

TOASTMASTER

TOASTMASTER TOP TIPS:

- ▶ **Sit at the front!**
- ▶ Start preparing a week in advance of the meeting
- ▶ Pick an entertaining theme for the evening
- ▶ Keep your introductions concise and to the point
- ▶ Don't forget to explain how the evening is structured
- ▶ **Watch-out for time!**

"They don't need a lawyer! They need a toastmaster!"

Edward Bennett Williams – American trial lawyer

Congratulations member, you are now in charge, as Toastmaster of the evening! The role of the Toastmaster is to be the genial host of the evening, to move it forward and to introduce each participant in turn. It is important that you fulfil this role to the best of your abilities. An effective Toastmaster can be the one ingredient that makes the difference between a good and a great meeting. **You are in charge!** Relish this opportunity as much as you can and

make an impact! **This is your chance to shine!**

WHAT WILL I LEARN?

As Toastmaster of the evening, you are in effect the director of a show that comprises nearly twenty actors! This is a fantastic occasion to build-up your leadership skills and confidence as speaker. Taking on this role might be daunting at first, but afterwards all you'll remember is "I've done it!" Lastly, this role is a great occasion to become more involved with the running of the club 'behind the scenes' and to get to fellow members better.

The skills learnt in the role are highly transferable to the business environment. This is especially so when presiding and organising meetings.

BEFORE THE MEETING

This role requires a little bit of prior preparation in order to be as successful as possible. Please liaise with the club Vice-President of Education as needed. You should aim to start preparing for the role a week before the meeting.

One week beforehand:

- ▶ Check who is participating on the easy-Speak meeting page
- ▶ Liaise with VP-Education regarding any gaps on the agenda
- ▶ Assist VP-Education as needed to contact meeting participants

Three days beforehand (Saturday prior to meeting):

- ▶ Pick up a theme for the evening – It can be anything you want! Maybe something that relates to the time of the year (spring, holidays, Halloween, Christmas) or something more personal (new job, difficult decision made etc.).
- ▶ E-mail out the evening participants asking for answers to a question related to the theme of the evening e.g. "What were the first holidays you've been too?" "When did you make a difficult decision?" You can also ask how long the participants have been a member for!

In the days leading up to the meeting, keep in touch with the club VP-Education so that you are aware of any apologies for absence, changes to the agenda, etc.

Aim to be thoroughly familiar with the meeting's agenda before it starts!

DURING THE MEETING

Please aim to arrive early, 15 to 20 mins before the meeting is due to start. Once you've settled down, get to know the speakers and functionaries of the evening.

- ▶ Cross-check who is present and who is absent with the help of the VP-Education and club President.
- ▶ If anyone is missing assist the club President and VP-Education in finding suitable replacements before the meeting starts
- ▶ If anyone failed to reply to your e-mail but is present, ask them their answer(s) to your question on the evening's theme.
- ▶ **RE-FAMILIARISE YOURSELF WITH THE AGENDA OF THE MEETING**
- ▶ **SIT AT THE FRONT**
- ▶ **RELAX!**

Once the club President's has finished his/her introduction, it's your time to shine and take over the stage. Your role introduction should be brief, very energetic and contain the following points:

- ▶ Remind everyone to switch off their mobile phones
- ▶ Explain the structure of the meeting, speeches, evaluations, table topics, wrap-up
- ▶ Demonstrate the importance of clapping and applause. Lead a rousing test applause for added effect!
- ▶ Talk about the Toastmasters Educational and its structure if you have manuals at hand (time permitting)
- ▶ Introduce the theme of the evening (if you decided on one)

From then on, you'll be introducing functionaries, speakers and evaluators in turn. Keep your introduction, energetic, sharp and timely. A good example is "Our vote counter tonight is Olga. Olga has been a member for 3 months and her favourite food is mango".

When handing over the stage to the next speaker or functionary remember the following:

- ▶ Lead the applause!
- ▶ Shake hands with them firmly as they enter the stage
- ▶ Walk behind them as you move back to your seat
- ▶ When you see that the speaker or functionary is about to leave the stage. Lead the applause and shake hands with them to complete the handover

Before introducing speakers, ask the speech evaluator to introduce the objectives of the speech briefly. This way everyone in the audience knows what the speaker is working towards and will be evaluated against. The introduction will look like "*Let's have Hilary who's evaluating Olga's speech to read out the speech objectives for us.*"

After each speaker has spoken, ask the timekeeper for 90s on the clock for the audience to give feedback slips to the speaker. You can use this interval to say a sentence about the speech you've heard, a quote maybe. Or alternatively just stand tall and make eye contact with the audience.

Don't forget timekeeper's reports and best speaker, evaluator and table topics speaker votes after each section of the meeting!

When your time as Toastmaster is over, hand the meeting back to the club's President and don't forget to introduce him or her in relation to the theme of the evening too!

KEEPING TO TIME

Starting and finishing on time is what defines a good Toastmasters meeting. As Toastmaster of the meeting, you're in charge and you should pay particular attention to time with your helper, the timekeeper.

Commons ways in which a meeting overruns besides starting late include:

- ▶ Spending too much time introducing speakers and functionaries
- ▶ Extending the feedback collection times between speakers
- ▶ Not ending the break when it's meant to end
- ▶ Having too many table topics speakers during the table topics section

It cannot be emphasised enough that you and the timekeeper are working together as a close-knit team to keep the meeting on time. **Remind the timekeeper to use his/her bell at the end of the gos feedback section, or use hand signals.**

The good news is that there is enough flexibility in a meeting agenda to gain back time and finish on time even if a meeting begins ten minutes late. Besides, the obvious of limiting table topic to four, five or six speakers maximum. There are other techniques one can employ to gain back time:

- ▶ Limit the feedback section between speakers to a minute
- ▶ Highlight the speech's objectives yourself, as part of your introduction of the speaker. Don't invite the evaluators
- ▶ Reduce the length of the break by a couple of minutes
- ▶ Arrange for collection of best speakers etc. votes to take place at the same time as the relevant timekeeper report
- ▶ Make your introductions even shorter