



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

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## 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

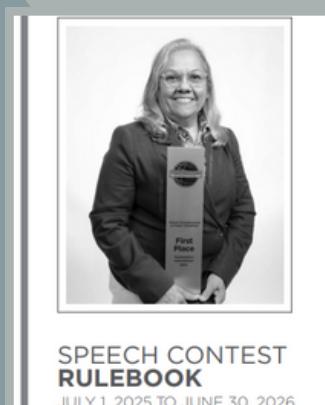
The topic of this impromptu speech is the same for all contestants who only learn about it when they are introduced by the contest chair.

### 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



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## 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**

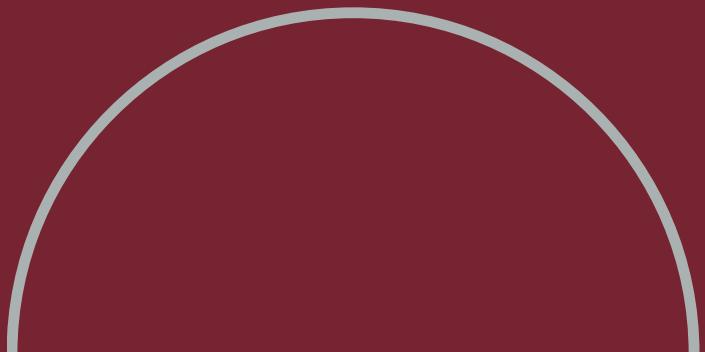
Download the materials you need to conduct speech contests.

#### **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**

