

**TOASTMASTERS**  
INTERNATIONAL



# SPEECH CONTEST **RULEBOOK**

JULY 1, 2024 TO JUNE 30, 2025



**WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE**

**TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL**  
**toastmasters.org**

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# Introduction

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Speech contests are an important part of the Toastmasters educational program. They provide an opportunity for Toastmasters to gain speaking experience, as well as an opportunity for other Toastmasters to learn by observing proficient speakers.

This booklet contains the rules and standard procedures for conducting the International, Evaluation, Humorous, Table Topics, Tall Tales, Online, and Video speech contests. If you are involved in conducting or competing in a speech contest, please read these rules carefully and follow them. By doing so, you will ensure a fair speech contest and an enjoyable event for everyone.

## The book consists of three (3) parts:

- ▶ **Speech Contest Rules.** Here you will find the General Rules governing all Toastmasters speech contests, as well as the specific rules covering the International, Evaluation, Humorous, Table Topics, Tall Tales, Online, and Video contests.
- ▶ **Contest Checklists.** This section describes some of the common steps required for contest chairs, chief judges, and contestants to prepare for a speech contest.
- ▶ **Speech Contest Materials and Additional Resources.** In this section, you'll find a list of Web pages and other helpful materials related to Toastmasters Speech Contests.

Note: Rule changes are made once a year by administrative Protocol with the approval of the International President, the International President-Elect, and the Chief Executive Officer. Changes are highlighted by a mark (◆) in the left margin.

# SPEECH CONTEST RULES

## General Rules for All Toastmasters Speech Contests

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Unless otherwise stated, these rules apply to all speech contests conducted by Toastmasters International clubs, Areas, Divisions, and Districts, as well as all contests conducted at the International Convention.

### 1. Speech Contest Policy

A. Toastmasters International recognizes and supports the following official speech contests: International Speech Contest, Evaluation Contest, Humorous Speech Contest, Table Topics Contest, Tall Tales Contest, Online Speech Contest, and Video Speech Contest (only for members of undistricted clubs, including Provisional Districts). No other contest types, showcases, etc., can be conducted by Districts (including Areas and Divisions) and Provisional Districts (including Areas and Divisions).

1. Districts (including Areas and Divisions) must conduct the International Speech Contest. The International Speech Contest must only be conducted in English.
  - a) Provisional Districts (including Areas and Divisions) may conduct a speech contest in English using the rules of the International Speech Contest. This contest does not proceed beyond the District level. A contest using the rules of the International Speech Contest must be titled Provisional Speech Contest.
- ◆ 2. Districts (including Areas and Divisions) and Provisional Districts (including Areas and Divisions) may conduct up to three (3) additional English speech contests each year. The District Director recommends which contests are to be conducted. The recommendations are subject to the approval of the District Executive Committee at its first meeting of the program year.
- ◆ 3. Districts (including Areas and Divisions) including Provisional Districts (including Areas and Divisions) may also conduct up to four (4) non-English speech contests each year. The District Director recommends which contests are to be conducted. The recommendations are subject to the approval of the District Executive Committee at its first meeting of the program year.
  - a) Each of these contests is conducted in a language selected by the District Director and approved by the District Executive Committee.
  - ◆ b) Non-English contests are optional and must be conducted using the rules of the corresponding English speech contest. If a non-English contest is conducted using the rules of the International Speech Contest, it must follow all rules, including eligibility requirements.
  - c) If the non-English contest is being conducted using the rules of the International Speech Contest, such contest must be titled using the name of the language. For example: Chinese Speech Contest.
  - d) Non-English contests must not continue beyond the District level.
- ◆ e) Districts (including Areas and Divisions) are not permitted to conduct multilingual speech contests.

- B. All District-level speech contests are conducted only at the annual District Conference.
- C. Contests must originate at the club level and proceed through the Area, Division, and District levels, respectively. Only contests following this progression are permitted at the Area, Division, and District levels. All clubs are eligible to advance contestants to the Area level in all contests, regardless of the contest language or the primary language of the club.
  - 1. Contests conducted by Provisional Districts must follow this same progression, with the exception of the Video Speech Contest.
- D. Toastmasters International pays the travel expenses of each contestant who participates in the International Speech Contest at the semifinal level at the International Convention. The travel allowance is computed in the same manner and subject to the same restrictions as that of District leaders.
- E. The *Speech Contest Rulebook* is Protocol and applies to all official Toastmasters speech contests. Modifications to rules may only be made through the administrative Protocol review process. Exceptions are not permitted.
- F. Individual admission fees to a contest may be charged to audience attendees and contest officials. However, contestants shall never be charged a fee to compete in a contest. Clubs, shall never be charged a fee to send a contestant to a contest.

## 2. Eligibility

- A. To be eligible to compete in any official Toastmasters speech contest, a member must:
  - 1. Be a paid member of a club in the Area, Division, and District in which they are competing.
    - a) The club must also be in good standing.
    - b) A new, dual, or reinstated member must have dues and membership application current with World Headquarters.
  - 2. Maintain eligibility at all levels of any contest.
    - a) If at any level it is determined that a contestant was ineligible to compete at any previous level, the contestant must be disqualified. This disqualification must occur even if the ineligibility is discovered at a later level and has been corrected.
- B. In addition, to be eligible to compete in the International Speech Contest, a member must:
  - 1. Have earned certificates of completion in Levels 1 and 2 of any path in the Toastmasters Pathways learning experience or earned a Distinguished Toastmaster award.
    - a) If a club chartered less than one (1) year before the club contest, charter members are permitted to compete without having completed this requirement. The club must have officially chartered before the Area contest.
- C. The following are ineligible to compete in any Toastmasters speech contest:
  - 1. Incumbent International Officers and Directors
  - 2. Region Advisors or Region Advisor applicants

3. District officers whose terms expire June 30:
  - a) District Director
  - b) Program Quality Director
  - c) Club Growth Director
  - d) Administration Manager
  - e) Finance Manager
  - f) Public Relations Manager
  - g) Division Director
  - h) Area Director
4. International Officer and Director candidates
5. Immediate Past District Directors
6. Candidates for District positions elected by the District Council for the term beginning the upcoming July 1.
7. Members who are serving in contest official or presenter roles that meet the following criteria:
  - a) Voting judge, tiebreaking judge, or chief judge at any level, in any District, at the same contest type in which they would be competing.
  - b) Timer, ballot counter (counter), Sergeant at Arms, or other contest official role for the same contest in which they would be competing.
  - c) Presenter of an education session, a contest chair, a contest Toastmaster, or an event committee chair for the event at which the contest will be held, including Area, Division, and District events, as well as the International Convention.
8. The winner of the World Championship of Public Speaking® held in August during the International Convention is not eligible to compete in the International Speech Contest again at any level.
9. The winner of the Video Speech Contest announced at the International Convention is not eligible to compete in the Video Speech Contest again. Winners of the Video Speech Contest may compete in the International Speech Contest in subsequent years if all other eligibility requirements are met.
10. Toastmasters who are members in more than one (1) club and who meet all eligibility requirements are permitted to compete in the club contest(s) in each club in which they hold paid membership.
  - a) No contestant can compete in more than one (1) Area speech contest of a given type, even if the two (2) Areas are in different Divisions or Districts.
11. Each contestant must be physically present to compete beyond the club level. Participation by audio, video, or other remote technology is not permitted beyond the club level. (Exceptions: participants in the International Speech Contest Quarterfinals, Online Speech Contest, and Video Speech Contest.)
- D. To be a chief judge, voting judge, or tiebreaking judge at a Toastmasters speech contest, you must meet all eligibility requirements identified below.
  1. At a club contest, be a paid member.
  2. At an Area, Division, or District contest:
    - a) Be a paid member for a minimum of six (6) months.

- b) Have completed a minimum of six (6) speech projects in the *Competent Communication* manual or earned certificates of completion in Levels 1 and 2 of any path in the Toastmasters Pathways learning experience.
  - 1. Only members who joined Toastmasters prior to the rollout of Pathways in their region can apply speeches from the *Competent Communication* manual towards eligibility for judging.
- c) Be physically present at the contest for which you are serving. (Exceptions: contest officials for the Online Speech Contest.)
- 3. At the International Speech Contest Quarterfinals, Semifinals, and the World Championship of Public Speaking:
  - a) Be a paid member for a minimum of six (6) months.
    - 1. The club must also be in good standing.
  - b) Be at least an Advanced Toastmaster Bronze or Advanced Communicator Bronze, or have completed at least one (1) path in the Toastmasters Pathways learning experience.
    - 1. Only members who joined Toastmasters prior to the rollout of Pathways in their region can apply speeches from the *Competent Communication* manual to eligibility for judging.
  - c) Have previously judged a Toastmasters speech contest at the Area, Division, District, or semifinal level.
- E. All other contest officials and the Evaluation Contest test speaker must be paid members.
- F. Candidates for elected District leader positions for the term beginning the subsequent July 1 are ineligible to serve as a contest official or as a test speaker at the Area, Division, or District level.

### 3. Selection Sequence

- A. Club, Area, Division, District. Each club in good standing is permitted to choose its contestant for each Area speech contest by whatever means the club desires. If a club contest is held, it must comply with the rules in this rulebook, and the contest result is final. Contests must be held at the Area, Division, and District levels. The Area speech contest winner then proceeds to the Division contest. The Division winner then proceeds to the District contest.
  - 1. In those Districts with 10 or more Divisions, two (2) separate runoff competitions among Division winners may be held before the District contest finals.
    - a) Insofar as is practical, the number of Divisions competing in each runoff will be the same.
    - b) The three (3) highest-placed available contestants from each runoff competition will then advance to the District contest. Placement in the runoff competitions will not be announced.
  - 2. Should a club, Area, or Division contest winner be unable to participate in the next-level contest, the highest-placed available contestant will advance to that level.
  - 3. The International Speech Contest is the only contest that proceeds beyond the District level to quarterfinals, semifinals, and the World Championship of Public Speaking.



4. Should a District-level contest winner be unable to participate in quarterfinals, the next highest-placed contestant will advance to that level.
  5. If a quarterfinal contestant in the International Speech Contest cannot compete in the semifinal round, the next highest-placed contestant will be contacted by World Headquarters.
- B. Eight (8) weeks prior to the Area contest, if an Area has four (4) assigned clubs or fewer in good standing, Districts have the option to allow two (2) contestants from each club to compete in the Area contest.
1. Should additional clubs charter prior to the Area contest, two (2) contestants from each club are permitted to compete.
  2. In those Divisions with four (4) assigned Areas or fewer, Districts have the option to allow the two (2) highest-placed available contestants from each Area to compete.
  3. In Districts with four (4) assigned Divisions or fewer, Districts have the option to allow the two (2) highest-placed available contestants from each Division to participate in the District contest.
  4. The decision whether or not to allow two (2) contestants to advance from club to Area, from Area to Division, and/or from Division to District must be made and communicated throughout the District prior to the commencement of the contest cycle, i.e., prior to any club contests being held.
    - a) Once the decision is made, it must be implemented consistently throughout the District in all clubs, Areas, and Divisions affected.
    - b) If a District decides to allow two (2) contestants to advance from club to Area, its decisions regarding the number to advance from Area to Division and/or from Division to District need not be the same.
  5. Occasionally, a contest will be held with only one (1) contestant. In such cases, a contest must still be held, and the contestant must be disqualified if they do not meet the timing, originality, and eligibility requirements.

#### **4. Speech Subject and Preparation**

- A. The subject of all International, Humorous, Tall Tales, and Online contest speeches must be selected by the contestant.
- B. The subject of Table Topics Contest speeches must be determined by the contest chair, as outlined in the Table Topics Contest section of this rulebook.
- C. The subject of Evaluation Contest speeches must be limited to oral evaluations of the test speaker's speech, as outlined in the Evaluation Contest section of this rulebook.
- D. Contestants must create their own speeches, and each must be substantially original.
  1. Twenty-five percent or less of the speech may be devoted to quoting, paraphrasing, or referencing another person's content. Any quoted, paraphrased, or referenced content must be so identified during the speech presentation.
  2. Before all contests, every contestant must certify in writing to the chief judge that the content of their speech is or will be substantially original by using the Speaker's Certification of Eligibility and Originality (Item 1183).
- E. Contestants must not reference another contestant, or a speech presented by another contestant, during their speech at the same contest in which they are competing.

- F. All contestants will speak from the platform or area designated by the contest chair.
1. All contestants, the chief judge, voting judges, and the tiebreaking judge will be advised of the speaking area before the contest begins.
  - ◆ 2. A lectern/podium will be available. However, use of the lectern/podium is optional. (Exception: for the Online Speech Contest, any speaking participants are responsible for the equipment they will use.)
  - ◆ 3. If amplification is necessary, a lectern/podium fixed-mounted microphone and a portable microphone must be made available. (Exception: for the Online Speech Contest, any speaking participants are responsible for the equipment they will use.)
  - ◆ 4. All equipment must be available for contestants to practice with prior to the contest. Contestants are responsible for arranging their preferred setup of the lectern/podium microphone and other equipment in a quiet manner before being introduced. (Exception: for the Online Speech Contest, any speaking participants are responsible for the equipment they will use.)

## 5. General Procedure

- A. At each level of a Toastmasters speech contest, a specified number of voting judges and officials are required.
1. At club contests, a contest chair, chief judge, at least five (5) voting judges, a tiebreaking judge, two (2) counters, and two (2) timers are appointed, unless impractical. For the Online Speech Contest, a minimum of one (1) backup timer is also appointed in case of any technical difficulties.
  2. At Area contests, there must be an equal number of voting judges from each club in the Area, or a minimum of five (5) voting judges. In addition to these voting judges, a contest chair, chief judge, tiebreaking judge, two (2) counters, and two (2) timers must be appointed. For the Online Speech Contest, a minimum of one (1) backup timer is also appointed in case of any technical difficulties.
  3. At Division contests, there must be an equal number of voting judges from each Area in the Division, or a minimum of seven (7) voting judges. In addition to these voting judges, a contest chair, chief judge, tiebreaking judge, two (2) counters, and two (2) timers must be appointed. The chief judge, voting judges, and the tiebreaking judge must not be a member of any club in which a contestant is a member. For the Online Speech Contest, a minimum of one (1) backup timer is also appointed in case of any technical difficulties.
  4. At District contests, there must be an equal number of voting judges from each Division in the District, or a minimum of seven (7) voting judges. In addition to these voting judges, a contest chair, chief judge, tiebreaking judge, three (3) counters, and two (2) timers must be appointed. The chief judge, voting judge, or tiebreaking judge must not be a member of any club in which a contestant is a member. For the Online Speech Contest, a minimum of one (1) backup timer is also appointed in case of any technical difficulties.
  5. For the International Speech Contest Quarterfinals, there must be a minimum of nine (9) voting judges and one (1) tiebreaking judge for each contest. The Immediate Past International President once removed will be the chief judge for all quarterfinals. If the Immediate Past International President once removed is

unable to serve as chief judge, the First Vice President will appoint another Past International President. No voting judge or tiebreaking judge can be a member in the same District in which a contestant is a member. No voting judge or tiebreaking judge can be a member in the same club in which a contestant is a member.

6. At the semifinals for the International Speech Contest, there must be an equal number of voting judges from each District, or a minimum of nine (9) voting judges. In addition to these voting judges, a contest chair, chief judge, tiebreaking judge, three (3) counters, and two (2) timers are appointed. No chief judge, voting judge, or tiebreaking judge can be a member of any club in which a contestant is a member.
  7. At the World Championship of Public Speaking, there must be one (1) voting judge representing each region. In addition to these judges, a contest chair, five (5) qualifying judges, a tiebreaking judge, three (3) counters, and two (2) timers are appointed. The Immediate Past International President once removed will be the chief judge for the World Championship of Public Speaking. If the Immediate Past International President once removed is unable to serve as chief judge, the First Vice President will appoint another Past International President. No chief judge, voting judge, qualifying judge, or tiebreaking judge can be a member of any club in which a contestant is a member.
  8. Voting judges at all levels must remain anonymous when practical.
  9. The contest chair may appoint a contest Toastmaster. In such cases, the term, "contest Toastmaster" should be used for the member supporting the contest chair. A contest Toastmaster is also ineligible to compete in the contest at which they are serving.
  10. Contest officials must not serve in more than one (1) role for the same contest at the Area (when practical), Division, District, quarterfinal, semifinal, and final levels.
- B. Before the contest, contestants are briefed on the rules by the contest chair. Contestants will then draw for their speaking position with the contest chair.
1. For the International, Evaluation, Humorous, Table Topics, and Tall Tales speech contests, contestants will then draw for their speaking position with the contest chair.
  2. For the Online Speech Contest, speaking position can be established using a randomization tool that is screenshared with all contestants.
- C. If a contestant is absent from the briefing, the alternate speaker, if present, is permitted to attend the briefing in place of the primary contestant.
1. If the primary contestant is not present when the person conducting the contest is introduced, the primary contestant is disqualified and the alternate officially becomes the contestant.
  2. Should the primary contestant arrive after the briefing but before the person conducting the contest is introduced, the primary contestant is permitted to compete, provided the primary contestant:
    - a) Reports to the contest chair upon their arrival.
    - b) Has all required paperwork in good order before the person conducting the contest is introduced to begin the contest.
    - c) Waives the opportunity of a briefing.

- D. Before the contest, voting judges, counters, and timers are briefed on their duties by the chief judge.
1. Each voting judge receives the appropriate ballot for the contest.
    - a) International Speech Contest voting judges receive the International Speech Contest Judge's Guide and Ballot (Item 1172).
    - b) Evaluation Contest voting judges receive the Evaluation Contest Judge's Guide and Ballot (Item 1179).
    - c) Humorous Speech Contest voting judges receive the Humorous Speech Contest Judge's Guide and Ballot (Item 1191).
    - d) Table Topics Contest voting judges receive the Table Topics Contest Judge's Guide and Ballot (Item 1180).
    - e) Tall Tales Contest voting judges receive the Tall Tales Contest Judge's Guide and Ballot (Item 1181).
    - ◆ f) Online Speech Contest voting judges receive the Online Speech Contest Judge's Guide and Ballot (Item 1189A).
    - g) All voting judges and the tiebreaking judge receive the Judge's Certification of Eligibility and Code of Ethics (Item 1170). The form must be signed and returned to the chief judge.
  2. Timers receive the Speech Contest Time Record Sheet and Instructions for Timers (Item 1175). If necessary, they also receive instruction in the proper use of the timing equipment.
  3. Ballot counters receive the Counter's Tally Sheet (Item 1176). If necessary, they also receive instruction in the gathering of ballots and the counting room procedure (described below).
- E. Before the contest, the chief judge selects a member to act as tiebreaking judge.
1. The identity of the tiebreaking judge is secret, and known only to the chief judge.
  2. The tiebreaking judge does not attend the judges' briefing.
  3. The chief judge must provide a Tiebreaking Judge's Guide and Ballot to the tiebreaking judge before the beginning of the contest.
    - a) International Speech Contest tiebreaking judges receive the International Speech Contest Tiebreaking Judge's Guide and Ballot (Item 1188).
    - b) Evaluation Contest tiebreaking judges receive the Evaluation Contest Tiebreaking Judge's Guide and Ballot (Item 1179A).
    - c) Humorous Speech Contest tiebreaking judges receive the Humorous Speech Contest Tiebreaking Judge's Guide and Ballot (Item 1191A).
    - d) Table Topics Contest tiebreaking judges receive the Table Topics Contest Tiebreaking Judge's Guide and Ballot (Item 1180A).
    - e) Tall Tales Contest tiebreaking judges receive the Tall Tales Contest Tiebreaking Judge's Guide and Ballot (Item 1181A).
    - ◆ f) Online Speech Contest voting judges receive the Online Speech Contest Tiebreaking Judge's Guide and Ballot (Item 1189B).
- F. For the International, Humorous, Tall Tales, and Online contests, the contest chair must introduce each contestant by announcing the contestant's name, speech title, speech title, and contestant's name.

1. For Table Topics contests, the contest chair must introduce each contestant by announcing the contestant's name, topic, topic, and contestant's name.
  2. For Evaluation contests, the contest chair must introduce each contestant by announcing the contestant's name twice.
- G. Contestants in the International, Humorous, and Tall Tales contests are permitted to remain in the same room throughout the duration of the contest.
1. Contestants in the Online Speech Contest are permitted to remain in the same virtual room throughout the duration of the contest.
  2. Evaluation Contest participants are required to leave the room after the test speech has been delivered, as outlined in the Evaluation Contest section of this rulebook.
  3. Table Topics Contest contestants must stay out of the room until the preceding speaker has completed their response to the topic, as outlined in the Table Topics Contest section of this rulebook.
- H. There will be one (1) minute of silence between contestant speeches, during which voting judges and the tiebreaking judge will mark their ballots. All voting judges and the tiebreaking judge will judge all contestants; the chief judge does not judge contestants.
- I. When the last contestant finishes speaking, the contest chair will ask for silence until the ballot counters have collected all ballots. The chief judge will notify the contest chair when all ballots have been collected. The contest must only resume once this notification is received.
1. In order for a ballot to be valid, judges shall:
    - a) Complete their ballots by entering their choices for first, second, and third place.
    - b) Sign and print their names on the ballot. E-signatures are acceptable.
  2. When voting judges have finished marking their ballots, they must discreetly provide the bottom portion of the ballot to the ballot counters (if using a physical ballot, provide voting judges with envelopes in which to secure their ballots prior to collection).
    - a) The top portion of the ballot is not provided to the ballot counters and must be discreetly discarded by the voting judge after the contest.
  3. When the tiebreaking judge has finished marking their ballot by ranking all contestants in order, they must discreetly provide the bottom portion of the ballot to the chief judge (if using a physical ballot, provide the tiebreaking judge with an envelope in which to secure their ballot prior to collection).
    - a) The top portion of the ballot is not provided to the chief judge and must be discreetly discarded by the tiebreaking judge after the contest.
  4. As the voting judges and the tiebreaking judge are completing their ballots at the end of the contest, the timer with the stopwatch completes the Time Record Sheet and provides it to the chief judge (if using a physical form, provide the timer with an envelope in which to secure the Time Record Sheet prior to collection).
- J. Once all of the ballots have been collected, the ballot counters and the chief judge will tabulate the results in a private counting room (this can be a physical or virtual room, matching the contest type).

1. In the counting room, the ballot counters will tabulate the results of the contest using the Counter's Tally Sheet (Item 1176).
    - a) On the Counter's Tally Sheet, each contestant receives points for being ranked first, second, or third place on a voting judge's ballot.
      1. Three (3) points are scored for each first-place ranking.
      2. Two (2) points are scored for each second-place ranking.
      3. One (1) point is scored for each third-place ranking.
    - b) Once all points are entered, the ballot counters compute the total points for each contestant and enter the totals on the bottom of the tally sheet.
      1. Point totals must be verified by all ballot counters before results are entered on the sheet.
      2. Contestants are then ranked on the bottom of the tally sheet according to the number of points scored.
    - c) In the event of a tie, the chief judge will consult the tiebreaking judge's ballot.
    - d) The tied contestant who received the highest ranking on the tiebreaking judge's ballot will gain the contested place, and any other tied contestants will be ranked in order behind that contestant.
  2. Once the results have been tabulated and verified:
    - a) The Notification of Contest Winner form (Item 1182) will be completed by the chief judge with the ranking of all contestants and submitted to the contest chair of the next level (if applicable).
    - b) The Results Form (Item 1168) will be completed by the chief judge with the names of the winners in reverse order and submitted to the contest chair.
  3. All ballots and the tally sheet will be kept by the chief judge until after the winners have been announced.
- K. After the conclusion of the contestant interviews, the contest chair announces the winners of the contest.
1. In contests with three (3) or more participants, a third-place winner, a second-place winner, and a first-place winner will be announced. Winners will be announced in reverse order.
  2. In contests with fewer than three (3) participants, a second place winner (if applicable) and a first-place winner will be announced. Winners will be announced in reverse order.
  3. Winners must be announced prior to the end of the event.
    - a) If the contest is the only event taking place, winners must be announced before the contest adjourns.
    - b) If multiple contests are taking place as part of a larger conference or event, winners from all contests must be announced before the end of the conference or event.
  4. If there are multiple contests taking place at one event, each contest must be officially adjourned prior to the beginning of the next contest, even if winners have not yet been announced.

5. For the International Speech Contest Quarterfinals, contestants advancing to the semifinals will be announced in no particular order. Placement will not be announced.
6. For the International Speech Contest Semifinals, contestants advancing to the World Championship of Public Speaking will be announced in no particular order. Placement will not be announced.
7. Announcement of contest winners is final unless the list of winners is announced incorrectly, in which case the chief judge, ballot counters, or timers are permitted to immediately interrupt to correct the error.
- L. After the winners have been announced, the chief judge will destroy all ballots, the time record, and the tally sheet.

## **6. Timing of the Speeches**

- A. Two (2) timers are appointed by the chief judge. One is provided with a stopwatch, and the other with a signaling device that displays green, yellow, and red colors. For the Online Speech Contest, a minimum of one (1) backup timer is also appointed in case of any technical difficulties.
- B. The signaling device must be in full view of each contestant.
- C. The timer with the stopwatch maintains and delivers to the chief judge the written record of elapsed time of each speech on the Speech Contest Time Record Sheet and Instructions for Timers (Item 1175). This constitutes the official time.
- D. The timer managing the timing device ensures that contestants are able to view an accurate green, yellow, or red signal at appropriate times during the speech.
- E. All speeches delivered by contestants must conform to the timing guidelines for the contest.
  1. International, Humorous, and Online contest speeches must be from five (5) to seven (7) minutes. A contestant will be disqualified if the speech is less than four (4) minutes 30 seconds or more than seven (7) minutes 30 seconds. Timers must not consider fractions of a second. A contestant is not qualified until their time reaches four (4) minutes and 30 seconds and is not disqualified until their time reaches seven (7) minutes and 31 seconds.
  2. Table Topics Contest speeches must be from one (1) minute to two (2) minutes. A contestant will be disqualified if the speech is less than one (1) minute or more than two (2) minutes 30 seconds. Timers must not consider fractions of a second. A contestant is not qualified until their time reaches one (1) minute and is not disqualified until their time reaches two (2) minutes and 31 seconds.
  3. Evaluation Contest speeches must be from two (2) to three (3) minutes. A contestant will be disqualified if the speech is less than one (1) minute 30 seconds or more than three (3) minutes 30 seconds. Timers must not consider fractions of a second. A contestant is not qualified until their time reaches one (1) minute and 30 seconds and is not disqualified until their time reaches three (3) minutes and 31 seconds.
  4. Tall Tales Contest speeches must be from three (3) to five (5) minutes. A contestant will be disqualified if the speech is less than two (2) minutes 30 seconds or more than five (5) minutes 30 seconds. Timers must not consider fractions of a second. A

contestant is not qualified until their time reaches two (2) minutes and 30 seconds and is not disqualified until their time reaches five (5) minutes and 31 seconds.

- F. Upon being introduced, the contestant must proceed immediately to the speaking position.
1. To ensure that each contestant's audiovisual equipment is functional, each contestant must say, "Thank you, Contest Chair," after being introduced.
    - a) If the audiovisual equipment is functional, the contest chair will respond, "You're welcome." Timing will begin with the contestant's next definite verbal or nonverbal communication with the audience. This usually will be the next word uttered by the contestant, but would include any other communication such as sound effects, a staged act by another person, etc.
    - b) If the audiovisual equipment is not functional, the contest chair will notify the contestant and pause the contest to allow for the appropriate corrections.
      1. For the International, Evaluation, Humorous, Table Topics, and Tall Tales contests, when the appropriate corrections have been made, the contest chair reintroduces the contestant.
      2. For the Online Speech Contest, a contestant is allowed 10 minutes to attempt to make the appropriate corrections.
        - i. If the contestant is able to correct the equipment within the 10 minutes, the contest chair reintroduces the contestant.
        - ii. If the contestant is unable correct their equipment within the 10 minutes, the contest continues with the next contestant.
  2. The speaker should begin speaking within a short time after arriving at the speaking area, and is not permitted to delay the contest unnecessarily.
- G. Timers must provide warning signals to the contestants, which must be clearly visible to the speakers but not obvious to the audience.
1. For International, Humorous, and Online contests:
    - a) The green signal will be displayed at five (5) minutes and remain displayed for one (1) minute.
    - b) The yellow signal will be displayed at six (6) minutes and remain displayed for one (1) minute.
    - c) The red signal will be displayed at seven (7) minutes and will remain on until the conclusion of the speech.
  2. For Evaluation contests:
    - a) The green signal will be displayed at two (2) minutes and remain displayed for 30 seconds.
    - b) The yellow signal will be displayed at two (2) minutes and 30 seconds and remain displayed for 30 seconds.
    - c) The red signal will be displayed at three (3) minutes and remain displayed until the evaluation is concluded.
  3. For Table Topics contests:
    - a) The green signal will be displayed at one (1) minute and remain displayed for 30 seconds.



- b) The yellow signal will be displayed at one (1) minute 30 seconds and remain displayed for 30 seconds.
  - c) The red signal will be displayed at two (2) minutes and remain displayed until the speech is concluded.
4. For Tall Tales contests:
    - a) The green signal will be displayed at three (3) minutes and remain displayed for one (1) minute.
    - b) The yellow signal will be displayed at four (4) minutes and remain displayed for one (1) minute.
    - c) The red signal will be displayed at five (5) minutes and remain displayed until the speech is concluded.
  5. In all speech contests, no signal can be given for the overtime period.
  6. Any visually impaired contestant is permitted to request and must be granted a form of warning signal of their own choosing.
    - a) Acceptable warning signals would include, but not be limited to: a buzzer, a bell, or a person announcing the times at five (5), six (6), and seven (7) minutes.
    - b) If any special device and/or specific instructions for such a signal is/are required, the contestant must provide same.
  7. In the event of technical failure of the signal or timing equipment, a speaker is allowed 30 seconds extra overtime before being disqualified.
- H. Prior to announcing results, the contest chair must announce the number of time disqualifications, but not name the contestant(s) involved.

## 7. Protests and Disqualifications

- ◆ A. Protests are limited to eligibility, originality, and reference to another contestant or another contestant's speech and must only be lodged by voting judges and/or contestants. Any protest must be lodged with the chief judge and/or contest chair prior to the contest being adjourned.
- B. The chief judge, contest chair, voting judges, and contestants must not consider protests from audience members.
- C. Before a contestant can be disqualified on the basis of originality, or for referencing another contestant's speech, the contestant must be given an opportunity to respond to the voting judges. A majority of the voting judges must concur in the decision to disqualify.
- D. The contest chair can disqualify a contestant on the basis of eligibility.
- E. All decisions of the voting judges, and qualifying judges are final.

## 8. Use of Props and Electronic Devices

- A. Contestants who plan to use props (including but not limited to any sort of electronic devices, music, PowerPoint slides, or virtual backgrounds) must notify the contest chair prior to the contest.
- B. Contestants must abide by any venue restrictions on the use of props.
- C. All props must be set up during the minute of silence prior to the contestant's speech and removed from the stage in the minute of silence following the speech.

1. Contestants may enlist someone to help them with props, but it is not the responsibility of the contest chair or any other contest official to do so.
2. Contestants must demonstrate to the contest chair prior to the contest that the props can be set up and removed in the allotted times.
  - a) If a contestant is unable to demonstrate this, the props cannot be used during the contest.

## **International Speech Contest Rules**

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- ◆ The International Speech Contest enables members to practice public speaking and content development in a competitive setting. Every speech should fit within the overall purpose of the contest: To clearly develop and present ideas in a substantially original speech.

The International Speech Contest, which must be conducted in English only, follows all rules outlined in the General Rules section of this rulebook. In addition, the following additions and exceptions apply.

1. The International Speech Contest begins at the club level, and proceeds through the Area, Division, District, quarterfinal, semifinal, and final levels.
  - A. District-level contest videos that are submitted to World Headquarters to be used in quarterfinal judging must meet these requirements:

### **Audio**

- ▶ The audio must be clear and without echo, static or other excessive noise.

### **Camera**

- ▶ The camera must record in high definition.
- ▶ Only single-camera setup is permitted; use of multiple camera angles is not allowed.
- ▶ The camera must be placed on a tripod to maintain stability and prevent unwanted movement.
- ▶ The camera must have an unobstructed, in-focus view of the contestants.
- ▶ The entire speaking area must be visible throughout the recording.
- ▶ The camera must be monitored by a camera operator at all times to ensure it is recording properly.
- ▶ Zooming is not permitted.

### **Lighting**

- ▶ The speaking area must be fully lit.
- ▶ The speaker's facial expressions must be visible throughout the speech; the image should not be too bright or dark.
- ▶ No lighting, artificial or natural, should point directly at the camera.

### **Video Recording**

- ▶ The recording must only contain the introduction of the winning contestant's speech by the contest chair and the entire winning speech.
- ▶ The recording may not be edited in any way, such as by adding text, graphics, images, or anything that does not meet the requirements above.

- B. If a quarterfinal video fails to meet any of the recording requirements, the contestant will be disqualified by the chief judge. The submitting District will be notified of the disqualification.
- C. District Submission to World Headquarters
1. Following the District-level International Speech Contest, the chief judge ranks all District-level contestants in order of results on the Notification of Contest Winner form (Item 1182) and then submits the form to the Program Quality Director.
  2. The Program Quality Director submits the Notification of Contest Winner form, Quarterfinals Video Release Form, and video of the first-place winner to World Headquarters in the format and manner requested.
- D. Quarterfinals are conducted by video after the submission of District winners. Quarterfinals include the District winners randomly assigned to contests with no fewer than nine (9) and no more than 10 contestants in each.
1. Quarterfinal judges will view all videos for their assigned contest in the order provided by the chief judge.
  2. Quarterfinal judges must view all videos in one (1) sitting.
  3. Quarterfinal judges may only view each video once. Pausing or rewinding is prohibited.
  4. After quarterfinal results are announced, information about the semifinal contest is provided to the winners by World Headquarters.
- E. Semifinals are to be held at the International Convention, and will include the top two (2) winners from each quarterfinal contest, randomly assigned to four (4) separate contests.
1. All contestants' briefings for the semifinal speech contests will be conducted simultaneously by World Headquarters staff.
  2. All judges' briefings for the semifinal speech contests will also be conducted simultaneously by World Headquarters staff.
- F. Every participant in the World Championship of Public Speaking must present an entirely new and different speech than the one presented during that year's semifinal speech contest or any previous year's semifinal and final-round speech contests.
1. Winners advancing to the semifinal level at the International Convention will prepare and deliver to World Headquarters outlines of their semifinal speech. If they have previously competed at the semifinal or final levels, contestants will provide World Headquarters with outlines from all speeches presented at these levels. Outlines from all semifinal winners will be given to qualifying judges before or during the judges' briefing for the World Championship of Public Speaking.
  2. Qualifying judges will also be given a qualification sheet. On this sheet, qualifying judges will indicate whether the speech being delivered at the World Championship of Public Speaking is entirely new and different from the speech given at the semifinal contest or any previous year's semifinal and final-round contests.
  3. As the voting judges are completing their ballots at the end of the contest, the qualifying judges complete the qualification sheet, sign it, place it in the provided envelope, and hold it up for the ballot counters to collect.

4. In the ballot counting room, the chief judge will open and review all Speaker Qualification Sheets. If three (3) of the five (5) qualifying judges check (X) in the Disqualified column for a given speaker, that speaker is disqualified, and no protest may be made.
2. The semifinals and World Championship of Public Speaking will follow the version of the rulebook that was in effect when the contest cycle began on the previous July 1, approximately 14 months before the World Championship of Public Speaking.

## Evaluation Contest Rules

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The Evaluation Contest follows all rules outlined in the General Rules section of this rulebook. In addition, the following additions and exceptions apply.

1. At the beginning of this contest, a five (5)- to seven (7)-minute test speech will be presented.
  - A. The test speech must be a contest-type speech or a project speech from the Toastmasters Pathways learning experience.
  - B. Contestants who choose to make preparatory notes during the test speech must use the Evaluation Contestant Notes sheet (Item 1177). More than one (1) sheet may be used.
  - C. It is recommended that at all levels of the contest, the Toastmaster giving the test speech not be a member of the same club as any one of the contestants.
  - D. The test speaker must be introduced by announcing the speaker's name, speech title, speech title, and the speaker's name.
  - E. Neither the test speaker's project nor any objectives that the speaker may have can be made known to the contestants, chief judge, voting judges, tiebreaking judge, or audience.
2. At the conclusion of the test speech, all contestants must leave the room. They then have five (5) minutes to prepare their evaluation using the Evaluation Contestant Notes sheet.
  - A. Timing and preparation supervision must be under the control of the contest Sergeant at Arms.
  - B. Where it is not practical for contestants to leave the room, contestants will complete their five (5)-minute preparation in the same room under the control of the contest Sergeant at Arms.
  - C. Contestants must not use digital or other devices during the contest to gain an unfair advantage.
3. After five (5) minutes have elapsed, no further preparation is allowed and all contestants must hand their copy of the Evaluation Contestant Notes sheet to the contest Sergeant at Arms. The Evaluation Contestant Notes sheets must be handed back to contestants as they are introduced to present their evaluation.
4. Introduce each contestant by announcing the contestant's name twice. Note that this differs from the standard "name, speech title, speech title, name," format because Evaluation speeches do not have titles.

## Humorous Speech Contest Rules

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The Humorous Speech Contest follows all rules outlined in the General Rules section of this rulebook. In addition, the following additions and exceptions apply.

1. The subject for the Humorous Contest speech must be selected by the contestant. The speaker must avoid potentially objectionable language, anecdotes, and material.
2. The speech must be thematic in nature (opening, body, and close), not a monologue (series of one-liners).

## Table Topics Contest Rules

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The Table Topics Contest follows all rules outlined in the General Rules section of this rulebook. In addition, the following additions and exceptions apply.

1. All contestants must receive the same topic, which must be of a general nature.
  - A. The topic is selected by the contest chair.
2. The topic must be of reasonable length, must not require a detailed knowledge, and must lead to an opinion or conclusion.
3. Contestants will receive no advance knowledge of the topic until the moment they are introduced by the contest chair.
4. Contestants must not use digital or other devices during the contest to gain an unfair advantage.
5. When the contest begins, all contestants except the first must leave the room and remain under the supervision of the contest Sergeant at Arms.
6. Introduce each contestant by announcing the contestant's name, the topic, the topic, the contestant's name.
7. At the conclusion of each speech, the next speaker is invited into the room.

## Tall Tales Contest Rules

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The Tall Tales Contest follows all rules outlined in the General Rules section of this rulebook. In addition, the following additions and exceptions apply.

1. The subject for the Tall Tales speech must be of a highly exaggerated, improbable nature and have a theme or plot.
2. Humor and props may be used to support or illustrate the speech.

## Online Speech Contest Rules

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- ◆ The Online Speech Contest enables members to practice public speaking and content development in a competitive setting using an online platform. The topic and purpose of each speech is determined by the speaker. Every speech should fit within the overall purpose of the contest: To clearly develop and present ideas in a substantially original speech.

The Online Speech Contest follows all rules outlined in the General Rules section of this rulebook. In addition, the following additions and exceptions apply.

1. The Online Speech Contest is conducted with all contestants and contest officials participating live, online from physically distant locations.
2. All contestants and contest officials must participate in the contest live, in real-time, using equipment that they obtain themselves.
3. All briefings and rehearsals must be conducted online.
  - A. The contestants' briefing and judge's briefing must include
    1. Guidance on how technical difficulties will be addressed.
    2. How contestants and contest officials can contact the chief judge, contest chair, and other meeting moderators during the contest.
    3. How the chief judge and/or contest chair can communicate with contest participants during the contest.
  - B. The rehearsal must include time for
    1. Each contestant to conduct an audiovisual check.
    2. The contest chair to define each contestant's speaking area.
4. The platform selected for hosting the Online Speech Contest must meet the following requirements:
  - A. All contestants can join the contest with the ability to turn their video on and off, as well as unmute and mute themselves.
  - B. All contest officials can view contestant speeches live while maintaining confidentiality.
  - C. The host of the meeting can mute participants or turn off their video, as well as prompting participants to unmute or turn on their video.
  - D. All contestants can receive timing signals from the timer.
5. Prior to the contest, the chief judge and contest chair establish a way to privately communicate or signal that the contest should be paused.
6. The Online Speech Contest Statement below must be read or included in writing in a location that will be visible to all contest participants:
  - A. By attending this online Area, Division, or District speech contest, you agree to the privacy policy of Toastmasters International as well as the unassociated online hosting service. Some of your personal information, such as name, image, and any shared messages may be shared with other meeting participants and will be recorded by Toastmasters International who may use the recording in the future as it sees fit. Your online attendance hereby discharges Toastmasters International from all claims, demands, rights, promises, damages, and liabilities arising out of or in connection with the use or distribution of said video recordings, including but not limited to any claims for invasion of privacy, appropriation of likeness or defamation.
7. If a contestant experiences a technical difficulty in which their audio, video, or both are severely weakened or completely lost during the contest:
  - A. The chief judge and contest chair confer and determine whether the contest is paused.
    1. If the contest is paused, the impacted contestant is allowed no more than 10 minutes to attempt to reestablish a secure connection to the contest.
      - a) If the contestant is able to reestablish a secure connection within the 10 minutes, the contest chair indicates the last word or sentence that was heard

and the contestant continues their speech from that point with no additional time allowance.

b) If the contestant is unable to reestablish a secure connection within the 10 minutes, the contest continues with the next contestant.

8. If a voting judge experiences a technical difficulty in which they are unable to hear or see a contestant well enough to complete their responsibilities, they must notify the chief judge immediately and their ballot will not be included in the final results of the contest.
  - A. Backup judges may be appointed prior to the contest to serve as a judge in the event of a technical difficulty. If backup judges are appointed, they must judge the entire contest, but their ballot will only be consulted if a primary judge was unable to complete their role.
9. If a timer experiences a technical difficulty in which they are unable to hear or see a contestant well enough to complete their responsibilities, they must notify the chief judge immediately.
  - A. The backup timer must time all speeches but their time record sheet will only be consulted from the point at which the primary timer completing the Time Record Sheet was unable to complete their role.
  - B. If there is only one backup timer, they must also be ready to operate the signaling device should the primary timer operating the signaling device be unable to complete their role.
10. If enough contest participants experience a technical difficulty in which the contest is unable to proceed, the chief judge and contest chair confer and determine whether to pause the contest. If the contest is paused, it must be resumed within one (1) hour or the remainder of the contest must be rescheduled.
  - A. The chief judge and/or contest chair must communicate their decision to all contest participants in a timely fashion.
    1. If the contest is paused and can be resumed within one (1) hour, if a contestant was partway through a speech when the disruption occurred, the contest chair indicates the last word or sentence that was heard and the contestant continues their speech from that point with no additional time allowance.
    2. If the contest must be rescheduled, only contestants who have not yet presented will present during the rescheduled contest. If a contestant was partway through a speech when the disruption occurred, they can begin their speech from the start during the rescheduled contest. Contest officials must send all partially completed forms (Judge's Guide and Ballot, Time Record Sheet, etc.) to the chief judge to be stored until the rescheduled contest.
11. The use of external voting systems is prohibited.

## Video Speech Contest

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1. Members of undistricted clubs (including Provisional Districts) are invited to participate in the Video Speech Contest. Videos must be in English.
  - A. Members of undistricted clubs may not compete in the Video Speech Contest if they also belong to a club assigned to a District.
2. The Toastmasters International Speech Contest rules are to be followed as far as they are applicable.
  - A. There is no Area, Division, District, or semifinal competition for the Video Speech Contest, nor are there any travel allowances.
  - B. To enter, clubs conduct a speech contest and submit a video recording of the winning speech.
3. Only one (1) speech per club may be submitted.
  - A. Video Speech Contest entries must meet these requirements:
    - ▶ The audio must be clear and without echo, static, or other excessive noise.
    - ▶ Only single-camera setup is permitted; use of multiple camera angles is not allowed.
    - ▶ The camera must have an unobstructed, in-focus view of the contestant.
    - ▶ The camera must be mounted or secured to avoid unwanted movement.
    - ▶ Zooming is not permitted.
    - ▶ The speaking area must be fully lit.
    - ▶ The speaker's facial expressions must be visible throughout the speech; the image should not be too bright or too dark; the speaker should remain in frame through the entire speech.
    - ▶ No lighting, artificial or natural, should point directly at the camera.
    - ▶ The recording must only contain the introduction of the winning contestant's speech by the contest chair and the entire winning speech.
    - ▶ The recording may not be edited in any way, such as by adding text, graphics, images, or anything that does not meet the requirements above.
  - B. Video Speech Contest entries must be submitted using a Video Speech Contest Entry Form (Item 1178) that includes a live URL linking to a video submission.
  - C. Video Speech Contest entries must include a completed Speaker's Certification of Eligibility and Originality (Item 1183) with the entry form.
  - D. Entry forms must be emailed to [videospeechcontest@toastmasters.org](mailto:videospeechcontest@toastmasters.org) and received at World Headquarters on or before 5 p.m. Mountain Time, March 31, to be eligible for competition.
4. Should more than 10 eligible video submissions be received in a given contest cycle, separate run-off competitions can be held.
  - A. Each run-off competition will have no more than 10 contestants.
  - B. Insofar as practical, the number of contestants competing in each runoff competition will be the same.
  - C. The three (3) highest-placed contestants from each run-off competition will advance to the next level of the contest.



5. For each run-off competition and the final level of the contest, a minimum of five (5) voting judges and one (1) tiebreaking judge will be appointed.
  - A. Voting judges and tiebreaking judges must meet the eligibility requirements for judging the International Speech Contest.
    1. Voting judges and tiebreaking judge will not be physically present for the Video Speech Contest.
    2. The Immediate Past International President twice removed will be the chief judge for all Video Speech Contest competitions.
      - a) If the Immediate Past International President twice removed is unable to serve as chief judge, the First Vice President will appoint another Past International President.
  - B. Timers are not appointed for the Video Speech Contest.
    1. Speeches will be timed at the club level and verified when videos are reviewed for eligibility.
      - a) Speeches that do not meet the timing requirements will be reviewed by the chief judge. If the chief judge determines the contestant went overtime or undertime, the video submission will not be accepted.

# SPEECH CONTEST CHECKLISTS

Speech contests should be planned carefully and conducted professionally. Use of these checklists is not required but is strongly recommended.

## Contest Chair's Checklist

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As contest chair, you must:

- ▶ Plan the contest budget,
  - ▶ Make arrangements for a venue, online meeting platform, and/or audiovisual equipment (as dictated by the rules for the selected contest type),
  - ▶ Conduct a pre- and post-contest publicity program,
  - ▶ See that all bills for the event are promptly paid,
  - ▶ Make sure each speaker is eligible to compete and is familiar with the contest rules,
  - ▶ Make sure that any audiovisual equipment you are responsible for providing is working,
  - ▶ Make sure that the chief judge, voting judges, timers, and counters are briefed on their duties,
  - ▶ Make sure that ballots are counted carefully, and
  - ▶ Make sure that awards are presented to the winners in a ceremony that will make them proud.
- ◆ Although you may have a committee to help you with these tasks, it is still your responsibility to make sure they are done.

## Preparation

1. Determine the budget for the contest, remembering that contest income and expenses should break even. Allow for such expenses as awards, contest material, deposits, meals, printing, postage, the venue or online meeting platform (if applicable), etc.

Note: If there is an entry fee to attend the contest, that fee must be waived for contestants. Contestants cannot be charged a fee to compete.

2. Select a place and time for the speech contest and coordinate the selection with the proper Toastmasters officer.

3. Determine the agenda for the contest.

4. Arrange for the supplies and services required for the event.

5. Order or download certificates of participation from World Headquarters for all contest speakers.

6. Order trophies and/or order or download certificates from World Headquarters for the winners.

Note: It is a trademark violation to put the Toastmasters logo, or the words "Toastmasters" or "Toastmasters International," on speech contest awards not purchased from World Headquarters.

7. Toastmasters International speech contest materials are available for free download at [toastmasters.org](https://www.toastmasters.org):
  - ▶ Speaker's Certification of Eligibility and Originality (Item 1183)
  - ▶ Speech Contest Time Record Sheet and Instructions for Timers (Item 1175)
  - ▶ Judge's Guide and Ballot
  - ▶ Judge's Certification of Eligibility and Code of Ethics (Item 1170)
  - ▶ Counter's Tally Sheet (Item 1176)
  - ▶ Tiebreaking Judge's Guide and Ballot
  - ▶ Speech Contestant Profile (Item 1189)
  - ▶ Speech Contest Certificates
  - ▶ Results Form (Item 1168)
8. Select the chief judge. See the Eligibility section in this rulebook for eligibility requirements for a chief judge. Determine a method of communication or private signal with the chief judge should the contest need to be paused.
9. Appoint any supporting roles needed for the contest including Sergeant at Arms, test speaker, or other roles.
  - A. Meet with members serving in supporting roles and brief them on their responsibilities.
10. Notify the contest officials of the time and place of the contest and pre-contest briefings. (Allow ample time, e.g., two weeks, for club contest.)
11. Notify the contestants of the time and place of the contest and pre-contest briefing two (2) to six (6) weeks before the contest. Provide an information packet to each contestant at this time. The packet consists of:
  - ▶ *Speech Contest Rulebook* (Item 1171)
  - ▶ Speech Contestant Profile (Item 1189)
  - ▶ Speaker's Certification of Eligibility and Originality (Item 1183)
  - ▶ Any pertinent training materials relevant to your online platform (if conducting an Online Speech Contest)
12. Promote the contest in your community by sending news releases to the media.
13. Ensure that each contestant is eligible under the contest rules before the contest, and notify contestants of disqualification if necessary. To check contestants' eligibility:
  - ▶ Verify membership status: Club officers and District leaders can use the Eligibility Assistant available in Leadership Central of [toastmasters.org](https://www.toastmasters.org) to determine if a contestant is a paid member of a paid club, or a current District leader.
  - ▶ Verify education: If the member is competing in the International Speech Contest, confirm that they have completed Levels 1 and 2 of any path in the Toastmasters Pathways learning experience or earned a Distinguished Toastmaster award. Contact the Speech Contests team at World Headquarters by email at [speechcontests@toastmasters.org](mailto:speechcontests@toastmasters.org).

## Contestants' Briefing

1. Verify the presence of all contestants and pronunciation of their names.  
Note: During the contest, you also will conduct a brief informal interview with each contestant after all ballots are collected.
2. Review the speech contest rules with speakers.
3. Review Speaker's Certification of Eligibility and Originality (Item 1183). Remind contestants that by signing this form they certify that they have read and understand the rules regarding eligibility and originality.
4. Review timing protocol with speakers.
5. Acquaint contestants with the exact speaking area.
  - ▶ For the International, Evaluation, Humorous, Table Topics, and Tall Tales contests, this may include a lectern, tables, lighting, microphone, etc. All contestants must have the opportunity to test any amplifying equipment before the contest.
  - ▶ For the Online Speech Contest, the contest chair works with each contestant to test their audio and video and set a standard speaking area based on the limitations in their setting.
6. Determine speaking positions, as dictated by the rules.
7. If conducting an Online Speech Contest, ensure that all contestants are comfortable using the online platform as required for the contest.

## During the Contest

1. Open the contest with a brief introduction. Inform the audience:
  - ▶ The rules have been reviewed with the chief judge and contestants.
  - ▶ The contestants have been informed of the location of the timing lights.
  - ▶ The taking of photographs during the speeches is not permitted.
  - ▶ Each contestant selects their own speech topics. Some of the content may be personal in nature and contain language, ideas, or beliefs that some audiences may consider sensitive.
  - ▶ If conducting an Online Speech Contest, include the Online Speech Contest Statement in the contest introduction if it is not posted in writing.
- ◆ 2. Introduce each contest speaker. Do not make preliminary remarks about any speaker or the subject of their speech, or mention the name or location of the speaker's club or place of residence. Introduce each contestant slowly and clearly. Provide confirmation that audiovisual equipment is functional as described in the rules.
3. Upon completion of the speeches, ask voting judges and the tiebreaking judge to complete their ballots. At this time, the counters will collect the voting judges' ballots and the chief judge will collect and verify the Time Record Sheets from timers, as well as the tiebreaking judge's ballot. When all ballots and Time Record Sheets have been collected, the chief judge and ballot counters will proceed to the ballot counting room.
  - ▶ All ballots, Counter's Tally Sheet forms, and Time Record Sheets are considered confidential.
  - ▶ The chief judge ensures that all contest forms are disposed of appropriately.

- ▶ Keep a list showing placement of all contestants in case the winner or alternate cannot compete at the next level.
4. While the ballot counters are counting the ballots, the contest chair will interview each speaker.
    - ▶ At the conclusion of the contest speeches and while the results are being tabulated, introduce the contestants again, giving the club, Area, and District they represent, and present their certificates of participation. A short interview may be conducted at this time, using the contestant's biographical information as a guide.
  5. When the interviews are completed, collect the contest results from the chief judge.
  6. Address any protests. Protests are limited to voting judges and contestants. The chief judge, contest chair, voting judges, and contestants must not consider potential protests from audience members. Any protest must be lodged with the chief judge and/or contest chair prior to the announcement of the winner and alternate(s). The contest chair must notify the contestant of a disqualification regarding originality or eligibility prior to the announcement that the meeting is adjourned. Before a contestant can be disqualified on the basis of originality, or for referencing another contestant's speech, the contestant must be given an opportunity to respond to the voting judges. A majority of the voting judges must concur in the decision to disqualify. The contest chair can disqualify a contestant on the basis of eligibility.
  7. Prior to announcing results, the chair must announce if time disqualification(s) occurred, but not name the contestant(s) involved. The chief judge may discuss the matter privately with the disqualified contestant(s).
  8. In closing, thank all who helped make the contest a success.

## **After the Contest**

1. Provide the contact details for all contestants to the chief judge so the judge can complete the Notification of Contest Winner form (Item 1182). Confirm that the chief judge gives this form to the contest chair of the next level or to World Headquarters in the case of the International Speech Contest at the District level.
2. Send news releases (and photographs, if possible) to each winner's community newspaper and company publication, if applicable.
3. Make sure all bills pertaining to the contest are paid promptly.

## **Chief Judge's Checklist**

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### **Before the Contest**

1. Appoint and counsel voting judges, counters, timers, and a secret tiebreaking judge.
2. Act as chief counter and provide each counter with a copy of the Counter's Tally Sheet (Item 1176).
3. Encourage all speech contest officials to view the online Speech Contest training at [www.toastmasters.org/Leadership-Central/Speech-Contests/Speech-Contest-Tutorials](http://www.toastmasters.org/Leadership-Central/Speech-Contests/Speech-Contest-Tutorials).
4. Conduct the judge's briefing for voting judges, counters, and timers.

- ▶ For the International, Evaluation, Humorous, Table Topics, and Tall Tales contests, the judge's briefing may be conducted in person or online at the discretion of the chief judge. Online briefings are allowed in order to facilitate more scheduling opportunities for a thorough briefing.
  - ▶ For the Online Speech Contest, the judge's briefing must be conducted online.
5. Determine a method of communication or private signal with the contest chair should the contest need to be paused.

## **Judge's Briefing Checklist**

1. Distribute the following to each voting judge:
  - ▶ List of contestants in speaking order
  - ▶ Judge's Guide and Ballot
  - ▶ *Speech Contest Rulebook* (Item 1171)
  - ▶ Judge's Certification of Eligibility and Code of Ethics (Item 1170)
  - ▶ Any pertinent training materials relevant to your online platform (if conducting an Online Speech Contest)
2. Instruct all judges on protocol and procedures to mitigate and address unexpected challenges.
  - ▶ For the International, Evaluation, Humorous, Table Topics, and Tall Tales contests, instruct all judges to sit close to the contest area in case of an outside disturbance or malfunctioning technical system.
  - ▶ For the Online Speech Contest, ensure that judges view the contest in a location where they will not be interrupted and will have secure, reliable internet access. Provide judges with guidance on how technical difficulties will be addressed.
3. Review the Judge's Guide and Ballot and speaking area.
4. Brief the ballot counters in the use of the Counter's Tally Sheet (Item 1176).
5. Review the Speech Contest Time Record Sheet and Instructions for Timers (Item 1175) with the timers.
6. Provide a stopwatch to timer.
7. Brief the timers in the proper use of the timing equipment, if necessary.
8. If conducting an Online Speech Contest, ensure that all contest officials are comfortable using the online platform as required for the contest.

## **During the Contest**

1. Collect the Speech Contest Time Record Sheet and Instructions for Timers (Item 1175) from the timers.
2. Collect the Tiebreaking Judge's Guide and Ballot from the tiebreaking judge.
3. Resolve any eligibility or originality protests that may arise.
4. Oversee the counting process. See that all ballots are counted twice to ensure accuracy.
5. Provide a list to the contest chair showing placement of all contestants.

# Contestant's Checklist

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## Before the Contest

1. For International, Humorous, Tall Tales, and Online contests, select a topic and prepare your own substantially original speech. For the online Speech Contest, secure and test your audiovisual equipment.
2. Attend the Contestants' Briefing.
3. Inform the contest chair of any props you plan to use.
4. Review Speaker's Certification of Eligibility and Originality (Item 1183). By signing this form, you certify that you have read and understand the rules regarding eligibility and originality.
5. Attend the Speaker's Rehearsal and take note of the speaking area.

## During the Contest

1. In the one (1) minute of silence before your introduction, set up any and all props and visual aids. You may enlist someone to help you with this, but it is not the responsibility of the contest chair or any other contest official to do so.
2. After your introduction, proceed immediately to the speaking area and say, "Thank you, Contest Chair." When the contest chair responds, "You're welcome," begin your speech.
3. Check the timing signals regularly during your speech. If you see a red signal, wrap it up, even if you're not finished with your speech yet.
4. Immediately following your speech, remove any props or visual aids from the speaking area. You may enlist someone to help you with this, but it is not the responsibility of the contest chair or any other contest official to do so.

# SPEECH CONTEST MATERIALS

Speech contest materials are available to download as free digital content at [www.toastmasters.org/Speech-Contest-Kits](http://www.toastmasters.org/Speech-Contest-Kits).

## For all contests

ROLE	ITEM	ITEM NUMBER
All participants	Speech Contest Rulebook	(Item 1171)
Chief judge	Notification of Contest Winner	(Item 1182)
	Results Form	(Item 1168)
Voting and tiebreaking judges	Judge's Certification of Eligibility and Code of Ethics	(Item 1170)
Counters	Counter's Tally Sheet	(Item 1176)
Timers	Speech Contest Time Record Sheet and Instructions for Timers	(Item 1175)
Contestants	Speaker's Certification of Eligibility and Originality	(Item 1183)
	Speech Contestant Profile	(Item 1189)

## International Speech Contest

ROLE	ITEM	ITEM NUMBER
Voting judges	International Speech Contest Judge's Guide and Ballot	(Item 1172)
Tiebreaking judge	International Speech Contest Tiebreaking Judge's Guide and Ballot	(Item 1188)
Contestants	Quarterfinals Video Release Form	(Item 1193)

## Evaluation Contest

ROLE	ITEM	ITEM NUMBER
Voting judges	Evaluation Contest Judge's Guide and Ballot	(Item 1179)
Tiebreaking judge	Evaluation Contest Tiebreaking Judge's Guide and Ballot	(Item 1179A)
Contestants	Evaluation Contestant Notes	(Item 1177)



## Humorous Speech Contest

<b>ROLE</b>	<b>ITEM</b>	<b>ITEM NUMBER</b>
Voting judges	Humorous Speech Contest Judge's Guide and Ballot	(Item 1191)
Tiebreaking judge	Humorous Speech Contest Tiebreaking Judge's Guide and Ballot	(Item 1191A)

## Table Topics Contest

<b>ROLE</b>	<b>ITEM</b>	<b>ITEM NUMBER</b>
Voting judges	Table Topics Contest Judge's Guide and Ballot	(Item 1180)
Tiebreaking judge	Table Topics Contest Tiebreaking Judge's Guide and Ballot	(Item 1180A)

## Tall Tales Contest

<b>ROLE</b>	<b>ITEM</b>	<b>ITEM NUMBER</b>
Voting judges	Tall Tales Contest Judge's Guide and Ballot	(Item 1181)
Tiebreaking judge	Tall Tales Contest Tiebreaking Judge's Guide and Ballot	(Item 1181A)

## Online Speech Contest

<b>ROLE</b>	<b>ITEM</b>	<b>ITEM NUMBER</b>
Voting judges	Online Speech Contest Judge's Guide and Ballot	(Item 1189A)
Tiebreaking judge	Online Speech Contest Tiebreaking Judge's Guide and Ballot	(Item 1189B)

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## **Speech Contests Frequently Asked Questions**

[toastmasters.org/SpeechContestFAQ](https://toastmasters.org/SpeechContestFAQ)

## **Speech Contest Tutorials**

[toastmasters.org/SpeechContestTutorials](https://toastmasters.org/SpeechContestTutorials)

## **Policy 6.0: Speech Contests**

[toastmasters.org/SpeechContestGoverningDocuments](https://toastmasters.org/SpeechContestGoverningDocuments)

## ◆ **Online Speech Contest Best Practices**

[toastmasters.org/OnlineSpeechContestBestPractices](https://toastmasters.org/OnlineSpeechContestBestPractices)

