



Guideline: Table Topics Master

As Table Topics Master you are responsible for running the Table Topics session with the several purposes in mind. Enabling members to develop the skills of impromptu speaking or the ability to speak on their feet and providing a speaking opportunity for any member who is not otherwise included in the meeting agenda.

PRIOR TO THE MEETING:

- ✓ Check with the Toastmaster of the Evening to find out if a theme meeting is scheduled. If so, prepare table topics to carry out that theme. If no theme is scheduled, choose a selection of topics that follow a similar theme.
- ✓ Prepare a brief, but thorough summary of your role as Table Topics Master that explains your role in the program to visiting guests. You may want to include comments about the skills that are improved during the exercises.
- ✓ Prepare sufficient topics that can be used within the time planned in the agenda for Table Topics.
- ✓ When choosing your specific questions:
 - Select topics that will inspire the speakers to expound on them, give opinions, etc
 - Originality is desirable as much as possible
 - Don't make questions too long or complicated
 - Phrase questions so that the speaker will know clearly what they are to talk about
 - Keep your comments short. Your job is to give others a chance to speak, not to give a series of mini-talks yourself.

AS YOU ARRIVE AT THE MEETING:

Contrary to popular belief, Table Topics is not intended as an opportunity for EVERYBODY to speak. In a typical club meeting, many of the attending members are already participating on the agenda so lack of speaking opportunities is not a problem. When choosing table topic speakers avoid choosing people with roles and guests

Upon arrival obtain a copy of the meeting agenda. This will alert you to who the prepared Speakers, Evaluators, and the General Evaluator are so you can call on the other members first. Only if time permits at the end of the table topics session, you may call on the programme participants (with speakers last).

DURING THE MEETING:

Before you start with the Table Topics session the Toastmaster of the Evening will provide you with the number of questions to ask given the time remaining in the meeting.

After your introduction by the Toastmaster of the Evening, make a few "scene setting" comments which mention the purpose of table topics and introduce the general theme of your session with a maximum duration 1 minute.

- ✓ Keep your comments brief but enthusiastic.



- ✓ Keep the programme moving; be certain everyone understands the maximum time they have for their response and how the timing lights work.
- ✓ Give each participant a different question. Don't ask two people the same question unless you ask each specifically to give the "pro" or "con" views.
- ✓ Call upon the table topics speakers, as follows:
 - Members with no other speaking role - experienced members first
 - Willing guests (do not pressure anybody to speak)
- ✓ State the question briefly; **then** call on one of the members in the audience. This serves two purposes:
 - First, it holds everyone's attention, each one is thinking of a response should he or she be called on to speak;
 - Second, it adds to the value of the impromptu element by giving everyone an opportunity to improve his or her "better listening and thinking" skills.

WARNING: Do not exceed the requested number of speakers unless time permits.

Timing is also regarded as important in a Toastmaster club and the best way to control timing in a topics session is to control the number of speakers.

One last comment: subject matter is entirely the responsibility of the Topics Master but experience shows that a good overall performance is achieved in the following circumstances:

- ✓ The table topic is one allowing the speakers to speak from their own experience.
- ✓ The table topics session follows a common theme allowing the less-speakers up to 30 seconds preparation time.
- ✓ Of course, some Topics Masters prefer to set "challenging" topics which generally result in excellent performances from a few speakers and dismal performances from the rest - the choice is yours.
- ✓ On completion of the session, thank all participants and return control of the meeting back to the Toastmaster of the Evening.
- ✓ Reference for times:
 - 30 seconds for preparing the speech
 - Green signal: after 1 minute
 - Yellow signal: 1,5 minutes
 - Red signal: 2 minutes

Note: You are responsible to find a replacement if you are unable to fulfil your commitment.

Please notify the Toastmaster of the Evening ASAP of the replacement so he/she may update the agenda.