



International Speech Contest



Online Speech Contest



Tall Tales Speech Contest



Humorous Speech Contest



Table Topics Speech Contest



Evaluation Speech Contest

TOASTMASTERS

Speech Contest Guide

For Contest Chairs, Organizers, Judges, Timers, & Competitors

Table of contents

Welcome to the Toastmasters Speech Contest Guide

1. *Welcome & Purpose of Toastmasters Speech Contests*
2. *Overview of Toastmasters Speech Contests*
3. *Types of Official Toastmasters Contests*
4. *Eligibility Requirements*
5. *General Contest Rules*
6. *Contest Roles & Responsibilities*
7. *Judging & Scoring*
8. *Contest Day Flow*
9. *Forms & Templates*
10. *Helpful Toastmasters Resources*
11. *Frequently Asked Questions*





Section 1:

Welcome & Purpose of Toastmasters Speech Contests

The Significance of Toastmasters Speech Contests

Toastmasters speech contests have a rich tradition that honors outstanding communication and leadership skills. They provide members with a chance to push their limits, gain recognition, and develop through engaging competition.

Learning Opportunities

In addition to the competitive aspect, these contests deliver valuable learning experiences for speakers, judges, and organizers alike.

Section 2:

Overview of Toastmasters Speech Contests

Overview of Toastmasters Speech Contests

*Speech contests are conducted at multiple levels, beginning at the **club level** and progressing through **Area**, **Division**, and **District** levels.*

***Winners** at each level **advance** to the next level, provided they remain eligible and the next level of the contest is held.*

Section 3:

Types of Official Toastmasters Contests

International

Contestants present a five-to-seven minute speech on any subject they choose. All districts must conduct this contest.

Evaluation

Contestants observe a five-to-seven minute test speech and then present a two-to-three minute evaluation of the test speech.

Humorous

Contestants present a humorous speech that must be thematic in nature (opening, body, and close), not a monologue (series of one-liners).

Table Topics

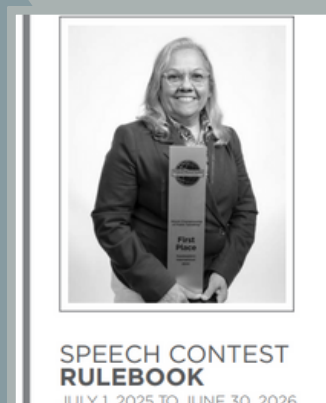
The topic of this impromptu speech is the same for all contestants who only learn about it when they are introduced by the contest chair.

Tall Tales

Contestants present a speech on a topic that is highly exaggerated and improbable in theme or plot.

Online

Contestants present a five- to seven-minute speech on any subject they choose while participating live and online from physically distant locations.



**2025-2026 Speech
Contest Rulebook**

Section 4:

Eligibility Requirements

Eligibility to Compete as a Contestant

To compete in any Toastmasters speech contest, you must:

- Be a paid member of a club in good standing
- Compete within your Area, Division, and District
- Remain eligible at every level (club → area → division → district)
- Be physically present beyond the club level

International Speech Contest – extra rule you must have:

- Completed Levels 1 & 2 in Pathways, or earned DTM

MORE INFO

✗ Not eligible to compete if you are:

- A current District leader, Region Advisor, or International Officer
- A candidate for District or International office
- Immediate Past District Director
- Serving in any contest role at the same contest (judge, timer, chair, etc.)
- The World Champion of Public Speaking (cannot re-enter International)

Eligibility of Contest Officials

Judges (Chief, Voting, Tiebreaking)

- Club level: paid member
- Area/Division/District:
 - Paid member 6+ months
 - Completed 6 speeches (legacy) or Levels 1 & 2 Pathways
 - Physically present (except Online contests)
- Must have no conflict of interest
- Cannot be from the same club as a contestant (Division+ levels)

Other Officials (timers, counters, Sergeant at Arms, test speaker)

- Must be paid members
- Must be physically present (except Online contests)

✗ Additional Restrictions

- District officer candidates may NOT serve as contest officials or test speakers
- No one may serve in more than one role in the same contest
- Contest officials cannot compete in that contest

Section 5:

General Contest Rules

General Speech Contest Rules (At a Glance)

- *Contests progress Club → Area → Division → District*
- *Only the International Speech Contest goes beyond the District*
- *Speeches must be substantially original (max 25% quoted)*
- *Contestants must sign an originality certification*
- *Strict time limits apply — over/under time = disqualification*
- *Timing signals: green/yellow/red*
- *Required officials: Contest Chair, Chief Judge, Judges, Timers, Ballot Counters*
- *Officials may serve in one role only*
- *Judges remain anonymous when possible*
- *Props allowed (must be approved in advance)*
- *Props set up/removed during 1-minute silence*
- *Protests allowed only for eligibility or originality*
- *Only judges or contestants may protest*
- *Protests must be made before contest adjourns*
- *Results are final once announced*
- *Winners announced before event ends, in reverse order*

For detailed information read the contest rulebook



**2025-2026 Speech
Contest Rulebook**



Section 6:

Contest Roles & Responsibilities

Contest Participants & Officials — Who Does What

Contestants

- *Toastmasters members who deliver speeches in the contest*
- *Must meet eligibility rules and follow time limits*
- *Present a substantially original speech*
- *Compete at one level at a time (club, area, division, district)*

Chief Judge

- *Oversees fairness and integrity of the contest*
- *Briefs judges, timers, and counters*
- *Handles protests and disqualifications*
- *Collects time records and ballots*
- *Submits official results*

Tiebreaking Judge

- *Used only if there is a tie*
- *Ranks all contestants in advance*
- *Identity is known only to the Chief Judge*

Ballot Counters

- *Collect and count judges' ballots*
- *Tabulate results privately*
- *Work under supervision of the Chief Judge*
- *Keep all results confidential*

Contest Chair

- *Leads and manages the contest*
- *Ensures rules are followed and the contest runs smoothly*
- *Introduces contestants and announces results*
- *Handles eligibility issues and coordinates officials*

Voting Judges

- *Evaluate speeches using official judging criteria*
- *Rank contestants (1st, 2nd, 3rd)*
- *Remain anonymous when possible*
- *Judge all speakers in the contest*

Timers

- *Measure speech time using a stopwatch*
- *Display green, yellow, and red timing signals*
- *Record official speaking times*
- *Report any time disqualifications (without naming speakers)*

Sergeant at Arms

- *Manages the room or online platform*
- *Escorts contestants in and out (Table Topics, Evaluation)*
- *Maintains order and timing flow*



Section 7:

Judging & Scoring

Judging in a Toastmasters speech contest exists to ensure a **fair, unbiased**, and consistent evaluation of each contestant. Judges are expected to focus solely on the performance delivered during the contest and score according to official criteria.

As a judge, your job is to choose the strongest speech delivered today, using the official ballot.

Ask Yourself Just 4 Questions:

Was the message clear?

- Did I understand the main point?
- Was the speech well organized?

Was the speaker engaging?

- Did the speaker sound confident and natural?
- Did they connect with the audience?

Was the language effective?

- Were the words clear and appropriate?
- Could I easily follow what was said?

How did the speech make me feel?

- Was it memorable, inspiring, or entertaining?
- Did it leave a strong impression?

Section 8:

Contest Day Flow

This section outlines what happens before, during, and after the contest so everyone knows what to expect and when.

BEFORE THE CONTEST

Set up the room or platform

- Arrange seating, timing equipment, and sound
- Prepare ballots, timing sheets, and scripts
- Test microphones, cameras, and screen sharing (if online)

Conduct briefings

- Contestant briefing
- Review speaking order, timing signals, and rules
- Judges & officials briefing (led by Chief Judge)
- Review judging criteria, timing, protests, and ballot handling

Draw for speaking order

- Conducted by the Chief Judge
- Order is final and confidential

DURING THE CONTEST

Opening

- Contest Chair or Toastmaster explains the contest
- Introduces contest officials

Speeches

- Each contestant is introduced
- Timers display signals as required
- Judges complete ballots after each speech

Collection of ballots

- Ballot counters collect ballots after the final speaker
- Judges remain silent and independent



AFTER THE CONTEST

Tallying results

- Ballot counters tally scores under the Chief Judge's supervision
- Timing results are verified
- Tie-breaking ballot used if required

Announcing winners

- Winners are announced in reverse order
- Certificates or awards are presented

Wrap-up

- Thank contestants, judges, and officials
- Secure and destroy ballots after results are final
- Submit results to the next contest level





Section 9: Forms & Templates

Common forms include eligibility forms, speaker profiles, timing sheets, and ballot tally forms. Official Toastmasters templates should be used whenever possible.

INTERNATIONAL SPEECH CONTEST KIT

HUMOROUS SPEECH CONTEST KIT


EVALUATION SPEECH CONTEST KIT

TABLE TOPICS SPEECH CONTEST KIT

TALL TALES SPEECH CONTEST KIT

ONLINE SPEECH CONTEST KIT

If you have these forms printed and ready, you're already 80% prepared for contest day.



Section 10:

Helpful Toastmasters Resources

TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL WEBSITE

SPEECH CONTEST MATERIALS

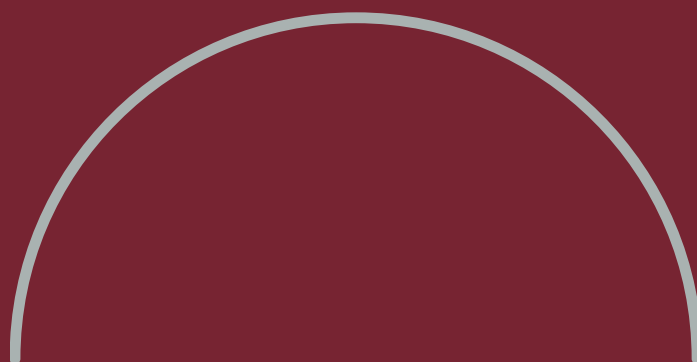
Download the materials you need to conduct speech contests.

CONDUCTING QUALITY SPEECH CONTESTS

Read this guide to understand the process, rules, and resources required to enhance your speech contests.

SPEECH CONTEST RULEBOOK CHANGES

Find out how the Speech Contest Rulebook has changed and why each change was made.



Section 11:

Frequently Asked Questions

Who can compete in a club speech contest?

Any Toastmasters member in good standing may compete, provided they meet the eligibility requirements for that specific contest type.

Do I have to compete to help with the contest?

No. Members may participate as contest officials (judge, timer, ballot counter, etc.) even if they are not competing.

What happens if someone goes over or under time?

Timing rules are strictly enforced. A speaker outside the allowed time range may be disqualified, even if the speech is excellent.

What can be protested?

Only eligibility or originality may be protested. Protests must be raised by a judge or contestant before winners are announced.

Can guests attend a contest?

Yes! Guests are welcome and often encouraged to attend speech contests.

How is the speaking order decided?

Speaking order is determined by a random draw conducted by the Contest Chair before the contest.

How many judges are required?

The number of judges depends on the contest level and contest type. The Contest Chair or Chief Judge ensures the correct number is recruited.

What if there is a tie?

A tie-breaking judge is appointed in advance. Their ballot is used only if needed and remains confidential.

Do judges get to discuss results?

No. Judges score independently and do not discuss scores or rankings with anyone.

Where do I find the official rules and forms?

All official rules, ballots, and forms are available on the Toastmasters International website in the Speech Contests section.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

