



# Guidelines for Online Toastmasters Meetings

for District 19

## Rules of Conduct

- Toastmasters and guests will treat an online meeting with the same respect as an in-person meeting.
- Be on time to the meeting. Just as arriving late to the meeting location is a distraction, so is popping in to the online forum late.
- Do not multitask. You wouldn't bring your computer into the room or play on your phone while in-person. Give the meeting the same attention online as you would in the room.
- When you're not speaking, mute yourself. This way, your microphone won't pick up extraneous sounds during speeches.
- Don't eat while in the meeting. Unless a virtual "meal" was set up, don't eat while on camera.
- Stay seated. Wandering around is disrespectful to the speakers. No one wants to see an empty chair while they're giving a speech.
- Be aware of your surroundings that will show up on camera. Avoid backgrounds with inappropriate art, general clutter, or personal areas. For examples, avoid having an unmade bed or messy kitchen counters in your background. If you're concerned, use a virtual background, if provided by the meeting application.
- Keep your roles. If you normally greet people when they come through your door, be there to greet them as they join the meeting. Open and close your meeting just as you would in person.
- Do not hold side conversations while your microphone is live. Also, don't have conversations with other attendants during the meeting. Save it for before or after the meeting. The entire group can hear everyone equally. It takes away from the appropriate speaker.
- Meeting participants should never be muted by the meeting host or cohosts unless there is an issue with distracting, background noise, or obviously unacceptable behavior. Never use the mute control to censor ideas.

## Agenda

A meeting's Toastmaster will ensure the meeting agenda, on branded letterhead, is distributed to all club members at least one (1) day before the scheduled meeting. The agenda may also be attached to the files area of the meeting application for guests to see.

## Before the Meeting

The Vice President Education is responsible for confirming club members with meeting roles will be in attendance for the meeting. The VPE should also assist a member who will not attend in finding his replacement for a role, if necessary. If a replacement cannot be found in time, the meeting Toastmaster should be notified as soon as possible.

Please notify the president, VPE, and/or VPM in advance of the meeting of any guests invited to the meeting.

If convenient, opening the meeting application early allows attendants to chat before the meeting, just as they would in person. The President (or whoever is starting the meeting) will be mindful of the

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time. The President will clearly indicate the meeting is about to begin. He will have the option to mute everyone in the meeting in order to be on time. Mass muting will only be done when necessary in order to not shout over people chatting.

If a speaker needs to show a presentation for a speech, ensure that said speaker has the ability to share his screen. This is another good reason to open the meeting early, to run a test with the speaker.

Timers will have a method of showing the time to the speaker. Suggestions include colored papers, or changing the virtual background to green, yellow or red. Ensure the camera represents the colors well enough before the meeting.

### **During the Meeting**

Run the meeting, according to the agenda, just as you would an in-person meeting. Shaking of hands can be replaced with verbal handoffs to speakers, and speaker's acknowledgement of such.

Point out the person acting as Timer before the speeches. This will help the speakers to see how they're doing on time.

If a speaker has a bandwidth issue, such as video freezes or sound stutters, other members may temporarily turn off their own cameras to aid the speaker. While it is best for the speaker to be able to make "eye contact", the listeners also want to hear the whole speech.

### **After the Meeting**

The club officers will thank all guests for attending. Guests who are trying out the club can then be encouraged to reach out to the Vice President Membership to learn how to join the club, if they wish.

If convenient, leave the meeting room open for some time to again let club members chat as they would after an in-person meeting. Attendees will wait until the President (or Host) has adjourned the meeting before chatting. Attendees will always be respectful to others still in the meeting.

### **Security**

Toastmasters International recommends NOT publishing the meeting URL or link in public social media areas, such as Facebook or Twitter. Instead, clubs should extend the meeting invitation to guests one at a time, via email. This will allow the clubs to avoid meeting hacking.

Club officers will have "Host" rights to the meeting platform, in order to allow speakers the ability to share their screen for presentation projects, to mute the room to start the meeting, or set up a "waiting room" to control entry into the online meeting (in case an unknown person joins, who has not yet been verified by a club member). It will be understood that the President, who opens the meeting, or the VPE in his place, will retain host abilities. If neither are in attendance, the first available club officer will act as host. Club members will not have the ability to mute other members.

### **Updates**

This guidelines list will be updated as needed as it is a living document.