

District 2 Toastmasters

**Toastmasters Club  
Contest Chairman's Guide**

A Learning Tip Seminar

By

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## About Bruce Meaker

Bruce Meaker has been a Toastmaster for over 27 years.

He has held every club and nearly every District Officer position including District 2 Governor in 1994-95. During this time he has started and mentored over a dozen clubs. He currently belongs to four Toastmaster clubs (home – Snohomish County, advanced – Toastmasters Extraordinaries, and specialty – Philosophically Speaking and Seattle International 10).

His other accomplishments include chairing two District conferences, District Chief Judge, Regional Conference Facilities and Finance Chairs, Toastmaster of the Year (2001), and District Historian from 1997 to 2013.

In 2007 after rising to the District level seven times, he won the District 2 Evaluation contest. He repeated this feat in 2010 to become only one of several in District 2 history to have won the Evaluation contest more than once.

As a Distinguished Toastmaster, he is a regular speaker and trainer for clubs, Toastmasters Leadership Institutes, MELEs, and District Conferences on the subjects of Club and Toastmaster skills.

He is available to speak on a variety of Toastmaster skill building and inspirational subjects, including Evaluations, Mentoring, TM of the Day, Where to Get Speech Ideas, How to Quickly Draft a Speech, Converting Guests to Members, Building Healthy Clubs, Contest Chairmanship and Judging, Speechcraft, Conducting a Successful Roast, and Toastmasters as preparation for life opportunities.

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# Club Contest Chairman's Guide

By

Bruce Meaker, DTM PDG

I have learned about Toastmasters Contests through many years of experience in District Leadership. Toastmasters is about “showmanship” and the contests we ask our leaders to run are a great opportunity to practice this vital skill. A “good show” helps the members who participate to grow in confidence and feel good about the growing process. These skills have helped me greatly in successfully facilitating real life events such as my mother’s 80<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration, my parent’s 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, and the retirement celebration for my boss at work. All of them required planning and organization of people and resources for the purpose of celebrating some event or person. All based on the skills learned by putting on a club contest.

Because Toastmaster contests are public events, there will usually be members of the public who will attend that are non-Toastmasters. Many times these will be family of the contestants. By putting on a quality well run contest, you promote the goodwill of Toastmasters with both the participants and guests which only furthers the goals of the organization to sustain and expand its membership while offering them valuable growing experiences. This is the contest chairman’s charge as a leader.

The following list emphasizes what a Contest Chairman has to be aware of and do before, during, and afterward to put on a “good show” ie. a successful contest.

## Before the Contest

1. **Toastmaster.** You are the Chairman of the contest and as such you are to practice getting others to fill all the roles for you. Therefore, avoid the urge to be the Toastmaster yourself and get someone else to fill that role. If you want to be a Contest Toastmaster, then make arrangements to swap with another. They toastmaster your contest and you toastmaster theirs.

Communicate with the Toastmaster ahead of time. If they are inexperienced, be sure that person is briefed about what they are to do during the contest. The list of items should include the following:

- Arrival time to brief the contestants
- Opening statements to warm up the audience
- Calling on the Chief Judge and Timer to review their roles (decide if Chief Judge or Toastmaster will call on the Timer)
- Contestant introductions (name, title, title, name)
- Asking Timer for one minute between contestants (two minutes at the end of each contest) for the Judges to mark their ballots

- Contestant interviews. 1 to 2 minutes each but has to be long enough to allow the Chief Judge and counters to complete their determinations of contest winners. If a contestant is in both contests, they are to only be interviewed after the second contest to avoid the perception of bias with the judges.
  - Evaluation speaker interview. Must be long enough to allow the evaluation contestants to be sequestered, have 5 minutes for composing of notes, and the first contestant to be returned to the room. 5 minutes of interview will usually do it.
  - Table Topics contest question. It can be developed either by the Chairman or the Toastmaster. The Chairman should be deliberate about clarifying who it will be.
2. **Chief Judge.** Again, resist the urge to play this role. Get someone else to perform this role. Confer with the Chief Judge before the contest. Discuss which of you will be bringing the contest forms. I like to have the Chief Judge bring the forms and then I bring a set myself for backup.
  3. **Judges.** There should be at least 5 judges plus a Tie Breaking Judge.
    - a. If the club is large enough, you can have the club members judge the contest. However, a judges training before the contest should be done.
    - b. Judges may be invited from outside your club. If you do you accomplish two goals. First, they provide a fresh, relatively unbiased judging from those who are not familiar with the contestants. The second advantage of inviting outside judges is that it adds to the attendance numbers for your contest. Plan ahead and ask persons outside your club to come judge your contest early before their schedules get filled up.
  4. **Location/ Venue.** The contest may be held at the site of the club meetings. However, if that location is not suitable or the club prefers variety then the contest may be moved to another location. The Chairman should consider if there is space to conduct the Toastmaster's and Chief Judge's briefings. Also there should be outside rooms to sequester the contestants for the Evaluation and Table Topics contests.
  5. **Date and Time.** This information should be clarified well ahead of the contest. Many club meeting are from 1 to 1.5 hours long. However, if there are two contestants in each contest, then the contest will have a 2 hour duration. This will need to be made clear to all if the contest is held during a regular club meeting.
  6. **Equipment.** The following is a list of equipment needed to put on a contest. Usually the club has these items in stock but the chairman needs to be deliberate about checking that they will be available for the contest.
    - a. Timing lights
    - b. Stop Watches (2)
    - c. US flag

- d. Lectern
- e. Extension Cord

7. **Paper Forms.**

- a. Judges Forms were discussed above under Chief Judge.
- b. Contest Program / Agenda  
The following are my rules of thumb for crafting an agenda that will accurately depict the flow of the contest.
  - 9 minutes / contestant - Humorous and International Speech Contest
  - 5 minutes / contestant - Evaluation Contest
  - 3 minutes / contestant – Table Topics

This allows enough time for Toastmaster introductions of contestants, contestant presentations, 1 minute of silence between contestants and 2 minutes at the end for the judges.

- 2.5 minutes / contestant for interviews
- 6 minutes for the Evaluation Speaker interview to allow the contestants to be sequestered, have 5 minutes to compose their notes, and for the return of the first contestant.
- c. Certificates of Participation for the Toastmaster to give the contestants after the interview.
- d. Certificates of Appreciation for the Chairman to give the contest supporters before announcing the contest winners.
- e. Advertising flyer. Besides the other vital information about the contest, clearly specify the expected “Arrival Time” and “Contest Start Time”. If you just specify that the Contest will be held at 9 a.m. expecting to begin the contest then, there will be contestants and supporters that will arrive at that time and delay your contest. Arrival time should be at least a half hour before the start time to allow for the briefings by the Toastmaster and Chief Judge. An hour is better.

8. **Money.** Contests will cost a modest amount (\$20 to \$100). It depends on your club culture as to what you are expected and able to do. Costs might occur for the following:

- a. Awards for the winners. Give a quality award to the contest winner. This may be a plaque, ribbon, framed certificate.
- b. Appreciation gifts for the Toastmaster and Chief Judge. These people have greatly helped you put on a good show. Gifts may be a modest gift card, potted plant, Table Topics idea cards, notebook to write ideas, etc.
- c. printing and paper for agendas and certificates of appreciation.

- d. refreshment food / drinks. Club members may donate food and drinks or you may arrange to have food purchased. Refreshments can be snacks, muffins, pizza, or a full potluck menu. Drinks may include water, coffee, tea, juice and/or soda, It depends on how you want to organize this part of the contest experience and you club culture.

Financial support for contest costs can come from serveral sources. Once you tally the expected costs for the contest, approach the club for support from the club treasury. Many clubs put funds in their annual budgets to cover expected contest costs. Other funds can come from activities such as holding a raffle or member donations.

- 9. **Awards.** Purchase award trophies / plaques for the winners of each contest. Rule of thumb for number of places:

<u>No. of Contestants</u>	<u>Places Awarded</u>
2, 4	1st, 2nd
3, 5 or more	1st, 2nd, 3rd

Depending on the culture and financial resources of your club, you can have a paper certificate for 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> place or purchase trophys for them.

Try to avoid having only one person without an award. This is accomplished by awarding to all contestants or only the top two. The top two need to be awarded to make it clear who the alternate contest representative for the next contest is if the winner is unable to participate.

### During the Contest

- 1. **Greeter.** Have someone at a table near the door who will greet and sign in everyone who attends. The sign-in list is important for you to know how many came. Then for the next contest, you will know if you need to adjust your promotion for the contest and how many funds will be needed to pay for expenses.
- 2. **Start on time.** Get organized to start when you have said you are going to start. It maintains your integrity if you do. It irritates everyone if you don't. Minimize the number of people arriving at the start time by advertising the registration time as at least 1/2 hour before the start time. One hour ahead of time is better.
- 3. **Welcome / Flag Salute.** Give an enthusiastic and warm welcome to the attendees. Always conduct a flag salute to the country that allows us the right to free speech.

4. **Dignitaries.** Introduce any District dignitaries that might be present i.e. club presidents, Assistant Area/Division Directors, or Past District Governors/Directors. However, if you have a “dignitary” who is a contestant, conduct the introductions after the contest before handing out the Certificates of Appreciation.
5. Introduce the Toastmaster.
6. Get Certificates of Participation for the contestants to the Toastmaster so the contestants get them as they are interviewed. The others get their Certificates of Appreciation from you at the end before the winners are announced. You could delegate the creation of these to another person. I sometimes give out a candy bar with the Certificate of Appreciation such as a \$100,000 bar and tell them they are worth a hundred grand (which they are).
7. After the Toastmaster is done:
  - a. Present Certificates of Appreciation to all the contest supporters.
  - b. Announce the time and date of the Area contest
  - c. Announce if there were any disqualifications for time. Don’t say who it was. The audience will know and understand if a very good speaker does not place and therefore, will not question the judging process.
  - d. Announce the winners. Do not call the contestants up to the front to announce the winners. I was in a contest years ago with 4 contestants. We were called up to the front of the room and then the winners were announced in the order of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place. I was standing there with the other remaining person thinking that maybe I had won the contest when they announced the other person as the winner. This awkward moment left me to just sit down so the winner could bask in his glory. After that experience I recommend that the winners be announced with the contestants in the audience. Doesn’t create an embarrassing situation which detracts from audience focus on congratulating the winner.
8. **Be Graceful.** Showmanship demands that you graciously conduct the contest in a manner which honors everyone who participates or attends. Do not call attention to mistakes or errors made by others during the contest that are inconsequential to the outcome. Many times the audience won’t know if an error has been made so you serve no constructive purpose in calling attention to it. However, if a serious breach of contest protocol is occurring during the contest by an inexperienced Toastmaster or Chief Judge then it would be appropriate to call gracious attention to it to avoid a protest. Briefing the Toastmaster and conferring with the Chief Judge ahead of the contest will go along way toward avoiding such challenges.
9. **Pictures.** Arrange to have someone take pictures of the event (not during the contestants speaking) and particularly of the winners. It is part of a documenting

a good show and may come in handy for future trainings on how to put on a successful contest or year end review of what the club accomplished.

#### After the Contest

1. Celebrate! Have a party afterward for all who can attend at a local restaurant or pub. This allows you to develop and enjoy a Toastmaster comradarie. This reinforces the positive culture of your area or division.
2. Evaluate. Make a list of what worked well and what did not work well for reference when conducting a contest in the future.
3. Communicate. Forward the names of the winners to the chairman at the Area contest.
4. Have any name plates for the contest trophies engraved with the winners names if appropriate.

# Club Contest Chairman Management Plan

Contest: Snohomish County

Who fills this roll or is responsible for the Item

Chairman

Toastmaster

Chief Judge

Judges

1

2

3

4

5

6

Timers

1

2

Counters

1

2

Sgt at Arms

Greeter

Photographer

Location:

**Equipment**

Timing Lights:

Stop Watches:

US Flag:

Refreshments:

Coffee Maker, Tea Water Heater, Extension Cord

Coffee, Tea, Orange and Apple Juice, Muffins

Contest Program / Agenda: Bruce Meaker

Certificates of Appreciation: Bruce Meaker

Costs:

Responsible Person

Trophies

Muffins

Coffee, Tea, Juice

Candy Bars (20)

Total

Humorous Speech Contestants

Table Topics Contestants

# ***Snohomish County Club #690***

## ***International Speech and Evaluation Contests***

### ***Agenda***

***Date: March 7, 2005***

***Location: Snohomish County Annex, Everett, Washington***

*5:00 p.m. Arrive for Contestants and Judges briefings*

*5:30 Call to Order by Contest Sgt at Arms -----  
Flag Salute*

*5:30 Introduction of Toastmaster-----Bruce Meaker, DTM  
Opening Comments  
Introduction of Chief Judge-----John Pachamatla, DTM  
Introduction of Timers-----  
Review of the Rules*

*5:40 Evaluation Contest  
Review the Procedures  
Introduction of Evaluation Speaker-----Betty Eisenzimmer, DTM*

*5:50 Interview of Evaluation Speaker*

*5:56 Introduction of Contestants  
Jay Lambert, Tony Stigall*

*6:10 Interview Contestants*

*6:15 Break*

*6:22 International Speech Contest  
Introduction of Speakers  
Charla Hattendorf, Brad Towers*

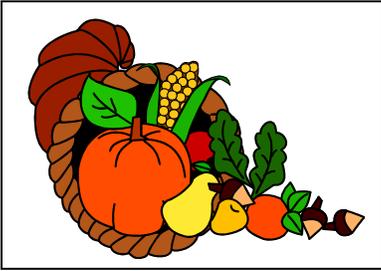
*6:40 Interview Contestants*

*6:45 Certificates of Appreciation*

*6:50 Introduction of Contest Chair-----John Patchamatla  
Announcement of Contest Results*

*7:00 Adjourn*

# SNOHOMISH COUNTY TOASTMASTERS



Presents the



## HUMOROUS SPEECH AND TABLE TOPICS CONTEST

Monday, September 18, 2003

Snohomish County Courthouse  
Room A104

Arrival Time: 5:00 p.m.  
Start Time: 5:30 p.m.



Contact: Bruce Meaker, DTM  
425-783-1722 (w)  
425-338-4574 (h)

# **CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION**

PRESENTED TO

CHARLA HATTENDORF

SNOHOMISH COUNTY TOATMASTERS  
INTERNATIONAL SPEECH CONTEST

March 5, 2005

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Bruce Meaker, DTM PDG  
Contest Chairman

# **CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION**

PRESENTED TO

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**JUDGE**

SNOHOMISH COUNTY TOASTMASTERS  
HUMOROUS SPEECH AND TABLE TOPICS CONTEST

Thank you,

September 18, 2003

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Bruce Meaker, DTM PDG  
Contest Chairman