

The Role of Toastmaster

The main duty of the Toastmaster is to act as a genial host and conduct the entire programme, including introducing participants. The toastmaster is MC for the evening. If the toastmaster does not perform the duties well, an entire meeting can end in failure. The toastmaster creates an atmosphere of interest and expectation. The participants should be introduced in a way that excites the audience and motivates them to listen.

For obvious reasons this task is not usually assigned to a member until he or she is familiar with the Club and its procedures.

Preparation

- At the end of the meeting, next week's toastmaster is identified and the designated roles checked. The toastmaster then can begin to prepare next week's programme.
- Phone Sunday night to check roles. Call members who haven't attended lately. They may have let their attendance slip and just need a little encouragement to return.
- Have a good variety of roles on the programme, the general content is: 2 or 3 speeches and evaluators, general evaluator, table topics master and 2 table topics evaluators, grammarian, timer, sergeant at arms, mission statement or bard and a slot for the VP Ed and President to close the meeting. Format can be varied.
- When assigning roles, make sure anyone doing a new role has access to advice from a mentor, if not explain the role yourself.
- Match up speakers with evaluators.
- At the beginning of the week, send an email round with all the roles assigned so far and ask for volunteers to fill any outstanding roles.
- Set a theme if you wish. A theme can add a lot of fun to the meeting, break the ice and provide a subject that people can speak about.
- Download a toastmasters template and fill in the roles and names (full names)
- Add the times allowing an extra minute here and there for extras.
- Add apologies at the top.

- Keep a cool head and be prepared to adapt to last minute changes, adjust the programme to suit and ask others to fill in.
- Print off 15 or so copies of the programme to distribute at the meeting.

During the meeting

- Arrive early to check layout and that all the equipment is ready.
- Check pronunciation of unfamiliar names. Use full names.
- Make sure visitors are identified so that they can be welcomed and asked to comment at the end.
- Sit near the front for easy access to the stage but not at the side as this is distracting to the audience.
- After being introduced by the S@A, greet and welcome the audience enthusiastically. Talk briefly about the events of the evening that we can look forward to, announce the apologies and comment on those who have adopted the theme.
- Greet each speaker warmly and shake hands, announce their name clearly and lead the applause.
- Make a linking comment between speakers to keep the meeting flowing.
- Basically the stage is yours to 'hold'. The correct etiquette is that the toastmaster hands over the stage to the next speaker by shaking hands. After speaking the toastmaster returns and takes over the stage again. The shaking of hands signifies the passing over of the stage.
- Pay close attention to time. It may be necessary to shorten the supper break or table topics session if the meeting is running over time.

Once an experienced Toastmaster, you may want to vary the meeting – for example: an activity or quiz could replace a speech, the grammarian's role could be replaced by joke teller or ah counter. You could even decide not to assign roles at all but let the members pick the roles out of a hat on the way into the meeting! You could change the order of the roles, ask other clubs to join us for the evening or bring friends or family along. The choices are endless.

Remember performing as toastmaster is one of the most valuable experiences in your Club work. It is easily the most challenging and yet the most rewarding role in the Club. To preside over a meeting which you have taken a great deal of trouble to organise ... to see the meeting flowing and the audience enjoying themselves and your confidence growing ... it all becomes worthwhile in the end.

Good luck when your turn comes!

Diane Burke 24.9.15