



Organizing a Contest:

Rules, Tips & Secrets



*Prepared for the District 19 Executive Committee
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Introduction

Congratulations! You get to run an area contest!

If you haven't done it before, you'll find it to be challenging, frustrating, and scary ... and fun, exciting and you'll feel great after it's done! This document will cover a few of the things that someone forgot to tell you. We'll look at rules, protocols and advice that will make it go more smoothly.

Other than what's in the Toastmasters Contest Rule Book, what's said in this document is not carved in stone. It's just advice collected from the experiences of those who've been there and done that. There are reasons why some things are done a certain way, and these guidelines can help protect the integrity of your contest and make sure contestants are treated fairly and can protect you from unknowingly ruffling feathers.

Do you really have to read through all this – um – stuff? Yes, if you want to do your job right. Sure, you can get away with winging it. But if you care about the contestants and want to respect the work they've put into it, and you take any pride in your own work and reputation, take the 10 minutes to read this. Always remember – you're not in this alone. Put together a team that will support you, and lean on your Division Director and others you trust for guidance and advice.

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RULE BOOK HIGHLIGHTS

Read the Rule Book to be fully prepared. Here is a summary of the rules you're most likely going to need to know. It is not comprehensive. *If an issue comes up, consult the real Contest Rule Book.*

Selection of Contestants

- A club can select which member will represent it at the Area contest any way it wishes, whether club contest or appointment. If the club holds an official contest, though, it must follow the Rule Book. If a club chooses to hold a contest but ignore the rules (such as not disqualifying contestants for going overtime), then it cannot be called a “contest” (and should be called an exhibition, competition, demonstration, etc.).
- If your area has four or fewer clubs, the District has the option of letting each club send TWO contestants to the area contest during a given Toastmasters year. If a division has four or fewer areas, the top two contestants from each area contest may advance to the division contest. These decisions are made at the beginning of each Toastmasters year by the District Executive Committee (DEC). If uncertain what the standard is for this year, contact your Division Director or the District Program Quality Director.
- If you have just one contestant for a contest, *you must still conduct the contest*. There is still the possibility the contestant could disqualify on time. To give the lone contestant a "pass" wouldn't be fair to the other Area winners who had to meet a time limit. It does make the ballot counters' job easier, though.

Contestant Eligibility

- A contestant must be a member in good standing (dues paid up) of a club in good standing.
- To compete in the International Speech Contest, the contestant must have completed six assignments from the CC manual, or earned a Certificate of Completion in Levels 1 and 2 of any path in Pathways (not required for Humorous, Table Topics or Evaluation contests).
- District officers (Area Directors on up), along with candidates for district offices who are actively campaigning and education presenters at the Contest are not eligible to compete (because they'd have an unfair advantage over contestants who aren't presenting).
- A contestant can only compete in ONE area, even if he or she has won more than one club contest.
- A contestant in one Area Contest cannot serve as a judge or chief judge in another Area.
- A contestant cannot have another major role at the same contest.

Judges

- Judges have to meet the same eligibility requirements as the speakers (six CC speeches or two levels of Pathways) and be a member in good standing).
- At an area contest, there must be either equal representation (one judge from each club in the area, regardless of whether they have a contestant participating), or at least five judges, "unless impractical." This is open to debate, but in my opinion it's better to have the most judges possible, so try to have at least five judges at the area level, and seven at division.

- Judges at an area contest have to be a member in good standing, have been a member for the past six months, and completed at least six CC projects or earned a Certificate of Completion in Levels 1 and 2 of any path in Pathways.
- The identity of judges should remain anonymous as much as practical.
- At Division and District contests only (not Area), judges and the chief judge aren't supposed to be in the same club as one of the contestants. Check with District Leadership about the current interpretation of the rules.

If a Contestant Is Late

- If at the time of the contestants' briefing a contestant has not shown up for the contest), an alternate speaker from that speaker's club may attend the briefing and participate in the speaking order draw.
- The contestant must show up by the time the person conducting the contest (usually the Chair) is introduced to the audience. However, the primary contestant has to first report to the Contest Chair, and must waive their right to the briefing. He or she then takes the speaking order slot drawn by the alternate. If the contestant has not shown up by the time the Contest Chair is introduced, the speaker is disqualified and the alternate can compete.

If there is a Protest

- Contestants and judges can protest a speech based on originality if they believe a speech is less than 75% original. A protest can be presented to either you as Contest Chair or to the Chief Judge.
- If there is a protest – and they happen very rarely – start by calling a "time out" at the contest, asking people to take a short break while you consult with the Chief Judge. Do not explain to the audience why.
- The Chief Judge will then assemble the judges, talk to the contestant, and then the judges vote on whether to disqualify the contestant. You'll just have to fill time as best you can (District announcements, an impromptu educational session, etc.).
- Once you have announced the winners of the contest, results are final and cannot be protested. If it's a case of eligibility, and the contestant is found to not be eligible, the contestant is disqualified immediately and may not advance, even if it happens after the contest. He or she is then replaced by the next best contestant.

WHERE DID THE FALL CONTESTS GO?

Effective with the fall of 2018, Toastmasters has eliminated the fall contest cycle, which used to offer the Humorous Speech and Evaluation contests. Instead, in District 19, at the beginning of the Toastmasters year (July) the District leaders will decide what second contest will be paired with the International Speech Contest during the spring contest cycle. They will choose either Table Topics, Evaluation, Tall Tales, or Humorous Speech.

One consequence of this is that you, as Area Director, only have to do all of this once during the Toastmasters year. It's up to you whether that's a good thing or a bad thing.

TIMELINE

FOUR TO SIX WEEKS BEFORE THE CONTEST

Read the Rule Book!

It will answer many of your questions, including ones you didn't think to ask. Even if you *think* you know the rule book, read it. There are changes every year.

Choose a Sergeant at Arms and a Chief Judge (and maybe a Wrangler).

These are your partners. Look for people with experience if you have little, especially Sergeant at Arms. Work with them to divide duties. Remember the Chief Judge has to have six CC speeches or two Pathways levels completed to be eligible.

Find a location, date, and time.

- Setting a **date** sounds easy, but you should consider:
 - Club contest dates
 - Division contest date. Schedule at least two weeks before the Division Contest so contestants have time to tweak their speeches and you and your Chief Judge have time to recruit your judging team.
 - Try not to schedule an Area Contest more than a month before the Division Contest so the speech contestants don't have to work so hard to keep the speech fresh.
 - Work with your other Area Directors in your division and your Division Director. You don't want to compete with your fellow Area Directors for volunteers, plus the ADs should try to attend and assist their fellow Area Directors' contests.
 - Facility availability.
- In choosing the **time**, be careful not to make it too early (if it's a weekday, give them a reasonable chance to make it there after work). And set and promote two times... a "registration time" by which you want all contest personnel there so they can be briefed, and an actual contest start time (at least 30 minutes after the registration time).
- In choosing a **location**, check with the previous Area Director. You are free to change tradition, but sometimes it's easier to keep using the same venue (especially if it's a good one). Your predecessor should have contact information for you at the venue. If you are not familiar with it, visit the venue ahead of time.
- Once you have set your Date, Time and Location, notify your Division Director so she or he can confirm there aren't conflicts with their plans. Then after the Division Director approves, notify:
 - Your fellow Area Directors (so they can plan to be there to help you);

- The District Public Relations Manager (so it can be added to the District Calendar).

Decide what your contest is going to be like. Consider (there will be more info on each of these later under "Other Good Advice"):

- Educational Session?
- Refreshments?
- Trophies or Awards?
- Charge admission fee?

Download a Contest Kit from Toastmasters.com

Although some of the files will duplicate what you have already been provided with, it's good to have electronic backups. It will include nearly all the paperwork you'll need (*more on that later*).

Roles

Make a list of the roles to be filled. *Again, there is lots more information on "roles" in the "Other Good Advice" section of this document.*

- The earlier you start the easier it is.
- The more people you have filling roles, the more people you have in the audience.
- You'll get better results if you don't ask generically... "I need someone from your club..." Instead, ask individuals: "Jim, would you please be my Chief Timer?"

Prepare Trophies/Prizes

If buying trophies locally, contact local trophy shops; ask about lead time for ordering trophies, cost, etc. (and add to this timeline where appropriate). Remember you CAN'T use the Toastmasters logo or even the name Toastmasters. You can say "Speech Contest" or "Table Topics" or "Evaluation Contest." It's up to the DEC to determine each year how much financial help the District will provide for trophies. More trophy information is listed later under "Other Good Advice."

THREE TO FOUR WEEKS BEFORE THE CONTEST

Find a Test Speaker

If there is an evaluation contest during this year, find a volunteer to give the test speech that will be used for the evaluation contest contestants. It should be someone with 6-10 speeches completed in the CC. The speaker should be someone not familiar to the contestants, and preferably from a different Area. This could be one of your most challenging tasks, so start early. And consider who could be a backup in case your first recruit backs out.

Start Promoting

As soon as you have reserved the location, date and time, send the details to the Club Presidents and Vice Presidents of Education so they can schedule their club contests if they haven't already done so. Include a reminder about Toastmaster of the Year Contest, with the Toastmaster of the Year form. Promote TMOTY contest within the message.

Create a Flyer.

Send flyers to Club Presidents and VPEs – include a list of roles, asking for volunteers and promote the Toastmaster of the Year contest.

Check Contest Forms and Certificates.

These should be provided by the District 19 Program Quality Director. If you don't have them or don't have enough, contact the PQD for more forms or print from the online kit you have downloaded from the Toastmasters International website.

Start preparing your contest script.

NOTE: DO use a prepared script for the contest. DO NOT attempt to ad-lib it. You can get a recommended script from www.district19.me or from your Division Director. You don't have to read it verbatim, but it will assure you follow the protocols necessary to keep the contest fair and in line with what the other Areas and Divisions in District 19 are doing

TWO TO THREE WEEKS BEFORE THE CONTEST

Find judges. The chief judge should handle the recruiting of the judges (along with the timer and ballot counters), but communicate with your Chief Judge to make sure it's being done and find out if there are any problems. Work together to solve them.

Check on facility reservation. Make sure you're on the calendar.

Work with your refreshment chair. Are you on the same page?

Work with Wrangler to collect contestant bio and eligibility forms.

Start preparing paperwork folders (either chair or the Chief Judge):

Judges and Tie-Breaking Judge (each should include:)

- One ballot for each contest
- One judge's eligibility form for each contest
- "Barriers to Objectivity" document
- Blank paper for note-taking

Timers

- Chief Timer's statement
- One time-keeping form for each contest for each timer

Ballot Counters

- Six tally sheets – one for each contest for each ballot counter.

ONE TO TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE CONTEST

Send reminder emails to volunteers.

Confirm your test speaker. Recruit a backup just in case.

Check list of contestants.

Have you received names and eligibility and bio forms for all contestants? If not, contact club presidents.

Talk to your Chief Judge.

Check list of judges. Do you have equal representation from all clubs/areas? Everyone qualified?

Is the tie-breaking judge lined up?

Have the judges been sent copies of the ballots and rules to study in advance?

Talk to your Sergeant at Arms.

Are you going to handle the contestant briefings or are you going to delegate to the Sergeant at Arms? What about the drawing for speaking order?

Finalize Contest Chair script.

Begin work on Contest Agenda/Program

Check List of Supplies/Equipment, including:

Timing Equipment

- Timing light
- Backup red-yellow-green cards
- 2 stopwatches (or verify with Timers that they're willing to use smartphone timers)

Registration Table

- Sign-in Sheets
- Pens
- Name Tags
- Markers/Sharpies
- Money Bag/Envelope, Change – If registration fee collected
- Copies of next level conference flyers/registration forms

Refreshments:

- Snacks – sweet, salty, healthy
- Coffee and coffee maker – extension cord
- Beverages – Pop, bottled water, etc.
- Ice
- Cups – for coffee and beverages
- Sugar, artificial sweetener, creamer, stirrers
- Plates, napkins, eating utensils (depending on snacks)

ONE WEEK BEFORE

Send reminder messages to volunteers, contestants and dignitaries.

Check on facility reservation.

Check with next level Conference Chair – Are they attending and will they bring flyers/registration forms for their contest? If not, ask for one to copy and have available at the Registration Table.

Do you have?

- Trophies – 1st and 2nd (*and maybe 3rd) place for each contest (International Speech, and either Evaluation, Tall Tales, or Humorous Speech)
- Certificates of Participation for each contestant
- 1st Place Certificates for both contests
- 2nd Place Certificates for both contests
- 3rd Place Certificates for both contests (if needed)
- Bio Sheet for each contestant
- Certification of Eligibility for each contestant
- Notification of Winners form
- Judges' Packets

- Ballot Counters' Packets
- Timers' Packets
- Check with Sgt. at Arms and review plans and supplies
 - Draw for Speaking order system – suggestions: draw numbers on slips of paper, use playing cards, etc.
 - Room set-up

TWO TO THREE DAYS BEFORE

Review everything above. What did you forget?

Select a Table Topics question (if there's a Table Topics Contest this year, of course)

Print two copies: one for you to read the question from and the other to hand to the contestant. Shhhhhh! The question is top secret – don't tell anyone, unless you want to run it by a trustworthy veteran for their opinion. See Page 16 for more on choosing your Table Topics question.

Confirm again with your test speaker (if there's an evaluation contest)

Review agenda/program: Still accurate?

Pack supplies/equipment

Assemble your Chief Judge's packet (if CJ hasn't done it):

- Judges' folders
- Tie-Breaking Judge's folder
- Folders for Ballot Counters and Timers
- Chief Judge's statement
- Briefing information for Judge's briefing
- Briefing information for timers and ballot counters
- A copy of the Rule Book

ONE DAY/NIGHT BEFORE

Double check lists

Complete Participation Certificates (wait until the last minute in case there are any changes)

Finalize agenda and make copies

Review your script

Review contestant bio forms to prepare for post-contest interviews

Get a good night's sleep

AT THE CONFERENCE

Be the first one there!

Meet a final time with Sgt. at Arms and Chief Judge to confirm duties and preparation.

- Give the Chief Judge the Judges', Ballot Counters' and Timers' Packets.
- Give the SAA the timing devices and timing cards, plus the system for determining speaking order and form (if you have delegated that duty).
- Make sure you work with the CJ and SAA to define the speaking area before the contestants' and judges' briefing take place.

Meet with Paper Wrangler

- Review when you want to be handed participation and bio forms and in what order.
- Make sure the Wrangler has provided speech titles and they're in your script.
- See the next main section for more details on the Wrangler's job.

Meet with the highest ranking District officer attending. Does he or she want to do District announcements (promoting the next contest and anything else they want)?

Give registration table supplies to Registration team.

Give refreshments to Refreshment team or check that supplies have arrived and are set up.

If relevant, show SAA the room where Table Topics or Evaluation Contestants will be sequestered.

Make sure you have a chair set up for yourself in front but off to the side of the stage.

WRANGLING THE PAPER

The chair must communicate clearly to his or her team who's expected to do what. It doesn't matter whether the packets are assembled by the Chair, the Chief Judge or the Paper Wrangler, but it's the responsibility of the Chair to make sure it gets done.

Before the contest starts, the Wrangler and Chair should make sure you have biography forms from each contestant (both contests). You also need to make sure you have eligibility forms signed by all of the contestants, and collect the judge's eligibility forms from the judges or Chief Judge (if he or she has already collected them).

I recommend using pocket folders for each of people filling roles. They should be the same dark color (black or navy) so the audience is less likely to immediately identify who the judges are. Details are decided by the Chair and Chief Judge, but here the recommended folder contents

Judges:

- One ballot for EACH contest
- The form called Barriers to Objectivity
- A blank sheet of paper for taking notes
- The judge's eligibility form.
- Contest Rule Book (optional)

Tie Breaking Judge:

- The same list as the other judges, but with their special ballot inside.

Chief Judge:

- Chief Judge's statements to be read at the start of each contest.
- Rule Book
- Barriers to Objectivity (to be used in briefing the judges before the contests)

Chief Timer:

- Four copies of the timing sheet (two timers, two contests, for a total of four copies),
- A copy of the timer's statements to be read at each of the two contests.

Ballot Counters:

- Two copies of the Counter's counting form for each Ballot counter

All the folders for the judges, Tie Breaking judge, ballot counters and timers should be given to the Chief Judge to distribute.

The Paper Wrangler should have printed out copies of the participation certificates and the 1st/2nd/3rd place certificates. The Participation Certificates can be filled out in advance. The Wrangler will have to take care of putting the correct names on the winners' certificates after the results are given to the chair (but before the winners are announced – so you'll have to hurry).

One of the main jobs I expected of my wrangler was to put the right papers in my hands (as contest chair) at the right time. The trickiest part is after the ballots are collected and the chair does the interviews. Details are up to the chair, but it's recommended that the wrangler be prepared to hand the Chair a stack of papers, with Contestant #1's biography form and participation certificate back to back. Then in order for all the other contestants, too.

CONTEST ROLES

The more people you have recruited for roles, the bigger your audience is going to be.

Required

- Contest Chair**
- Chief Judge**
- Sgt. at Arms**
- Test Speaker (Evaluation Contest only)**
- 5-7 Judges (Either equal representation or 5 or more for Area, 7 or more for Division)**
- 1 Tie-breaking judge (identity known only to Chief Judge)**
- 3 Ballot Counters**
- 2 Timers**
- Contestants (of course)**

Optional

- Paper Wrangler (recommended, but not required)**
- Refreshment Chair**
- Refreshment Assistants**
- Registration Desk Chair**
- Registration Desk Assistant**
- Education Session Leader**
- Thought of the Day or Humorist**
- Publicity Chair**
- Photographer**
- Greeter**
- Protocol Director (to identify dignitaries for you)**
- Assistant Sgt. at Arms**
- Set-up / Clean-up Committee**
- Calligrapher**

OTHER GOOD ADVICE

It's All About the Contestants

The contest is not about the Area Director, and not about the Contest Chair. You are merely there to facilitate the contest as effectively as possible. However...

It is ALSO About You

This is also a learning opportunity for you... learning to lead, to organize, and to delegate. And it's an opportunity for an unusual speaking experience. Enjoy your time in the spotlight (without overshadowing the contestants), especially now that there's just one contest cycle per year. Bask in the applause and appreciation (while giving credit to those who helped).

Do You *Have* to Be the Chair?

No. Honestly, you can delegate the whole kit & caboodle. But if you do, you're really missing out on a great learning opportunity that goes with being an Area Director. Just do it.

Can You Do a Joint Contest with Another Area?

If there's a long history of lack of participation and you're concerned about attendance and volunteers, you do have the option of holding a Joint Contest with a neighboring area. It's not ideal, but it's something to consider if you're desperate. NOTE, however – you must still hold a separate contest! That is... you bring in one set of volunteers and one audience, including judges and contest personnel. But you then hold separate contests. For example, if Areas 10 and 11 are teaming up, you first do the Area 10 Table Topics Contest and then then the Area 11 Table Topics Contest, and then the Area 10 International Speech Contest and then the Area 11 International Speech Contest. Consult with your Division Director before attempting to hold a joint conference.

Choosing Your Chief Judge, SAA and Wrangler

If you've never run a contest before, make sure you have someone very experienced for either Chief Judge or Sergeant at Arms, or both. It also helps to have an experienced Wrangler, although that is also a prime learning position for someone who might succeed you some day. Your call.

Note that according to the rule book, your Chief Judge at the Area level and up **MUST** meet the same eligibility requirements as the judges: At least six CC manual projects completed or 2 Pathways levels, and can't be a member of the same club as one of the contestants.

Choosing Judges

You owe it to the contestants to put together the best judging team you can. *The Chief Judge should handle the recruiting of the judges*, but as Contest Chair be sure to communicate well so you know it's being handled. While the Chief Judge will advise you or handle the recruiting, know the rules and offer what help you can, including recruiting. You know your area best. Technically, at the Area level you can have "equal representation" (one judge from each club in your area) OR at least five judges. Aim for both; fewer than five judges isn't fair to the contestants. Ideally, recruit a judge from each club in your area, and add a couple of good experienced judges from outside your area. If you can find seven judges, go with seven judges. Or eight. Or nine.

Your judges are going to have to fill out an eligibility form that verifies they are qualified. To be eligible to judge at the area and division level, a member must have at least six CC projects completed. And if you're putting together a DIVISION contest, the judges can't be a member of the same club as one of the contestants.

The Tie-Breaking Judge

Only the Chief Judge should know the identity of the tie-breaking judge. Because the TB Judge should NOT attend the judges' briefing, choose someone who is experienced. The same eligibility requirements apply to the TB Judge.

Publicity / Getting People to Attend

Promote the event to the community. It's a great member-building opportunity. How you promote depends on your location. Feel free to contact the District Public Relations Manager for specific advice, or recruit someone (such as the VP of Public Relations for one of the clubs in your area) to be a publicity chair for your contest.

Remember, this is all about the speakers. So how do you make sure there's a decent-sized audience for the contest? First, recruit lots of people to fill roles, even if you have to make some up (see the section here about roles). Also, beg! Visit your clubs and tell them how much they'll get out of attending (and maybe recruit them to fill roles). How about attending their club contest? Then you can answer any questions the contestant may have about the next level. Of course, you can also publicize with emails – send a statement to your club presidents that they can read to the club. Submit info for use in club newsletters, web sites or social media pages. Also, be sure to invite the other Area Directors in your Area, and your Division Director! If they expect YOUR help, you have a right to expect theirs. Do you have advanced clubs in your area? Those people are often willing to help. Visit the clubs and ask for a couple of minutes to talk about your contest.

Charging Admission?

Toastmasters allows you to charge a small admission (perhaps \$1 or \$2) to cover your costs (mostly food and trophies). It's up to you whether you want to or you're willing to pick up the cost or do everything low-budget. If you do charge an entrance fee, it must be waived for CONTESTANTS. Toastmasters rules prohibit charging a fee for contestants to participate.

Educational Sessions

Not required, but if there's time (could depend on venue), it's an opportunity for the area to bond, share goals and build membership. And, of course, to educate. It can be – but doesn't have to be – a short version of one of Toastmaster's educational modules. However... be sure it isn't about offering speaking advice. Don't put content out there that will influence audience/judge perceptions of the contestants, or make the contestants question their speeches.

Dignitary Introductions

- Recommended order:
 - Current TRIO (by name, according to rank)
 - District Director
 - Program Quality Director
 - Club Growth Director
 - Past District Governors or Directors (by name)
 - Division Directors
 - Other District officers, including:
 - Finance Manager
 - Administration Manager
 - Public Relations Manager
 - District Parliamentarian

- District Chief Judge
 - District Librarian
 - District Historian
 - District Web Site Director
 - District Social Media Director
 - District Mentor Chair
 - District Prison Club Coach Chair
- Current Area Directors/Governors (by name)
 - Optional (Just stand up as a group; no name recognition necessary):
 - Past Division Directors
 - Past Area Directors/Governors
 - Current Club presidents
 - Past Club presidents
 - Distinguished Toastmasters (DTMs)
 - Past District Winners of the contests you're hosting (unless they're a contestant that day).
- Of course, skip over any officer not attending your contest.
 - Consider having a veteran Toastmaster who "knows the faces" serve as protocol officer and create a dignitary list for you as people arrive.
 - Recognize dignitaries at the start of the event, UNLESS one of the contestants is a dignitary. Then hold the introductions until the end (recognizing a contestant as a dignitary gives that person a competitive edge with the judges). OR skip over the person who's competing, and then mention it during the interview. Recognizing a contestant for a special accomplishment before the actual contest can contaminate judges' neutrality.
 - Define for the audience what makes up a District, Division and Area to help teach the TM structure.
 - Why is this protocol important?
 - It helps the members recognize who their leaders are and who to approach for advice.
 - It illustrates what district offices may be available to them.
 - It recognizes the volunteer work and hours put in by the district officers.

When You Introduce Contestants...

- It's in the Rule Book!

For Table Topics or Evaluation contests, it's simply:

"Contestant number 1: <Speaker's name>. <Speaker's Name>, Contestant number 1."

For International Speech, Humorous Speech and Tall Tales, it's:

"<Speaker's Name>, <Title of Speech>. <Title of Speech>, <Speaker's Name>."

- The goal is to make sure *every contestant is treated equally* and gets no more attention than any other contestant. Do not deviate from the script on this part. **THIS IS NOT THE TIME FOR THE CONTEST CHAIR TO AD-LIB OR JOKE.**

Sitting Down

- After you introduce the contestant, go to your chair and stand in front of it. Remain standing until the contestant says, "Madam/Mr. Contest Chair." *Then* sit.
- If the contestant forgets to acknowledge you, give it some time to make sure, and then go ahead and sit. Some contest chairs will remain standing, but doing so draws attention away from the speaker, and remember, contests are all about the contestants.
- If you forget and sit immediately upon arriving at your chair, don't stand up again. Again, it draws attention to you. Just remain seated, and nod at the contestant when he or she acknowledges you.

Contestant Interviews

- Prepare in advance – have your questions ready (but be ready to ad-lib follow-up questions)
- Remember, it's about the contestant, not about you. Don't steal the show by adding your own stories.
- Be prepared for a long interview with the Evaluation Contest Test Speaker – you have five minutes to fill.

Your Table Topics Question

- Keep it short! Remember, you're going to have to read it twice to every contestant.
- The question can be more challenging than in a club Table Topics session, but still the objective is not to stump the contestant. Give the contestant the opportunity to be creative.
- Avoid controversial topics.
- Don't ask about current events. It's not fair if one contestant happens to follow the news more carefully than another.
- Don't ask a question that requires specialized knowledge or trivia.
- Feel free to bring in props (I once bought some antique keys and painted them gold, and then asked them about the doors their magical key can open).
- A Google search can turn up some fun example questions.
- Officially, the Contest Rule Book says:

The topic shall be of reasonable length, shall not require a detailed knowledge, and shall lead to an opinion or conclusion.

Agendas

- You can make it as fancy or plain as you like.
 - If plain, at the very least list the names of the contest chair, Chief Judge, Sgt. at Arms, and especially the contestants, in alphabetical order, with a blank line in front of each name so people can mark down the speaking order when you announce it.
 - If you go with a fancy program, you can add the names of all volunteers ... *except judges!* Their identities are to be kept as secret as possible. (For the same reason, when you thank your volunteers for their help, do not identify the judges by name. Just say thank you to them as a group.)

- Either way, have someone else proof the agenda before you print it, especially for the correct spelling of names.

Verbal Details

- Know how to pronounce all names, especially contestants, BEFORE the contest starts. Keep a pre-contest checklist:
 - Names of contestants, dignitaries and contest personnel
 - Speech titles

Trophies

- You are not required to have trophies. You can substitute plaques, or even gift cards or books or anything you like.
- You can purchase your trophies from a local shop, but you **cannot** use the Toastmasters logo or name in the engraving. You **can** have the trophy say "Speech Contest" or "Evaluation Contest" or "Area 42 Contest."
- If ordering from TI, be sure to get the appropriate number of trophies. First and Second place for each contest if you have four or fewer contestants. Add a Third Place if you'll have five or more.
- District 19 might partially reimburse you for the cost of trophies. It's up to the DEC to determine each year. If you missed that DEC meeting and don't know, ask your Division Director.
- NOTE: At Division Contests and higher, trophies are purchased for you by District 19.

Attire

You're in charge. Look like it. Dress to impress in a business-like manner. Dress as if you were interviewing for a job you really really want.

District Announcements

The highest ranking District officer present should be given the opportunity to speak to the audience about upcoming events, including promoting the next level contest. It typically is at the end of contest right before the winners are announced. It can also be used earlier in an emergency if you need to fill time.

Announcing the Winners

- If you have fewer than five contestants for a contest, announce **ONLY** the first and second place winners (not a third place winner). When possible, avoid letting the audience know who finished last. If you have three contestants, still announce first and second place.
- If you have five or more contestants, announced first, second and third.
- **Do NOT call all the contestants to come forward at the same time before announcing the winners.** That only shines an embarrassing spotlight on those who didn't do well. Announce the winner (or 2nd or 3rd place), and THEN call that person forward to receive their award. Just call the winners up from the audience by name.
- If there is a disqualification because of a time violation, announce only that a disqualification on time has occurred. Do NOT identify which speaker that was. The speaker who was disqualified CAN be informed privately after the contest.
- Enlist help of a current District Officer – either Division Director or higher District official – to hand out the trophies and certificates.

Photography

- If you have arranged for a photographer, invite the winners to come forward for photos either when their names are announced or after the contest is finished. Photography is not permitted during the contest itself.
- Use the photo to send out a news release to local media announcing the contest results.
- Provide the winners' home clubs with copies of the photo so they can promote their clubs.

Saying Thank You to Volunteers

The last thing done should be a thank you to the people who helped organize and present the contest. Again, the exception is the judges, who should not be identified by individual name.

After the Contest

- Meet and greet; warmly accept the well-deserved accolades.
- Talk to the winning contestants to make sure they understand what comes next.
- Meet with the Wrangler and Chief Judge to make sure all paperwork is ready to send on to the next level, including contestant eligibility forms, bios, and the Toastmasters form listing the order of the speakers (all speakers, not just the announced winners).
- Manage the clean-up and make sure the room is restored to the way you found it.

If You Need Help

Throughout the contest process, don't be afraid to ask questions of:

- Your Division Director
- Your predecessor as Area Director
- Other past Area and Division Directors/Governors
- Experienced contestants from previous years
- The District Program Quality Director
- Toastmasters International