

# TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL®



## Speech Contest Rulebook



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## Introduction

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*Speech contests are an important part of the Toastmasters educational program. They provide an opportunity for Toastmasters to gain speaking experience, as well as an opportunity for other Toastmasters to learn by observing proficient speakers.*

*This booklet contains the rules and standard procedures for conducting the International, Evaluation, Humorous, Table Topics, and Tall Tales speech contests. If you are involved in conducting or competing in a speech contest, please read these rules carefully and follow them. By doing so, you will ensure a fair speech contest and an enjoyable event for everyone.*

*The book consists of three parts:*

- ▶ **Speech Contest Rules.** Here you will find the General Rules governing all Toastmasters speech contests, as well as the specific rules covering the International, Evaluation, Humorous, Table Topics, and Tall Tales contests.
- ▶ **Contest Checklists.** This section describes some of the common steps required for contest judges, contest chairs, and contestants to prepare for a speech contest.
- ▶ **Additional Resources.** In this section, you'll find a list of additional manuals, articles, Web pages and other helpful materials related to Toastmasters speech contests.

# Speech Contest Rules

## General Rules for All Toastmasters Speech Contests

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Unless otherwise stated, these rules apply to all speech contests conducted by Toastmasters International clubs, areas, divisions, and districts, as well as all contests conducted at the International Convention.

### 1. Speech Contest Policy

- A. Toastmasters International recognizes and supports the following official speech contests:
  1. International
  2. Evaluation
  3. Humorous
  4. Table Topics
  5. Tall Tales
  6. Taped – for members of:
    - a. undistricted clubs
    - b. clubs in provisional districts
- B. Speech contests must follow these requirements:
  1. Speech contest competitors must meet all eligibility requirements as outlined in the Speech Contest Rulebook.
  2. Districts must conduct the International Speech Contest.
  3. Districts may conduct up to three additional contests, which may be chosen from the list above.
  4. The only contests permitted at the area, division, or district levels are those that originate at the club level and proceed through the area, division, and district levels.
- C. The Speech Contest Rulebook is protocol and applies to all official Toastmasters speech contests. Modifications to rules may only be made through the administrative protocol review process. Exceptions shall not be permitted.

### 2. Eligibility

- A. To be eligible to compete in any official Toastmasters Speech Contest, a member must:
  1. Be a member in good standing of the club, area, division, and district in which he or she is competing.
    - a) The club must also be in good standing.
    - b) A new, dual, or reinstated member must have dues and membership application current with World Headquarters.
  2. Have completed at least six speech projects in the *Competent Communication* manual prior to the club contest.
    - a) However, a charter member of a club chartered since the previous July 1 is permitted to compete without having completed this requirement. The club must have officially chartered before the area contest.

3. Maintain eligibility at all levels of any contest.
  - a) If at any level it is determined that a contestant was ineligible to compete at any previous level, the contestant must be disqualified. This disqualification must occur even if the ineligibility is discovered at a later level and has been corrected.
4. The following are ineligible to compete in any Toastmasters speech contest:
  - a) Incumbent international officers and directors
  - b) Region advisors or region advisor applicants
  - c) District officers whose terms expire June 30:
    1. District governor
    2. Any lieutenant governor
    3. Secretary
    4. Treasurer
    5. Public relations officer
    6. Division governor
    7. Area governor
  - d) International officer and director candidates
  - e) Immediate past district governors
  - f) District officers or announced candidates for the term beginning the upcoming July 1
  - g) Presenters of education sessions at the event at which the contest will be held, including area, division, and district events, as well as the International Convention
  - h) Judges at any level of a contest in which a member would compete
5. The winner of the International Contest finals held in August during the International Convention is not eligible to compete in the International Contest again at any level.
6. Toastmasters who are members in more than one club and who meet all other eligibility requirements are permitted to compete in each club contest in which membership in good standing is held.
  - a) Should a member win more than one club International speech contest, he or she is permitted to represent only one of those clubs at the area level.
  - b) No contestant can compete in more than one area speech contest of a given type, even if the two areas are in different divisions or districts.
7. Each contestant must be present to compete. Participation by audio tape, video tape, teleconference, Web cam, streaming audio, or other remote technology is not permitted. (Exception: participants in the Taped Speech Contest are required to submit their entries as audio recordings, as outlined in the Taped Speech Contest section of this rulebook.)

### 3. Selection Sequence

- A. **Club, Area, Division, District.** Each club in good standing is permitted to choose its contestant for each area speech contest by whatever means the club desires. If a contest is held, it must comply with the rules in this manual, and the contest result is final. The area speech contest winner then proceeds to the division contest, if applicable. The division winner then proceeds to the district contest.
  1. In those districts with 10 or more divisions, two separate run-off competitions among division winners may be held before the district contest finals.
    - a) Insofar as practical, the number of divisions competing in each run-off will be the same.
    - b) The three highest-placed available contestants from each run-off competition will then advance to the district contest.

2. Should an area or division contest winner be unable to participate in the next-level contest, the highest placed available contestant will advance to that level.
  3. The International Speech Contest is the only contest that proceeds beyond the district level. Following the district-level International Speech Contest, the chief judge ranks all district-level contestants in order of results, and then submits this list to World Headquarters. Detailed information concerning the semifinal contest is then provided to the winner and alternate by World Headquarters.
  4. If a district contestant in the International Speech Contest cannot compete in the semifinal round, the next highest placed contestant will be contacted by World Headquarters.
- B. Eight weeks prior to the area contest, if an area has four assigned clubs or fewer, districts have the option to allow the two highest placed available contestants from each club to compete in the area contest.
1. Should additional clubs charter prior to the area contest, the two highest placed available contestants from each club are permitted to compete.
  2. In those divisions with four assigned areas or less, districts have the option to allow the two highest placed available contestants from each area to compete.
  3. In districts with four assigned divisions or less, districts have the option to allow the two highest placed available contestants from each division to participate in the district contest.
  4. The decision whether or not to allow two contestants to advance from club to area, from area to division, and/or from division to district must be made and communicated throughout the district prior to the commencement of the contest cycle – i.e. prior to any club contests being held.
    - a) Once the decision is made, it must be implemented consistently throughout the district in all clubs, areas, and divisions affected.
    - b) If a district decides to allow two contestants to advance from club to area, its decisions regarding the number to advance from area to division and/or from division to district need not be the same.

#### **4. Speech Subject and Preparation**

- A. The subject of all International, Humorous, and Tall Tales contest speeches shall be selected by the contestant.
- B. The subject of Table Topics speeches shall be determined by the contest chair, as outlined in the Table Topics Contest section of this rulebook.
- C. The subject of Evaluation contest speeches shall be limited to oral evaluations of the test speaker's speech, as outlined in the Evaluation Contest section of this rulebook.
- D. Contestants must prepare their own speeches, and each must be substantially original.
  1. Speeches for International, Humorous, and Tall Tales contests must be certified as such in writing to the chief judge by the contestants prior to the presentation of their speeches (using Item 1183, Speaker's Certification of Eligibility and Originality).
  2. Any quoted material must be so identified during the speech presentation.
- E. All contestants will speak from the same platform or area designated by the contest chair.
  1. All contestants and judges will be advised of the speaking area before the contest begins. The contestants are permitted to speak from any position within the designated area.
  2. A lectern/podium will be available. However, use of the lectern/podium is optional.
  3. If amplification is necessary, a lectern/podium fixed-mounted microphone and a portable microphone shall be made available.

4. All equipment shall be available for contestants to practice with prior to the contest. Contestants are responsible for arranging their preferred setup of the lectern/podium microphone and other equipment in a quiet manner before being introduced by the Toastmaster.

## 5. General Procedure

- A. At each level of a Toastmasters speech contest, a specified number of judges and officials are required.
  1. At club contests, a contest chair, chief judge, at least five judges, a tiebreaking judge, three counters, and two timers are appointed, as far as practical.
  2. At area contests, there shall be at least five judges or equal representation from the clubs composing the area. In addition to these judges, a contest chair, chief judge, tiebreaking judge, three counters, and two timers shall be appointed.
  3. At division or district contests, there shall be at least seven judges or equal representation from the areas composing the division or district, in addition to a contest chair, chief judge, tiebreaking judge, three counters and two timers; no judge shall be a member of the club represented by a contestant.
  4. At the semifinals for the International contest, there shall be at least nine judges or equal representation from the districts; no judge shall be a member of the club represented by a contestant. In addition to these judges, a contest chair, chief judge, a tiebreaking judge, three counters, and two timers are appointed.
  5. At the finals for the International contest, there shall be at least nine judges or equal representation from the districts; no judge shall be a member of the club represented by a contestant. In addition to these judges, a contest chair, chief judge, five qualifying judges, tiebreaking judge, three counters, and two timers are appointed.
- B. To be a judge at a Toastmasters speech contest, you must meet all eligibility requirements identified below.
  1. All judges shall be members in good standing.
  2. All judges at area, division, district, semifinal, and International speech contests shall have been a Toastmasters member in good standing since July 1 of the previous year and have completed at least six *Competent Communication* manual projects.
  3. All judges at the semifinal and International contests shall be at least an Advanced Toastmaster Bronze or Advanced Communicator Bronze and have previously judged a Toastmasters speech contest at area, division, district, or semifinal level.
- C. Before the contest, contestants are briefed on the rules by the contest chair. Contestants will then draw for their speaking position with the contest chair.
- D. If a contestant is absent from the briefing, the alternate speaker, if present, is permitted to attend the briefing in place of the primary contestant.
  1. If the primary contestant is not present when the person conducting the contest is introduced, the primary contestant is disqualified and the alternate officially becomes the contestant.
  2. Should the primary contestant arrive after the briefing but before the person conducting the contest is introduced, the primary contestant is permitted to compete, provided the primary contestant:
    - a) Reports to the contest chair upon his/her arrival



- b) Has all required paperwork in good order before the person conducting the contest is introduced to begin the contest. The primary contestant waives the opportunity of a briefing.
- E. Before the contest, judges, counters, and timers are briefed on their duties by the chief judge.
  - 1. Each judge receives the appropriate ballot for the contest and an envelope.
    - a) International speech contest judges receive Item 1172, International Speech Contest Judge's Guide and Ballot.
    - b) Evaluation contest judges receive Item 1179, Evaluation Speech Contest Judge's Guide and Ballot.
    - c) Humorous contest judges receive Item 1191, Humorous Speech Contest Judge's Guide and Ballot.
    - d) Table Topics contest judges receive Item 1180, Table Topics Contest Judge's Guide and Ballot.
    - e) Tall Tales contest judges receive Item 1181, Tall Tales Contest Judge's Guide and Ballot.
  - 2. Timers receive Item 1175, Speech Contest Time Record Sheet and Instruction for Timers. If necessary, they also receive instruction in the proper use of the timing equipment.
  - 3. Ballot counters receive Item 1176, Counter's Tally Sheet. If necessary, they also receive instruction in the gathering of ballots and the counting room procedure (described below).
- F. Before the contest, the chief judge selects a member to act as tiebreaking judge.
  - 1. The identity of the tiebreaking judge is secret, and known only to the chief judge.
  - 2. The tiebreaking judge does not attend the judges' briefing.
  - 3. The chief judge shall provide a Tiebreaking Judge's Guide and Ballot to the tiebreaking judge before the beginning of the contest.
    - a) International speech contest judges receive Item 1188, International Speech Contest Tiebreaking Judge's Guide and Ballot.
    - b) Evaluation contest judges receive Item 1179A, Evaluation Speech Contest Tiebreaking Judge's Guide and Ballot.
    - c) Humorous contest judges receive Item 1191A, Humorous Speech Contest Tiebreaking Judge's Guide and Ballot.
    - d) Table Topics contest judges receive Item 1180A, Table Topics Contest Tiebreaking Judge's Guide and Ballot.
    - e) Tall Tales contest judges receive Item 1181A, Tall Tales Contest Tiebreaking Judge's Guide and Ballot.
- G. For the International, Humorous, and Tall Tales contests, introduce each contestant by announcing the contestant's name, speech title, speech title, and contestant's name.
  - 1. For Table Topics contests, introduce each contestant by announcing the contestant's name, topic, topic, and contestant's name.
  - 2. For Evaluation contests, introduce each contestant by announcing the contestant's name twice.
- H. Contestants in the International, Humorous, and Tall Tales contests are permitted to remain in the same room throughout the duration of the contest.
- I. Evaluation contest participants are required to leave the room after the test speech has been delivered, as outlined in the Evaluation Contest section of this rulebook.
- J. Table Topics contestants must stay out of the room until the preceding speaker has completed his or her response to the topic, as outlined in the Table Topics Contest section of this rulebook.

- K. There will be one minute of silence between contestant speeches, during which the judges will mark their ballots. All judges will judge all contestants.
- L. When the last contestant finishes speaking, the contest chair will ask for silence until the ballot counters have collected all ballots.
  - 1. When judges have finished marking their ballots, they shall enter their choices for first, second, and third place, tear off the bottom portion of the ballot, place it in the provided envelope, and hold up the envelope for the ballot counters to collect.
    - a) The top portion of the ballot is not provided to the ballot counters, and must be discreetly discarded by the judge after the contest.
    - b) The chief judge personally collects the tiebreaking judge's guide and ballot, which must contain all contestants ranked in order by the tiebreaking judge.
  - 2. As the judges are completing their ballots at the end of the contest, the timers complete the timing record sheet, place it in the provided envelope, and hand it to the chief judge.
- M. Once all of the ballots have been collected, the ballot counters and the chief judge will leave the contest area and proceed to the counting room.
  - 1. In the counting room, the ballot counters will tabulate the results of the contest using Item 1176, Counter's Tally Sheet.
    - a) On the Counter's Tally Sheet, each contestant receives points for being ranked first, second, or third place on a judge's ballot.
      - a. Three points are scored for each first-place ranking.
      - b. Two points are scored for each second-place ranking.
      - c. One point is scored for each third-place ranking.
    - b) Once all points are entered, the ballot counters compute the total points for each contestant and enter the totals on the bottom of the tally sheet.
      - 1. Point totals must be verified by all ballot counters before results are entered on the sheet.
      - 2. Contestants are then ranked on the bottom of the ballot according to number of points scored.
    - c) In the event of a tie, the chief judge will consult the tiebreaking judge's ballot.
    - d) The tied contestant who received the highest ranking on the tiebreaking judge's ballot will gain the contested place, and any other tied contestants will be ranked in order behind that contestant.
  - 2. Once the results have been tabulated and verified, the chief judge records the names of the winners on a separate sheet of paper, which is then provided to the contest chair.
    - a) All ballots and the tally sheet will be kept by the chief judge until after the winners have been announced.
    - b) After the winners have been announced, the contest chair will destroy all ballots, the timing record, and the tally sheet.
- N. After the conclusion of the contestant interviews, the contest chair announces the winners of the contest in reverse order.
  - 1. In contests with five or more participants, a third-place winner, a second-place winner, and a first-place winner will be announced.
  - 2. In contests with four or fewer participants, a second-place winner and a first-place winner will be announced.
  - 3. Occasionally, a contest will be held with only one contestant. In such cases, a contest must still be held, and the contestant must be disqualified if he or she does not meet the timing, originality, and eligibility requirements.

4. Announcement of contest winners is final unless the list of winners is announced incorrectly, in which case the chief judge, ballot counters, or timers are permitted to immediately interrupt to correct the error.

## 6. Timing of the Speeches

- A. Two timers are appointed by the chief judge. One is provided with a stopwatch, and the other with a timing device that displays green, yellow, and red colors.
- B. The timing device must be in full view of each contestant.
- C. The timer with the stopwatch maintains and delivers to the chief judge the written record of elapsed time of each speech on the Time Record Sheet and Instructions for Timers (1175).
- D. The timer managing the timing device ensures that contestants are able to view an accurate green, yellow, or red signal at appropriate times during the speech.
- E. All speeches delivered by contestants must conform to the timing guidelines for the contest.
  1. International and Humorous speeches shall be from five to seven minutes. A contestant will be disqualified if the speech is less than four minutes 30 seconds or more than seven minutes 30 seconds.
  2. Table Topics contest speeches shall be from one minute 30 seconds to two minutes. A contestant will be disqualified if the speech is less than one minute or more than two minutes 30 seconds.
  3. Evaluation contest speeches shall be from two to three minutes. A contestant will be disqualified if the speech is less than one minute 30 seconds or more than three minutes 30 seconds.
  4. Tall Tales speeches shall be from three to five minutes. A contestant will be disqualified if the speech is less than two minutes 30 seconds or more than five minutes 30 seconds.
- F. Upon being introduced, the contestant shall proceed immediately to the speaking position.
  1. Timing will begin with the contestant's first definite verbal or nonverbal communication with the audience. This usually will be the first word uttered by the contestant, but would include any other communication such as sound effects, a staged act by another person, etc.
  2. The speaker should begin speaking within a short time after arriving at the speaking area, and is not permitted to delay the contest unnecessarily.
- G. Timers shall provide warning signals to the contestants, which shall be clearly visible to the speakers but not obvious to the audience.
  1. For International and Humorous contests:
    - a. A green signal will be displayed at five minutes and remain displayed for one minute.
    - b. A yellow signal will be displayed at six minutes and remain displayed for one minute.
    - c. A red signal will be displayed at seven minutes and will remain on until the conclusion of the speech.
  2. For Evaluation contests:
    - a. The green signal will be displayed at two minutes and remain displayed for 30 seconds.
    - b. The yellow signal will be displayed at two minutes and thirty seconds and remain displayed for 30 seconds.
    - c. The red signal will be displayed at three minutes and remain displayed until the evaluation is concluded.
  3. For Table Topics contests:
    - a. The green signal will be displayed at one minute and remain displayed for 30 seconds.

- b. The yellow signal will be displayed at one minute 30 seconds and remain displayed for 30 seconds.
  - c. The red signal will be displayed at two minutes and remain displayed until the speech is concluded.
4. For Tall Tales contests:
    - a. The green signal will be displayed at three minutes and remain displayed for one minute.
    - b. The yellow signal will be displayed at four minutes and remain displayed for one minute.
    - c. The red signal will be displayed at five minutes and remain displayed until the speech is concluded.
  5. In all speech contests, no signal shall be given for the overtime period.
  6. Any visually impaired contestant is permitted to request and must be granted a form of warning signal of his or her own choosing.
    - a. Acceptable warning signals would include, but not be limited to: a buzzer, a bell, or a person announcing the times at five, six, and seven minutes.
    - b. If any special device and/or specific instructions for such signal is/are required, the contestant must provide same.
  7. In the event of technical failure of the signal or timing equipment, a speaker is allowed 30 seconds extra overtime before being disqualified.
- H. Prior to announcing results, the contest chair shall announce if time disqualifications occurred, but not name the contestant(s) involved.

## **7. Protests and Disqualifications**

- A. Protests concerning eligibility and originality are limited to judges and contestants. Any protest shall be lodged with the chief judge and/or contest chair prior to the announcement of the winner and alternate(s).
- B. Before a contestant can be disqualified on the basis of originality, the contestant must be given an opportunity to respond to the judges. A majority of the judges must concur in the decision to disqualify.
- C. The contest chair can disqualify a contestant on the basis of eligibility.
- D. All decisions of the judges and qualifying judges are final.

## **International Speech Contest Rules**

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The International Speech Contest, which must be conducted in English only, follows all rules outlined in the General Rules section of this rulebook. In addition, the following additions and exceptions apply.

1. The International Speech Contest begins at the club level, and proceeds through the area, division (if applicable), district, semifinal, and International levels.
  - A. Semifinals are to be held at the International Convention, and will include all district winners randomly assigned to nine separate contests.
    1. All contestants' briefings for the semifinal speech contests will be conducted simultaneously by World Headquarters staff.
    2. All judges' briefings for the semifinal speech contests will also be conducted simultaneously by World Headquarters staff.

- B. Every participant in the finals of the International Speech Contest must present an entirely new and different speech than given in any International speech contest since January 1 of that same year.
1. Up to and including the semifinal speech contest, International contestants are permitted to use the same speech, but are not required to do so.
  2. Winners of each semifinal contest at the International Convention will prepare and deliver to World Headquarters outlines of their semifinal winning speech, which will be given to qualifying judges before the judge's briefing for the International Contest.
  3. Qualifying judges will also be given a Speaker Qualification Sheet (Item 1186). On this sheet, judges will indicate whether the speech being delivered at the finals of the International Speech Contest is entirely new and different from the speech given at the semifinal contest.
  4. As the judges are completing their ballots at the end of the contest, the qualifying judges complete the Speaker Qualification Sheet, sign it, place it in the provided envelope, and hold it up for the ballot counters to collect.
  5. In the ballot counting room, the chief judge will open and review all Speaker Qualification Sheets. If three of the five qualifying judges check (X) in the Disqualified column for a given speaker, that speaker is disqualified, and no protest may be made.

## Evaluation Contest Rules

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The Evaluation Speech Contest follows all rules outlined in the General Rules section of this rulebook. In addition, the following additions and exceptions apply.

1. At the beginning of this contest, a five- to seven-minute test speech will be presented.
  - A. The test speech shall be either a contest-type speech, or taken from one of the assignments in the *Competent Communication* manual.
  - B. Contestants are permitted to make preparatory notes during the test speech using materials of their choice.
  - C. It is recommended that at all levels of the contest, the Toastmaster giving the test speech is not a member of the same club as any one of the contestants.
  - D. The test speaker shall be introduced by announcing the speaker's name, speech title, speech title, and the speaker's name.
  - E. Neither the manual project nor any objectives that the speaker may have shall be made known to the contestants, judges, or audience.
2. At the conclusion of the test speech, all contestants shall leave the room. They then have five minutes to prepare their evaluation using materials of their choice.
  - A. Timing and preparation supervision shall be under the control of the contest sergeant at arms.
  - B. Where it is not practical for contestants to leave the room, contestants will complete their five minute preparation in the same room under the control of the contest sergeant at arms.
3. After five minutes have elapsed, no further preparation shall be allowed and with the exception of the first contestant, who shall be called back as first evaluator, all others shall hand all written material to the contest sergeant at arms. Preparation material shall be handed back to contestants as they are introduced to present their evaluation.
4. Introduce each contestant by announcing the contestant's name twice. Note that this differs from the standard name, speech title, speech title, name, because evaluation speeches do not have titles.

## Humorous Speech Contest Rules

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The Humorous Speech Contest follows all rules outlined in the General Rules section of this rulebook. In addition, the following additions and exceptions apply.

1. The subject for the humorous speech shall be selected by the contestant. The speaker shall avoid potentially objectionable language, anecdotes, and material.
2. The speech must be thematic in nature (opening, body, and close), not a monologue (series of one-liners).

## Table Topics Contest Rules

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The Table Topics Speech Contest follows all rules outlined in the General Rules section of this rulebook. In addition, the following additions and exceptions apply.

- A. All contestants shall receive the same topic, which shall be of a general nature.
- B. The topic shall be of reasonable length, shall not require a detailed knowledge and shall lead to an opinion or conclusion.
- C. Contestants will receive no advance knowledge of the topic until the moment they are introduced by the contest chair.
- D. When the contest begins, all contestants except the first shall leave the room.
- E. Introduce each contestant by announcing the contestant's name, the topic, the topic, contestant's name.
- F. At the conclusion of each speech, the next speaker shall be invited into the room.

## Tall Tales Contest Rules

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The Tall Tales Speech Contest follows all rules outlined in the General Rules section of this rulebook. In addition, the following additions and exceptions apply.

2. The subject for the Tall Tales speech must be of a highly exaggerated, improbable nature and have a theme or plot.
3. Humor and props may be used to support or illustrate the speech.

## Taped Speech Contest

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1. Members of undistricted clubs and provisional districts are invited to participate in the International Taped Speech Contest. Tapes must be in English.
2. The Toastmasters International Speech Contest Rules are to be followed as far as they are applicable.
  - A. There is no area, division, district, or semifinal competition for the Taped Speech Contest, nor are there any travel allowances.
  - B. To enter, clubs conduct a speech contest and submit an audio cassette or CD recording of the winning speech.
3. Only one taped speech per club may be submitted. The tape shall be made using the following procedures:

- A. You may use whatever means you wish to record the contest before a live audience, but all entries must be submitted to World Headquarters on audio cassette or audio CD. Videotapes, data CDs, MP3s, and other media will not be accepted.
- B. Time the speech carefully to comply with the International speech contest rules.
- C. Clearly mark the audio tape and container with the participant's name and club number and be sure to enclose a completed Speaker's Certification of Eligibility and Originality (Item 1183).
- D. Tapes must be received at World Headquarters on or before 5 p.m. Pacific Time, March 31 to be eligible for competition.

# Speech Contest Checklists

## Contest Chair's Checklist

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Since each speech contest is a public event, it should be planned carefully and conducted professionally. As contest chair, it is your responsibility to see that this is done. You must plan the contest budget, make room and audio arrangements, conduct a pre- and post-contest publicity program, and see that all bills for the event are promptly paid. You must make sure each speaker is eligible to compete and is familiar with the contest rules, that audiovisual equipment is working, that judges, timers, and counters are briefed on their duties, that ballots are counted carefully, and that awards are presented to the winners in a ceremony that will make them proud. Although you may have a committee to help you with these tasks, it is still your responsibility to make sure they are done.

NOTE: Some districts prefer to split the role of the contest chair and use a separate contest Toastmaster for the contest itself. In such cases, the term “contest Toastmaster” should be considered synonymous with “contest chair.”

### Preparation

1. Determine the budget for the contest, remembering that contest income and expenses should break even. Allow for such expenses as awards, contest material, deposits, meals, printing, postage, etc.
2. Select a place and time for the speech contest and coordinate the selection with the proper Toastmasters officer.
3. Determine the agenda for the contest (see appendix).
4. Arrange for the supplies and services required for the event.
5. Order certificates of participation for all contest speakers, and order trophies for the winners from World Headquarters. (NOTE: It is a trademark violation to put the Toastmasters logo, or the words Toastmasters or Toastmasters International, on speech contest awards not purchased from World Headquarters).
6. Order the following contest material from World Headquarters as necessary:
  - A. *Speaker's Certification of Eligibility and Originality* (Item 1183)
  - B. *Time Record Sheet and Instructions for Timers* (Item 1175)
  - C. *Judge's Guide and Ballot* (Item 1172)
  - D. *Counter's Tally Sheet* (Item 1176)
  - E. *Tiebreaking Judge's Ballot* (Item 1188)
  - F. *Biographical Data Sheet* (Item 1189)
7. Select the chief judge. See “Requirements and Duties of Contest Officials” in this rulebook for guidelines for selection of judges. The chief judge should encourage all speech contest officials to view the online Speech Contest training at [www.toastmasters.org/tlc](http://www.toastmasters.org/tlc).
8. Notify the officials of the time and place of the contest and pre-contest briefings. (Allow ample time, e.g., two weeks for club contest).



9. Notify the contestants of the time and place of the contest and pre-contest briefing two to six weeks before the contest (see appendix for sample letter). Mail an information packet to each contestant at this time. The packet consists of:
  - *Speech Contest Rulebook* (Item 1171)
  - *Biographical Data Sheet* (Item 1189)
  - *Speaker's Certification of Eligibility and Originality* (Item 1183)
10. Promote the contest in your community by sending news releases to the media.
11. Ensure that each contestant is eligible under the contest rules before the contest, and notify contestants of disqualification if necessary.

## **Contestants' Briefing**

1. Verify the presence of all contestants and pronunciation of their names. (NOTE: You also will conduct a brief informal interview with each contestant at the conclusion of the contest.)
2. Review the speech contest rules with speakers.
3. Review timing protocol with speakers.
4. Acquaint contestants with the exact speaking area, such as lectern, tables, lighting, microphone, etc. All contestants shall have the opportunity to test any amplifying equipment before the contest.
5. Draw for speaking positions.

## **During the Contest**

1. Open the contest with a brief introduction. Inform the audience:
  - The rules have been reviewed with the chief judge and contestants
  - The contestants have been informed of the location of the timing lights
  - The taking of photographs during the speeches is not permitted
2. Introduce each contest speaker.
  - Do not make preliminary remarks about any speaker or the subject, nor mention the name or location of the speaker's club or place of residence.
  - Introduce each contestant slowly and clearly.
3. Upon completion of the speeches, ask judges to complete their ballots. At this time, the counters will collect the ballots and the chief judge will collect and verify the Time Record Sheets from timers, as well as the tiebreaking judge's ballot. When all ballots and Time Record Sheets have been collected, the chief judge and ballot counters will proceed to the ballot counting room.
  - All Judge's Guides and Ballots, Counter's Tally Forms, and Time Record Sheets are considered confidential.
  - Give all forms to the chief judge for disposal.
  - Keep a list showing placement of all contestants in case the winner or alternate cannot compete at the next level.
4. While the ballot counters are counting the ballots, the contest chair will interview each speaker.

- At the conclusion of the contest speeches and while the results are being tabulated, introduce the contestants again, giving the club, area, and district they represent, and present their certificates of participation. A short interview may be conducted at this time, using the contestant's biographical information as a guide.
  - The contest chair may appoint a Toastmaster to perform any one or all of the chair's duties listed above.
5. When the interviews are completed, collect the contest results from the chief judge.
  6. Address any protests. Protests are limited to judges and contestants. Any protest will be lodged with the chief judge and/or contest chair prior to the announcement of the winner and alternate(s). The contest chair shall notify the contestant of a disqualification regarding originality or eligibility prior to the announcement that the meeting is adjourned. Before a contestant can be disqualified on the basis of originality, the contestant must be given an opportunity to respond to the judges. A majority of the judges must concur in the decision to disqualify. The contest chair can disqualify a contestant on the basis of eligibility.
  7. Prior to announcing results, the chair should announce if time disqualification(s) occurred, but not name the contestant(s) involved. The chief judge may discuss the matter privately with the disqualified contestant(s).
  8. In closing, thank all who helped make the contest a success.

## **After the Contest**

1. Secure the name, address, and phone number of the first place, second place, and third place contestants. Give this information to the contest chair of the next contest or to World Headquarters for district-level winners of the International speech contest.
2. Send news releases (and photographs, if possible) to each winner's community newspaper and company publication, if applicable.
3. Make sure all bills pertaining to the contest are paid promptly.

## **Chief Judge's Checklist**

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### **Before the Contest**

1. Appoints and counsels contest judges, counters, timers, and a secret tiebreaking judge.
2. Acting as chief counter, appoints three assistant counters and provides each of them with the Counter's Tally sheet (Item 1176).
3. Conducts the judges' briefing for judges, counters, and timers.

### **Judges' Briefing Checklist**

1. Distribute the following to each judge:
  - List of contestants in speaking order
  - Judge's Guide and Ballot (1172)
  - Contest Rules (1171)
2. Instruct contest judges to sit close to the contest area in case of an outside disturbance or malfunctioning technical system.

3. Review the Judge's Guide and Ballot (1172) and speaking area.
4. Brief the ballot counters in the use of the Counter's Tally Sheet (1176).
5. Review the Time Record Sheet and Instructions for Timers (1175) with the timers.
6. Provides a stopwatch to timer.
7. Briefs the timers in the proper use of the timing equipment, if necessary.

### **During the Contest**

1. Collects the Time Record Sheet and Instructions for Timers (1175) from the timers.
2. Collects the tiebreaking judge's guide and ballot from the tiebreaking judge.
3. Resolves any protests that may arise due to judge or contestant concerns over eligibility or originality.
4. Oversees the counting process. Sees that all ballots are counted twice to ensure accuracy.
5. Provides a list showing placement of all contestants to the contest chair.

## **Contestant's Checklist**

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### **Before the Contest**

1. For International, Humorous, and Tall Tales contests: Select a topic and prepare your own substantially original speech.
2. Attend the Contestant's Briefing.
3. Complete, sign, and submit a copy of Item 1183, Speaker's Certification of Eligibility and Originality, to the Contest Chair.
4. Attend the Speaker's Rehearsal and take note of the speaking area.

### **During the Contest**

1. In the one minute of silence before your introduction, set up any and all props and visual aids. You may enlist someone to help you with this, but it is not the responsibility of the contest chair or any other contest official to do so.
2. After your introduction, proceed immediately to the speaking area and begin your speech.
3. Check the timing signals regularly during your speech. If you see a red signal, wrap it up, even if you're not finished with your speech yet.
4. Immediately following your speech, remove any props or visual aids from the speaking area. You may enlist someone to help you with this, but it is not the responsibility of the contest chair or any other contest official to do so.

# Additional Resources

## **Speech Contest FAQs**

[www.toastmasters.org/speechcontestFAQ](http://www.toastmasters.org/speechcontestFAQ)

## **Membership and Eligibility Requirements**

[www.toastmasters.org/SpeechContestEligibility](http://www.toastmasters.org/SpeechContestEligibility)

## **International Speech Contest Official Responsibilities and Guidelines**

[www.toastmasters.org/SpeechContestRoles](http://www.toastmasters.org/SpeechContestRoles)

## **Speech Contest E-learning Module**

[www.toastmasters.org/tlc](http://www.toastmasters.org/tlc)

## **Why You Should Be a Speech Contest Official**

[www.toastmasters.org/official](http://www.toastmasters.org/official)

## **Is it a Test? Or is it Play? Have Some Fun on Contest Day!**

[www.toastmasters.org/ContestDay](http://www.toastmasters.org/ContestDay)

## **World Champions of Public Speaking**

[www.toastmasters.org/champs](http://www.toastmasters.org/champs)

## **Speech Contestant Travel Reimbursement Policy**

[www.toastmasters.org/websiteApps/policyProcedures/SectionVID9.pdf](http://www.toastmasters.org/websiteApps/policyProcedures/SectionVID9.pdf)

## NOTES

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Item 1171