

Table Topics Master

Table Topics are impromptu speeches. The purpose of the Table Topics section is to help members think on their feet and speak on a given subject for between one and two minutes. It also allows speaking opportunities for those who are not programmed for other roles on the Agenda.

Before the meeting

Draw up a list of Topics. Ideas can be found in The Toastmaster magazine, national papers or websites. Do not repeat the previous meeting's Table Topics ideas or items.

Select topics that will inspire the speakers and encourage them to give their opinions. Phrase them in such a way that the speaker clearly will know what you want them to talk about.

Keep your comments short. Your job is to give others a chance to speak, not to give a series of mini-talks yourself.

Get a copy of the Agenda, to help you select members who are not carrying out any speaking role. Only if time permits at the end of the Topics session should you call on participants already on the programme.

Find out if there is a theme of the meeting and, if so, prepare Topics in line with that theme.

During the meeting

When introduced, briefly state the purpose of the Topics session.

Set the stage for your Topics programme. Keep your remarks brief but enthusiastic.

State the Topic then call on a member. Doing it with way round holds everyone's attention as they all think of a response should they be called on to speak. It also adds to the value of the impromptu element by giving everyone an opportunity to improve his or her 'better listening and thinking' skills.

Call on speakers at random, but if possible try to select people who don't already have a role or a prepared speech (this is detailed on the Agenda), so that everyone gets the opportunity to speak during the meeting. Avoid going around the room in the order in which people are sitting.

Give each participant a different Topic. Don't ask two people the same thing unless you ask each specifically to give the 'pro' or 'con' side.

Watch the time you have available. Check the printed agenda for the total time allotted to Table Topics and adjust the number of Topics to end your segment on time. Even if your portion started late, try to end on time to avoid the total meeting running over time.

Further information on Table Topics

http://www.toastmasters.org.nz/index.cfm/Speaking_Resources/Table_Topics.htm

This section of the Knowledgebase has many interesting ideas for Table Topics:
<http://d71.org/kb.php?mode=cat&cat=26>

- This assignment can count towards your Competent Leadership Award. Remember to ask someone to evaluate your performance as Table Topics Master in the Competent Leader manual (p.29).