



TIPS FOR RUNNING SUCCESSFUL SPEECH CONTESTS AT CLUB, AREA, DIVISION AND DISTRICT LEVEL

TIMING

International Speech and Humorous Speech Contests 5-7 minutes

	<u>Time allowed</u>
Contest Toastmaster introduction	2 minutes
Speakers	7 ½ minutes each
Silence between each speaker	1 minute
Interviews	2 minutes each
Movement to and from the speaking area	1 minute each
Total time for a contest with 6 contestants	71 minutes
Time to be allowed on the agenda	75 minutes (for 6 contestants)

Evaluation Speech Contest 2-3 minutes

	<u>Time allowed</u>
Contest Toastmaster introduction	2 minutes
Test speaker	7 minutes
Preparation time for contestants including movement to preparation room	8 minutes
Speakers	3 ½ minutes each
Silence between each speaker	1 minute
Interviews	2 minutes each
Movement to and from the speaking area	1 minute each
Total time for a contest with 6 contestants	62 minutes
Time to be allowed on the agenda	65 minutes (for 6 contestants)

Table Topics Speech Contest – 1 to 2 minutes

	<u>Time allowed</u>
Contest Toastmaster introduction	2 minutes
Movement of contestants from the room	2 minutes
Speakers	2 ½ minutes each
Silence between each speaker	1 minute
Interviews	2 minutes each
Movement to and from the speaking area	1 minute each
Total time for a contest with 6 contestants	43 minutes
Time to be allowed on the agenda	45 minutes (for 6 contestants)

THE STARS

- The stars of the event are the contestants.
- Special guests are the District Leaders.
- The support cast is the contest chairman, contest personnel and members assigned specific tasks such as the welcome, invocation, contest toastmaster, raffle ticket sellers, door attendants and the audience.

Get them there

Send a congratulatory email to your contestants:

- Noting the time they are expected to arrive at the venue (at least 1 hour before for the briefing),
- Clothing choice (for technical reasons e.g. microphones require a belt pack to be hooked to a belt and female contestants should be warned to wear either a skirt/pants/dress with belt OR if a lapel mic is being used, the mic will need to be clipped to a lapel, avoid dangling earrings as the movement is picked up by the mic),
- Who to check in with on arrival and a map (how to get to the venue).
- Explain that contestants can arrange seating for their family early and that they can walk around the stage for familiarisation.
- Send a copy of the [Contest Chairman's Briefing](#) to the contestants.

Roles

- Speak to each member of the support cast and send a written explanation of what is expected of them. Do not expect anyone to know what you want from them, no matter how experienced the person is.
- Send the Biographical Data Forms to the contest toastmaster at least a week in advance.
- Advise the timing for each segment of the contest, e.g. welcome 2-3 minutes.
- Advise the Welcomer the names of people to be mentioned in the welcome (including role and education level of each person).
- Advise the raffle ticket sellers/drawers that a "good raffle is a quick raffle" – allow 5 minutes.
- Mentor and guide each person with an assignment on your agenda.

District Leaders

Allow District leaders to mingle with the audience. Have their seating pre-arranged. Introduce District leaders to club executives and any special guests.

The Contestants

The contestants are the stars. The event revolves around the contestants. Allow for nervous reactions by the contestants. Smile, be calm and sensitive to the needs of contestants. Remain professional at all times.

AVOIDING PROBLEMS

- Choose your venue with sound/audio in mind. Book audio team well in advance.
- Book an assistant as your floor manager for larger contests.
- Have a walk through with your audio team leader, host club president, contest toastmaster and caterers.
- Work with your host club on logistics. The members will know more than you about
 - the venue staff, small rooms for briefings, sound proof rooms for contestants, power outlets and lighting.
- Carry tools such as extension cords, double adaptors, scissors, sticky tape, gaffer tape, hollywood tape, paper, pens, cardboard and textas.
- Organise a female assistant for placement of the belt packs and microphones on female contestants.
- Make sure a table is available for the audio team equipment and set a (dining) table nearby. Organise drinks and look after the audio team who are generally too busy to do anything other than the task to which they have been assigned.

- Make sure your contestants know that microphones will be used and to dress appropriately so that equipment can be attached to clothing quickly and easily.
- Appoint a Sergeant-at-arms to start the evening. The contest chairman should not be acting as a stage or floor manager.
- Ensure you have 2 sets of timing lights (in working order), plus spare batteries and coloured timing cards as a backup.
- Test the illumination and the position of the lights.
- Invite the contestants to the stage to ensure they know where the lights are and are happy with the positioning.
- Be aware of cables. All cables should be taped to avoid the possibility of tripping.
- Assist contestants onto the stage, especially if they are wearing high heels or feeling nervous.
- Ensure there is a clear pathway through the audience for the contestants to get to the stage.
- Table Topics contestants are to be escorted to a silent room where they are unable to hear any speakers in the contest room.
- Contestants should not be carrying mobile phones or other smart phones.
- Evaluation contestants are to be escorted to a silent room where they have five minutes to take notes using the new Evaluation Contestants Notes sheet and where that are unable to hear any speakers in the contest.

THE INCIDENTALS THAT CAN MAKE OR BREAK A CONTEST EVENT

Catering – can make or break the timing and energy of a contest.

- Eating is not the priority at a contest.
- Work with the host club venue - decide on what sort of meal is appropriate depending on the time of day of the contest.
- For a sit down meal, have the entrée on the tables at the start. Main meals can be served during the interviews.
- Make sure the chief judge and ballot counters are served a meal if they are out of the room at the time of serving.
- Use “table tents” or other signage to indicate placement of special meals. Consider serving platters of food to each table to save time.

Raffles – are important but should not overtake the contest.

- Ask the host club to co-ordinate the raffle prizes in the most efficient way. Raffle draws should not exceed 5 minutes. This means 4-6 prizes only.
- Do not extend the evening because of lengthy raffle draws (people get bored when up to 25 tickets are drawn out and one by one the prizes are claimed).

- Engage a “barrel” person to expedite the raffle draw process. Draw a number and ask the winner to proceed to the back of the room to collect the prize, draw another number etc. There is no need to be cross checking all the numbers.

THE MONEY

- The contest is about getting as many people as possible to your area or division contest to see the best speakers.
- Consider changing the catering, venue or time of contest to reduce the attendance fee.
- Ask members to donate raffle prizes to maximise the returns on the raffle. Avoid spending money buying raffle prizes.
- Shop around for your engraving. Think ahead. Some engravers charge as little as \$2.50 per plate.
- Give thank you cards to judges and other special guests. There is no need for a gift when they have already been given seats to a fantastic contest and dinner.
- Create interesting flyers and send them to all the clubs in your area/division. Upload the area contest flyer to division websites and division flyers to the district website.
- Develop an editorial for the newspaper to attract attention and have more people attending.
- Work with your host club Treasurer. Do not handle the money yourself.
- Create a spreadsheet of all paying and non-paying attendees for the door staff. Collect money prior to the event (if possible via internet transfer) to prevent a long line up at the door.
- Ensure there will be a float in case change is required for door takings and the raffle.