

Toastmasters Meeting Roles

Guidelines for roles at club meetings:

Chairperson
Table Topic Master
Assistant Sergeant at Arms
Timekeeper
Grammarian
Introducer of Speakers
Speech Evaluator
Fun Item Presenter
The Presenter of General Business
The 'Hot Seat'
General Evaluator

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Toastmasters Meeting Roles

Chairperson

The primary purpose of the chairperson is to conduct the meeting.

Prior to the meeting you are expected to contact all the programmed participants to ensure they will be attending and are aware and prepared for the speech or duty designated, 10 to 12 days before the meeting. Re-check the weekend before the meeting.

NOTE If a person is unable to perform their duty, contact the VP Education to arrange a replacement

Obtain information on the speakers: speeches details (speech manual; speech number; timing; title) and decide on the requirements for equipment (eg OHP), and the timing for the lights

Your responsibility is to set out the programme agenda for the meeting and to provide sufficient numbers of the programme on the night (approx 25 copies)

You must timetable the meeting to ensure the programme fits into the allotted time (7.30 – 9.30, or possibly up to 9.40), informing the Table Topics Master of how much time is permitted

To timetable the time taken for speeches add one minute to the maximum length of time allotted for the speech. Allow 10 mins for a break

Arrive early at the meeting, and ensure the room has been set up correctly by the Sergeant at Arms

SAMPLE PROGRAMME

- Welcome – may include inspirational quote
- Introduction of guests / corrections to the programme
- Optional – short input on evaluations from VP Education
- Apologies
- Table Topics
- Introduction of speakers
- Manual speeches
- Educational (if appropriate)
- Fun item (optional)
- Table Topics Evaluation
- Speech evaluations
- General Business
- Timekeeper's report (optional)
- Grammarian's report (optional)
- General Evaluator's report
- Meeting end

Table Topics Master

The TTM selects a topic for the TT session and selects the participants.

Participants speak to the topic for 1- 1.5 – 2 minutes

The Chair will advise on the amount of time available for the session

The TTM explains the purpose of TT, leads the applause for participants as they get up to speak and as they finish

The TTM will also be evaluated during TT evaluation

When choosing participants, primarily choose those who will not otherwise be speaking on the night

Visitors/guests can be asked to speak, but ask their permission before the session starts, NOT during the session

The purpose is two fold – firstly to allow all those attending a chance to speak, and secondly to improve their impromptu speaking skills

Assistant Sergeant at Arms

Duties include:

Arrive early and ensure the table is set up at the door with members' nametags, visitor book, and meeting programme

Greet members and visitors, ask visitors to sign the book

Ensure that visitors are properly "looked after" – if possible sit beside them so that you can quietly explain to them what is going on, during the meeting, or if there is more than one visitor, get an experienced member of the club to sit with each visitor

Bring milk, biscuits, and tea towel

Put coffee, tea etc in kitchen before the meeting starts

Prepare water etc shortly before break

Serve drinks and biscuits to members

Afterwards, clean dishes and put stores back into cupboard

Pack nametags and visitors book and put into cupboard

Timekeeper

The role is to keep track of the time throughout the meeting, and report on timing when called on by the chair (optional)

Before the meeting check that the lights are working and you have a stopwatch/timer

Position the lights so that they can be clearly seen

During the meeting record the time the meeting starts.

Where timing is required, use the timing device, lights and bell as directed

During table topics, use the lights and bell as directed by the table topics master

Record the time taken by each speaker

Optional: When called on by the chairperson to give the timekeeping report, give your

findings: give the speaker's name and the time taken compared to the objective time

You may give a general statement about the table topics speakers rather than name them individually

Recommended time for report is 2 minutes

Record the time the meeting finishes

LIGHTS

Using the 3 lights:

When the green light is required, turn it on and leave it on until the amber light is required

When the amber light is required, turn it on and turn off the green light

Likewise for the red light

Leave the red light on until the speaker has finished

If the speaker is still going 30 seconds after the red light comes on, sound the bell; and thereafter every 15 seconds until the speaker stops.

Grammarian

This is a skill that expands your listening skills. You have a responsibility to comment on the use of English during the course of the meeting.

Prior to the meeting prepare a brief explanation of the duties of the grammarian for the benefit of guests and members

When you arrive at the meeting make a list of everyone present

During the meeting listen to everyone's word usage. Record any awkward use or misuse of the language (incomplete sentences, ers and ums, sentences that change direction midstream, incorrect grammar, incorrect pronunciation, malapropisms, etc) and any praiseworthy use of language

The chairman will ask you to give your report at the end of the meeting. Try to offer correct usage in every instance where there was a misuse.

Report on creative language usage. Affirmation should be given where someone has demonstrated an extended vocabulary

Please do not embarrass people

Recommended time for the report is 2 minutes

Introducer of Speakers

This person is most often the evaluator, but not necessarily so – it could be the Chair or another member of the meeting altogether

State title of the assignment, and the title of the manual that the assignment is from

State the objectives of the speech, and any additional personal objectives that the speaker may want to work on

Give the title of the speech

Welcome the speaker up to the floor.

Speech Evaluator

When you are the evaluator:

Before you evaluate, you should have a clear idea of what to look and listen for before the speech begins

Read the speaker's assignment and the evaluation guide before the speech. Contact the speaker before the meeting to discuss their assignment

You are expected to base most of your comments in relation to the objectives for that assignment.

Prepare as much as possible as soon as you know who you are evaluating.

During the speech pay close attention, using your eyes as well as your ears. Make written notes as necessary. After the speech you will present a brief oral evaluation, usually 2-3 minutes long. You will also complete the evaluation guide in the speaker's manual

As an evaluator, your role is to describe your reactions to the speech. Describe the strong points of the speech, make your evaluation positive and supportive, and commend all the good things the speaker did. Try to make the speaker feel good about him or herself.

Do not address your comments solely to the speaker, or speak in the second person ("You ..."). Rather speak to the whole audience and refer to the speaker in the third person ("He/she...").

Use personalised comments such as:

"My reaction was..."

"I felt that he/she.."

Avoid statements like:

"You should have..."

"You failed to..."

However don't overload the speaker with praise only. Every evaluation should have specific suggestions for improvement. An area requiring improvement should have a suggestion as to how the speaker could improve.

Personalise your recommendations for improvement, for example:

"I suggest"

“I feel X’s next speech would have more impact if he/she...”

Avoid statements such as:

“You should...”

“You must...”

The art of evaluating is to give supportive suggestions for improvement. Use the CRC technique, ie begin with a commendation or two, give one, two or three recommendations, and finish with a commendation.

How to benefit from an evaluation as a speaker

An evaluator is not a judge or a person with all the answers. He or she is a source of helpful feedback. Only you can accept if the evaluator is “on target”

The evaluator is trying to assist you, therefore aim to understand their viewpoint and not become defensive. Think through how the evaluator’s suggestions may help you improve your skills

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF EFFECTIVE EVALUATION

1. Read the speech objectives and evaluation guide
2. Talk with speaker beforehand
3. Listen carefully
4. Recognise the speaker’s strengths
5. Provide verbal reward for improvement
6. Look for areas for improvement
7. Give practical suggestions for improvement
8. Be positive and supportive
9. Make the speaker feel good about him or herself
10. Fill in their manual

Fun Item Presenter

The “fun item” presenter’s job is to help make the meeting more interesting, enjoyable, and fun. They should devise a short game that, as well as being fun, helps to develop impromptu speaking skills.

Eg “Bluff Mania” – get members of the audience up one at a time and ask them to define an obscure word, like “scombroid” “silurid”, “wlat”, “agelast”, “jobbernowl”, “ctenophile” (if they don’t know the word, make something up, but make it convincing!)

The Presenter of General Business

It is good practice for the President to share this function with other members of the committee, eg by alternating (every second meeting given by the President; other meetings by other members of the committee).

The ‘Hot Seat’

Note that this is intended for last minute cancellations. If someone puts in an apology several days in advance, the Chairperson ought to be able to find someone else to perform that duty, leaving the “Hot seat” free to attend to last minute cancellations.

General Evaluator

Arrive early

When called on to give the general evaluation, briefly explain the purpose if there are guests
Comment on:

The general atmosphere – was it friendly, relaxed, inviting, well organised, good room arrangement?

Reception – was it welcoming to everyone?

Chairperson – did they open the meeting on time? Did they welcome guests? Did they explain clearly any changes to the programme? Did they keep to time? How was the atmosphere – interested, bored, lively, etc?

Table topics – Evaluate TT as a whole, do not refer to individual speakers. Was the purpose of TT explained? Was the TT master well prepared? Were the topics appropriate? Did the evaluator have a good balance of recommendations and commendation? Were they helpful?

Speakers – Don't evaluate the speakers

Speech evaluation – were we told what the objectives of the speech were? were the evaluations informed, prepared, encouraging? Were the commendations and recommendations appropriate? Guidance on how the recommendations could be carried out could be useful

Grammarians – were they helpful? Perceptive?

Timekeeper – were they efficient? Clear and concise in their report?

Round off with a general appraisal of the evening, audience appreciation and enjoyment

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