work with? Do you have enough funds in your club bank account to cover all of your expenses? Where are the funds for your contest going to come from? You need to answer this question before you can make financial commitments.

Here are some ideas:

- The Club Bank Account for the Club Contest (*Sometimes the cost of a dinner contest can be split between the members and the club bank account.*)
 - Your Club Members for the Club Contest
 - Charge a Flat Fee
 - Sponsors
 - Raffles
 - Auctions
 - Donations
 - Some Combination of the Above
- 3. Format:** What type of meeting format can you use that will fulfill your purpose? Will it be casual or formal? Do you plan on serving a meal or just provide snacks?
 - 4. Site Selection:** When you select your location for the contest keep in mind the day and time of the week you plan to use it. As an example a: 6:00 P.M. start time on a Friday night can become a major challenge for your contestants and attendees. The facility you select must be able to help you fulfill your purpose. It should be barrier free. By that I mean no steps or stairs that can create barriers in the building and leading to the building. Is there safe parking for your members. Is the location easy to find. *Here is a tip: always check the restrooms of a restaurant or hotel you are planning to use for your contest - if they are clean and orderly then you will probably receive good service and food. If they look messy select a different location.* Always ask if there will be other activities going on the day or night you have planned for your contest.

You don't want to compete with a loud group or band next door!
 - 5. Supplies, Awards, & Gifts:** *Order everything early and include the cost in your budget.*
 - The T.I. Contest Rule Book
 - Judging Forms
 - Timer Sheets

- Counter Forms
- Timing Lights & Backup Timing Cards
- Stop Watches (2)
- Certificates of Appreciation
- Certificates of Participation for the Competitors
- Trophies or Awards – Order your trophies from TI or don't use the TI name!

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- Gifts for Target/Guest Speaker, Chief Judge and Toastmaster
- Tickets for Raffles & Cards for Auctions (if needed)
- Items for Raffles & Auctions (if needed)

6. Roles to be Filled:

- Contest Chair
- Contestants (*Determining who will compete at the club level is one of the first steps in planning a club contest. Sometimes new members will hold back because they don't feel they have a chance competing against advanced members. It is important to encourage everyone to compete. It is one of the best growth opportunities in Toastmasters!*)
- Toastmaster
- Flag Salute & Inspiration
- Chief Judge
- Timers (two)
- Vote Counters (three) (The chief judge can be one of three)
- Sergeants at Arms (2 or more depending on the size of your contest)
- Judges (at least five but try to have seven)
- Guest/Target Speaker (Evaluation Contest) (*Select a person that none of the contestants have heard deliver a presentation*)
- Registration desk
- Helpers to set up and clean up the contest room

At the club level you can have all of your members who aren't competing act as judges. Sometimes they have to wear two hats and fill one of the supporting roles. (*Try to have several of your members attend one of the judging workshops. Judging at a contest is different from evaluating a speaker and is an important part of the contest system.*)

7. Marketing: A well thought out marketing plan can help you insure the success of your contest. Ask yourself the questions; what is in it for the members and would you want to attend this contest? Use your club Web site if you have one. Post some information on the district Web site. Send an e-newsletter and or a PDF flyer to the members you want to attract.

8. Create and Print the Contest Agenda: Give some thought to the contest flow - allow for the toastmaster warm up, contestants, breaks, announcements, introducing dignitaries, interviewing the contestants, raffles, the award ceremony, anything and everything that will go into the contest.

Start on time - end on time!

Instructions for Contest Toastmaster

The Contest Toastmaster is the master of ceremonies for the contest - the one who has the most impact on the success of the program. Being a Contest Toastmaster can be a very enjoyable experience, but prior preparation is a must. Be sure to meet with your Contest Chair ahead of time to make sure you are as well organized as possible. Remember that you are charged with making this contest as fair as possible for every contestant. It is important that you follow the suggestions below.

A Week before the Contest:

- Contact & interview your contestants.
- Go over interview questions
- Learn how to pronounce their names
- Get their speech titles and ask them to be at the contest at least 1/2 hour before the program for a briefing and drawing for position
- Inquire about help they may need for props, flip chart etc. (*make sure you inform the Contest Chair of any Contestant's needs so that the Sergeant-At-Arms can be briefed*)

Day of Event:

- Arrive early
- Greet contestants
- Have each contestant fill out Certificate of Eligibility & Originality Form & Biographical Information Form.
- Have everyone draw for position in each contest. (*bring numbered slips or playing cards*)
- Explain their introductions - Name, Title, Title, and Name (*for speech contests*)
- In addition to contest rules, explain timing rules and location of timing lights.

The Contest Chair will open the contest by welcoming the audience, introduce the dignitaries, and then introduce you.

Contest Duties:

Warm Up: As Toastmaster, you must first warm up the audience. Think of a story or humorous anecdote that would get things flowing - you want the audience to get into the groove of the event. Make it relevant, but don't make it too long. Keep your opening down to no more than 5-7 minutes. After you warm up the audience proceed as you wish and include:

- Ask the audience to turn off electronic devices: cell phones, beepers, pagers, etc. and refrain from taking pictures during the speeches
- Have the timer explain the timing
- Indicate where the timing lights are located
- Explain how you will introduce the speakers - name, title, title, name
- Explain the 1 minute of silence between speeches & 2 minutes after the final speaker
- Ask them not to talk during the minute of silence as a courtesy to the judges.
- Explain they can only leave & enter the room during the minute of silence
- Give the speaking order to the audience
- Introduce Chief Judge and ask him/her if the judges, timers, and counters have been briefed

During the International Speech, Humorous Speech, Evaluation, and Table Topics Contests the process is almost the same. Refer to the Speech Contest Rulebook for the details. In a nutshell the international and humorous speech contests would follow the process below. The evaluation contest would have the guest/target speaker. Then the contestants leave the room and are brought back one at a time to compete. The table topics contestants leave the room as well and are brought back one at a time to compete. *(That means during your planning for the contest there has to be somewhere out of earshot to take them.)*

- Introduce the first contestant by saying... "name, title, title, name" and then lead the applause shake their hand and sit down. *(Note: refrain from saying our "first contestant, second contestant, etc.)*
- After each speaker has finished, shake their hand and lead the applause as they exit.
- Call for a minute of silence for the Judges.
- Ask for one minute of silence. The timer will notify you when the minute is up by turning on the red light. *(Make sure the timer knows this should be done in advance.)*
- After the last speaker call for 2 minutes of silence.
- Wait until all the ballots are collected. *(watch for a sign from the Chief Judge that all ballots are collected - if you're not sure ask the Chief Judge if all ballots are collected)*
- Ask the Contestants to join you on stage in the order they spoke
- Ask for a another big round of applause as they come up
- Ask the contestants to remain on stage until the interviews are completed.
- Interview them, thank them for participating, and give them their Certificates of Participation.
- Ask for another big round of applause at the end and let the contestants return to their seats.

When the speaking portion of the contest is finished thank the audience for being a wonderful supportive audience and return the control of the meeting back to the Contest Chair'.

9. **Wrap up & Awards:** The contest chair should thank the toastmaster and give him or her a gift or certificate of appreciation. In some clubs the chief judge receives a gift as well. Thank all of the people who made the contest possible. The award ceremony should be handled with class. Make sure it is the last item on the agenda and that it flows well. Have the visiting dignitary join the conference chair. Make sure you have the winners in the right order. In contests with three contestants and five or more contestants, you may announce a third place winner, a second place winner and a first place winner. In contests with four participants announce a second place winner and a first place winner only. *(That is, make sure that no contestant ends up as the implied "Loser.")* Usually, the contest chair reads the names and the visiting dignitary hands out the awards. *(Hold the award in your left hand. Extend your right hand to shake the hand of the recipient while holding the award close to your body. Shake hands, and then extend the award.)*

Evaluation Contestants	Name & Phone #	Email Address	Confirmed Yes/No
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			

Table Topics Contestants	Name & Phone #	Email Address	Confirmed Yes/No
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			

Items to Do	Who is Responsible & Phone #	Email Address	Confirmed Yes/No
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- Location of Contest
- Food & Refreshments
- Setup
- Take Down
- Timing Equipment
- Contest Forms
- Cards for contestant positions
- Certificates
- Awards
- Gifts
- (Some clubs give the TM & CJ a gift)
- Registration
- Marketing Information
- Contest Agenda
- Items for Raffles or Auction
- Tickets for Raffles
- Numbered Cards for Auctions

You can have more or less than six contestants. This is a general worksheet. Please feel free to use it to make your own. The main idea is to plan everything so the contest is a success.

Please feel free to contact me at: cjinkent@comcast.net or call 253.856.7513 if you have any questions.

Good Luck at your contest.

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