



# True Blue Toastmasters Club

## TABLE TOPICS MASTER

### The impromptu instructor!

With TABLE TOPICS, the **Table Topics Master** gives members who aren't assigned a speaking role the opportunity to speak during the meeting. The Table Topics Master challenges each member with a topical question, and the member responds with a one- to two-minute impromptu talk. This helps members to think and speak quickly on their feet! The Table Topics portion of a Toastmasters meeting usually takes place after the formal "prepared speeches" and "evaluation" segments and usually lasts 15-20 minutes. Guests are absolutely welcome to participate.

Preparation is key to leading a successful Table Topics session!

#### Preparation before the meeting

- Confirm that you will be the **Table Topics Master** that week with the person who is **Toastmaster** for that week. Collaborate together on a unique THEME (if the theme has not been pre-determined).
- Prepare an entertaining game and/or come up with 4-5 questions related to the theme. Select subjects and questions that allow speakers to offer opinions or stories.
  - NOTE: Using objects has proven extremely successful with the audience because it provides a tactile element.
    - Example: for a previous meeting, the theme was "Goals." The Table Topics Master had a cup filled with coins and asked each volunteer to come up and pick out a coin. Based on the coin's year, the speaker had to talk about what goal(s) he/she had for that year, and if he/she accomplished it.
  - NOTE: you can also ask questions where two people can offer differing views or do an improv scene. In this case, the speakers' time would be 2-4 minutes.
  - Keep questions brief to save time and to encourage clear understanding. Make sure that these questions do not require specialized knowledge.
  - **It's best to choose a couple of more seasoned speakers first** before the newer members so that they can learn how it's done. Plus it helps with their nerves!
- Review the *Competent Leadership* (CL) manual for the role of Table Topics Master and follow instructions on how to receive credit. The purpose of the CL manual is to help you build leadership skills; if all 10 leadership projects are completed, Toastmasters International will formally recognize it by awarding you the designation of CL.

### During the meeting

1. Bring your *Competent Leadership* (CL) manual to the meeting and have the VPE sign his/her initials on your Project Completion Record page.
2. Arrive 5 minutes early and check the agenda and members in attendance. **The goal of Table Topics is to call on members that do not have speaking roles; they should be called upon first.** Know whom you are calling on by knowing their names in advance – before you approach the lectern.
3. When introduced by the **Toastmaster**, make your way to the lectern, shake hands with the Toastmaster, and enthusiastically take control of the meeting. Begin by explaining the purpose of Table Topics for the benefit of guests and new members. Mention the theme and make certain that everyone understands that they only need to speak for 1 minute to qualify, and that the maximum limit is 2 minutes, with 30 seconds to wrap up. Also mention that all guests are welcome to participate, but that they don't have to.
  - a. **Remember, too, that your job is to give others a chance to speak, so keep your own comments short.**
4. Begin the program by asking your question **FIRST**. This is done to ensure all members have a few seconds to think of an answer. If your game involves not being able to ask the question first, then please make sure that the questions are extremely *easy*.
  - a. Call on seasoned members to respond and then call on newer members. Then gently prod any guest if he/she is willing to speak, but the guest does not have to. Avoid going around the room in the order in which people are sitting.
  - b. Note that audience members can respond to previously posed questions. For example, if you asked a question, and someone has already answered it, you can also pose the question again for anyone in the audience to respond to again.
5. **The Toastmaster is responsible for writing each person's name and what they talked about on the board as the Table Topics segment goes on; this is because you will be too busy transitioning in between Table Topic questions. Writing names down is for voting purposes.**
6. Keep your eye on the time. In general, Table Topics runs until 12:50pm, which leaves 10 minutes to conclude the meeting, unless stated otherwise. You may need to adjust the number of questions so your segment ends on time. Even if your portion started late, try to end on time to avoid the total meeting running overtime.
7. The Sergeant-At-Arms will have already passed out voting ballots to each person before the meeting. Call on members *and guests* to vote for the Best Evaluator and Best Table Topics Speaker. Please note that guests are also allowed to vote. This is meant to inspire because if a guest wins a "Best Table Topics Speaker" ribbon, it will encourage him/her to return to the club and possibly join as a member.
8. Return control of the lectern to the Toastmaster and remember to shake hands with the Toastmaster.

9. Collect everyone's ballots in the bucket at this time and then count the ballots.
  - a. Please note that you do not need to write all of the speakers' names down on a piece of paper and record tally marks. Instead, the fastest way is to organize the ballots into separate piles according to the name, and from there, you can see who has the most votes.
10. Slip the winning names to the Toastmaster and he/she will announce the winners after the Functionary Reports and hand out the award ribbons.

**After the meeting**

- Return the ballot bucket to the Sergeant-At-Arms.
- Reflect on how you did as Table Topics Master and implement any changes or improvements the next time you are Table Topics Master.

More Table Topics information can be found by clicking [here](#).

**Some people underestimate the Table Topics Master role's importance. Not only does it provide you with an opportunity to practice planning, preparation, organization, time management and facilitation skills; your preparation and topic selection help train members to learn how to present their thoughts clearly and convincingly, with no more than a few seconds of preparation. We also learn to listen constructively, and to think flexibly.**