



SPEECH CONTEST RULES – COMMON PROBLEM AREAS

The six specific areas of Contest Rules that cause the most confusion are:

Eligibility

Every year contestants are disqualified at all levels because of ineligibility. Eligibility must be checked at every level of the contest.

A contestant must be a member in good standing of the club, area, division and district in which he/she is a contestant. The club must be in good standing.

In the case of the International Speech Contest, a contestant must have completed at least 6 projects in the Competent Communication Manual prior to the club contest. The contest speech cannot be the 6th speech.

A contestant must have dues current with Toastmasters International (if new, dual or reinstated).

No contestant may compete in more than one Area contest, even if the two Areas are in different Divisions or different Districts.

The following are ineligible to compete in any contest –

An incumbent International Officer or Director, Region Advisors or Region Advisor applicants, District Officers whose terms expire 30th June (District Director, Program Quality Director, Club Growth Director, Public Relations Manager, Administration Manager, Finance Manager, Division Director, Area Director), International Officers and Director candidates, Immediate Past District Governors, District Officers or announced candidates for the term beginning the upcoming 1st July, presenters of education sessions at the event at which the contest will be held, judges at any level for a contest in which a member is still competing and the winner of any previous International Contest finals.

Originality

Speakers must prepare and present their own substantially original speech. Speakers cannot use the works of others as their entire speech or as the bulk of their speech with or without identification of the source (must be less than 25% of speech content). Any quoted material must be identified as such during the speech presentation. Determining a speech's originality can be difficult. There are several things to consider when determining whether a speech is substantially original. Some examples that would not be considered substantially original are-

A speech in which most of the speech is devoted to quoting another person or published work, even though the quote is properly attributed to the source.

A speech that has been taken entirely from another source which may or may not have been credited.

A speech in which part of the material is taken from another source that is not credited.

Many jokes, stories and anecdotes have been around for a long time. Their source is ANON and they are considered to be in the public domain without a need to be cited.

Humour

There is a wide-spread misconception in Toastmasters that entries in the International Speech Contest should be serious in tone. Providing the humour is tied to the speaker's message, no contestant should be marked down by judges simply because humour is used. To the contrary, humour can be an important part of any speech. Note that a series of one-liners does not constitute a humorous speech.

Props

Props and visual aids are mentioned in the Contestant's Checklist in the Speech Contest Rulebook. A contestant may use any prop or visual aid, provided it is not used before the beginning of the speech. A contestant may set up any props or visual aids in the one minute silence before being introduced. The contestant may enlist someone to help him/her with this, but it is not the responsibility of the contest chair or any other contest official to do so. Immediately following the speech, all props or visual aids must be removed from the speaking area.

Timing

Each contestant must proceed directly to the speaking position upon being introduced. If a contestant engages in a definite verbal or non-verbal communication with the audience (including the playing of music or other sound effect or a staged act by another person), prior to uttering the first word of the speech, the timer will activate the timing device at that point.

This may result in the contestant going overtime, in which case the contestant is disqualified. Contestants should begin speaking within a short time after arriving at the speaking area and are not to delay the contest unnecessarily.

Protests

Only judges and contestants may protest any aspect of a speech. A protest must be lodged with the chief judge and/or contest chairman before the results of the contest are announced. Protests are serious matters and must be handled promptly, efficiently and fairly. The contestant, whose speech is being questioned, is to be given the opportunity to respond to the accusations. Once the protest has been lodged, it is recommended that the following procedure be followed –

The chief judge should wait until all the speakers finish speaking and then quietly instruct the judges to gather in another room. Once gathered, the judges should be informed of the nature of the protest. If it concerns originality, the judges should be asked if any of them are familiar with the original material and therefore agree or not with the protest. The contestant who has been challenged is to be invited to respond to the accusation before the judges, who have the opportunity to ask the contestant any questions. The contestant is then asked to leave the room while the judges discuss the situation and come to a decision. The contest chairman must inform the contestant of the decision before the results are announced.

Determining originality can be difficult. For example, a contestant filing a protest may not be able to cite the exact source from which he/she believes another contestant took material. Contestants themselves may admit to “borrowing” material or they may deny it; and sometimes jokes and stories have been around for so long that no one knows their source. Judges should consider all of these factors when reaching their decision. Judges or contestants should not be using smart phones to google for the purpose of checking originality.

Keep in mind that judges deal only with the speech presentations. The contest chairman is responsible for other aspects of the contest, such as contestant eligibility. All decisions of the judges are final.