

Guide to being Toastmaster

The main duty of the Toastmaster is to act as the host and make introductions.

Participants should be introduced in a way that encourages the audience to listen to them. The Toastmaster creates an atmosphere of interest, expectation, and receptivity.

Before the meeting

- Check with the Vice President Education to find out if a special theme has been set for the meeting and if there are any programme changes.
- Prepare a brief introduction to open the meeting. This should be about three minutes long. It could be anything topical, maybe about a recent Toastmasters event, or something that presents the benefits of speaking in public. You could also briefly explain how Toastmasters was founded, for the benefit of new members and guests.
- Prepare a theme for all members to use as they introduce themselves. At the meeting you should ask them to take 20 seconds to say who they are and something brief on the theme – for example, "what's your favourite animal?"
- It's a good idea to think of some remarks which can be used to bridge the gaps between programme segments. You may never use them, but it's good to be prepared and it can add to the fun and interest of the meeting. You could even develop the remarks around a theme to run through the whole evening.

Remember that performing as Toastmaster is one of the most valuable experiences in your Club work. The assignment requires careful preparation in order to have a smoothly-run meeting.

At the meeting

- Arrive early in order to finish any last-minute details.

- Study the Agenda carefully so that you're aware of what will be happening at each stage.
- Check with the speakers for any last-minute changes.
- Prepare introductions for each Speaker. The VPE should send them to you before the meeting. If this doesn't happen it may be because the speakers haven't done their intro yet and you might have to ask them to scribble one out for you on the night.
- At about 6.55pm check that everything is in place for the meeting and that everyone is ready - especially the role-players. Check that the water jugs and glasses are on the tables and that everyone has an Agenda and Evaluation forms.
- Stand at the lectern and declare the meeting open with a decisive bang of the gavel.

During the meeting

- Preside with sincerity, energy and decisiveness. Take your audience on a pleasant journey and make them feel that all is going well.
- Keep your eye on the clock, and check from the Agenda that the meeting is running on schedule. If things are running late, don't deprive anyone of the time allotted to them, but you could politely mention it and remind the speakers not to go over their allotted time. If the meeting is running very late you could suggest taking five minutes off the Network Break.
- During Table Topics, take a seat near the front where you can be seen by the Table Topics Master. Keep an eye on the time, and when the 20 minutes is almost up, try to quietly indicate to the Table Topics Master that they should just do one last Table Topic.
- Always lead the applause before and after each presenter.
- After your introduction of another presenter, remain standing near the lectern until you have shaken hands – signifying your hand over of control of the meeting - then be seated.

- When another presenter has finished, shake hands again to signify that control of the meeting is returning to you.

Before you close the meeting...

- Check that the General Evaluator has awarded ribbons to three people who did particularly well or showed a great improvement on previous performance. The idea is that these ribbons should encourage speakers, so they're not necessarily given to the best performers of the evening, but to those who have shown most improvement. If the ribbons haven't been presented, the Toastmaster can present them. The ribbons are in a white A5 envelope in one of the plastic boxes.
- If someone did their Icebreaker or 10th speech, they should get a standing ovation. The Speech Evaluator usually organises this, but if it hasn't been done, the Toastmaster should invite everyone to give the Speaker an ovation.
- Declare the meeting closed with a decisive bang of the gavel.

Competent Leadership Award

- This assignment can count towards your Competent Leadership Award. Remember to ask someone to evaluate your performance as Toastmaster in the Competent Leader manual (page 27, 34, 45, 52 and 63).