

How to Prepare for and Conduct a Club Contest

by Lois Smith, ATM-B, AL, 2001 – 2002 District One Contest Training Chair
(<http://www.toastmasters-district1.org/sr/contest.shtml>)

See also “When You’re the Contest Chair,” by Penny Post (following this article)

As Soon as Possible

1. Find out which contests are being held (e.g., Humorous, Table Topics, Evaluation, International, Tall Tales). If your club President doesn’t know, he or she can find out from the Area Governor.
2. With the President and Vice President of Education, set a date for your club contest. Club contests are generally held a few months prior to the District contest.
3. Recruit contestants. This is best done by personal contact, if calls for volunteers don’t get you very far. Keep in mind that some contests require that to be a contestant, the club member should have given at least six manual speeches.
4. Appoint a person who can coordinate the whole event (the VP-E is usually pretty busy with other duties). This person can be a contest chair, or you can have the Toastmaster share the responsibilities with the Chief Judge. (See items 5 and 6.)
5. Appoint a Toastmaster. You can also appoint two Toastmasters, one for each contest.
6. Assign a Chief Judge, who will oversee all judging. The Chief Judge finds judges, though in some clubs, all members in attendance (but not guests) act as judges. Also, the Chief Judge finds a timer to time the speeches and one or two ballot counters to tally the votes. There should be a tie-breaking judge, whose ballot is read only if the tally from the other judges' ballots results in a tie for first place.
7. Order supplies from Toastmasters International (e.g., rule and procedures booklets, judging forms, certificates, awards).
8. Ask each contestant in a Humorous, International, or Tall Tales contest to fill out an eligibility form, in which he/she states that the material in the speech is original.
9. Ask all contestants to fill out a speaker biographical information form, to be used for the after-contest interviews (see below).

The Day or Night of the Contest

1. Toastmaster calls all contestants for both contests together before the contest and asks them to draw for speaking order. Also explains the physical boundaries of the speaking area and shows contestants where the timer(s) will be positioned.
2. Chief Judge explains to contestants that a contestant may lodge a protest (for example, if he or she doesn’t believe the speech given by another contestant is original material) and the time during which this may be done (before the results are read at the conclusion of the contest).
3. Toastmaster collects completed speaker biographies and (if applicable) eligibility/originality forms from each contestant.

Conducting Humorous, Tall Tales, and International contests

1. President or Contest Chair introduces the Toastmaster.
2. Toastmaster explains the purpose of the first contest (see rule booklet) and timing rules for that contest.
3. Toastmaster introduces the Chief Judge.
4. Chief Judge explains about judging (if all club members are doing judging, this should include a description of judging criteria, maybe 5-8 minutes). When finished, the Chief Judge announces "Let the contest begin!"
5. Toastmaster explains that each contestant will be introduced only by name, then title, title repeated, name repeated. Toastmaster then introduces first contestant.
6. After the first contestant finishes, Toastmaster calls for one minute of silence for judging. Timer times one full minute and notifies the Toastmaster when it's over.
7. After last contestant finishes, Toastmaster calls for two minutes of silence. After ballots have been collected (sometimes takes more than two minutes), Chief Judge exits with ballot counters.
8. While ballots are being counted, Toastmaster conducts interviews with each contestant, unless a contestant is also competing in the second contest, in which case that contestant's interview is held after the second contest. Each contestant should be given a certificate of participation.
9. Chief Judge gives Toastmaster the envelope with the names of first- and second-place winners.
10. Break
11. If the second contest is being conducted by a different Toastmaster, the President or Contest Chair introduces the new Toastmaster.
12. Toastmaster explains purpose of the second contest and timing rules.
13. Toastmaster introduces Chief Judge.
14. Chief Judge explains about judging and announces "let the contest begin!"
15. Toastmaster explains that each contestant will be introduced only by name, title, title, name, then introduces first contestant.
16. Toastmaster introduces first contestant (again, name, title, title, name).
17. After first contestant finishes, Toastmaster calls for one minute of silence for judging.
18. After the last contestant finishes, Toastmaster calls for two minutes of silence. Chief Judge collects ballots and exits with ballot counters.
19. Toastmaster conducts interviews with each contestant and gives each a certificate of participation.
20. Chief Judge gives Toastmaster envelope with names of first and second place winners. *Note* that if there are only two contestants in each contest, only the winner is announced. If there are three or more contestants, announce first- and second-place winners.
21. Toastmaster calls for announcement from Area Governor (if present) about the upcoming Area Contest.
22. Toastmaster may call on Area Governor to assist with handing out prizes to winners. (If a second-place prize is given, first mention that this person will

substitute for first-place winner in the event that first-place winner can't compete in the Area Contest.)

Conducting the Evaluation contest

All procedures are the same as other types of contests, with the following exceptions. It's best to have two Sergeants-at-Arms.

1. Toastmaster introduces the model speaker, who gives a five-to-seven minute speech.
2. Toastmaster asks one Sergeant-at-Arms to escort the Evaluation contestants to a separate area where they will not be distracted or disturbed and where they can't hear contestants who precede them in the speaking order.
3. The other Sergeant-at-Arms remains with the contestants, who have five minutes to write notes. At the end of five minutes, Sergeant-at-Arms collects the notes from all contestants. (During this time, Toastmaster is interviewing the model speaker.)
4. The inside Sergeant-at-Arms asks the first contestant to return to the contest room. The outside Sergeant-at-Arms gives the contestant back his/her notes.
5. Toastmaster introduces the Evaluation contestant, who speaks for no longer than three and a half minutes.
6. When the contestant is finished, Toastmaster calls for one minute of silence for judges to mark their ballots. The procedure continues until the final contestant completes his/her evaluation. After two minutes of silence (or however long it takes), ballots are collected and tallied.

Conducting the Table Topics contest

All procedures are the same as other types of contests (except Evaluation), with the following exceptions. It's best to have two Sergeants-at-Arms.

1. Toastmaster has prepared a question prior to the contest.
2. All Table Topics contestants are escorted out of the room so they can't hear the responses given by contestants who precede them.
3. Each contestant is escorted back into the room, gives his/her Table Topics answer for no longer than two and a half minutes, and sits down.
4. Toastmaster calls for one minute of silence, then asks for the next contestant to be escorted into the room.
5. The procedure continues until the final contestant finishes his/her Table Topics response. After two minutes of silence (or however long it takes), ballots are collected and tallied.

After the Contest

1. Give the Area Governor the eligibility and biographical information forms for the winners of the club's Humorous, Tall Tales, and International contests.

2. Arrange with the club Treasurer to pay the Area contest registration fee for the winners of the club contest.

If you have any questions, please contact your Area or Division Governor.

When You're the Contest Chair

by Penny Post, DTM (. (<http://www.toastmasters-district1.org/sr/wycontestchair.shtml>)

Introduction

The description of contest personnel and activities summarized in this document is a direct reflection of, first, my own training an Area Governor in 1992, and second, my experience as Contest Chair for two Division contests in 1993-94, presenting the District Contest training in 1996-97, and as Division B Governor myself in 1998 - 1999.

The two main stages of a contest described here cover the planning and the actual event. In addition to this short list, you will also need at a minimum a copy of the Contest Planning timeline and an excellent outline of the Contest Toastmaster's duties. However, this should get you started!

The way to budget a contest to pay for itself (and make money too!) is to have good publicity, provide good value for the cost, and have attractive raffle prizes (also well publicized). Make sure everyone keeps receipts for the treasurer's accounting. How much money are you starting with? If none, you can often get a small loan from a higher echelon (Division, District) to pay for initial outlay.

As you approach the two weeks before the contest, it's extremely useful to prepare a detailed timed agenda. It will clarify everyone's place in the scheme of things, and ensure that all contest participants are working to the same goal. Furthermore, the details you have to include will trigger reminders of jobs to assign.

Functionaries

When you plan a contest, what roles need to be filled first? Whom do you ask? Work the club presidents as assistants and as resources. The main goal is to involve as many people as possible. At Division D's Spring '94 contest we acknowledged 31. Although some jobs can be doubled up or eliminated, most tasks *do* have to be covered. Or so we have found in District One.

Main Contest Responsibilities

- Contest Chair
- Chief Judge

- Treasurer
- Publicity
- Decorations
- Food
- Raffle Prizes
- Trophies
- Certificates
- Toastmaster

Additional Responsibilities

- Protocol Officer
- Registration (at least 2)
- Greeter/Traffic Coordinator
- Raffle Sales
- Sergeant at Arms
- Judges
- Timers (2)
- Ballot Counters (2)
- Opening Thought
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Set-up Committee
- Clean-up Committee

The Planning

Place, Date, Time and Format

Contest Chair and Area/Division Governor define these. Restaurant, corporate facility, community facility? (Convenience, parking availability, price?) Breakfast, lunch, dinner, potluck, dessert?

Theme

Coordinated by Contest Chair/Governor with Publicity (flyers, programs), Decorations, and Food

Publicity

Flyers should include Date, Time, Place, Name of Contest, Whose Contest (i.e. Area D3, or Division B), Theme, Toastmasters logo, Food provided, and Cost. They also need a contact name, with phone number for information and reservations, and address to send preregistration checks. Same person usually creates contest programs.

Decorations

In keeping with theme. They don't have to be festive, but should relate.

Food

Meal or snacks? What will please the most, offend the fewest, and be most appealing in quality, quantity, availability, price, and speed and efficiency of service for the place & time of day?

Raffle Prizes

Be sure to solicit contributions from clubs or areas. Ideas: movie theaters, book stores, restaurants, and Big Prizes (hot air balloon ride, tickets to sports event, stage or other performance, concert, etc.) Call or write *well in advance* to allow for followup time, negative response.

Trophies & Gifts

Plaques, trophies, clock, penholders, etc.? What will inscription say: March 4, 1995 or Spring 1995? Name of Contest, 1st/2nd or First/Second Place? Allow time for mistakes in the inscriptions. Small gifts for Contest Chair, TM, Chief Judge (Timer, pointer, trophy).

Certificates

Order from Toastmasters International, or have someone create a master on their computer. You may also want frames; those must also be ordered. Two groups are needed, one for Participation (for contestants) and a much larger batch for Appreciation (all the planners and hard workers on the contest). Certificates must include the date, name of the contest (Humorous and Evaluation, or International and Tall Tales, or whatever), name of recipient, and signatures by contest chair and appropriate governor.

Judging

Choose your Chief Judge early. This person is responsible for recruiting at least seven judges, two ballot counters, and two timers. S/he also needs forms: judging forms for each specific contest (the criteria are different), a tie-breaking judging form for each contest, balloting forms to record the tallies, and two timing forms. Other equipment: Clock, timing lights, and green, yellow and red cards. At the contest, the Chief Judge is responsible for briefing the *judges* about fairness, protests, disregarding timing, appropriateness of material, and signing ballots; briefing the *timers* on the operation of lights and cards and when to begin timing; and briefing the ballot counters about collecting and counting ballots. CJ briefs the *contestants* as to the defined speaking area (determined with Contest Chair and/or TM) and location of timing lights.

Toastmaster

Contests can have one or two Toastmasters (one for each contest). TM is the contestant contact, and should be given contestant names by the Chair. TM supplies contestants with two forms each, for eligibility and biography info (for use during the interviews following the contests). Half an hour before call to order, TM assembles contestants and provides slips on which they draw for speaking order. When contest begins, TM announces contestant's name, title of speech, repeats title of speech, and contestant's name. At conclusion of each speech, TM asks for one minute of silence. At end of contest, two minutes of silence or until CJ signals that all ballots have been collected. Then TM interviews contestants, *first* asking what club or area they are representing.

Follow-Up

Contest Chair should stay in regular touch with Committee chairs to ensure progress. Have trophies and certificates been ordered? Is food ordered/decisions made? Decorations purchased or created? Publicity, publicity, publicity.... Flyers are not enough, they must be *distributed*, and announcements made repeatedly at club meetings. Are Raffle Prizes coming in OK? Have clubs committed? Is CJ collecting judges? Who will the contestants be? Do they all know where and when the contest will be held?

In Addition

On the day of the contest, Contest Chair and presiding Governor are to *stay calm*. If not, pretend to be. Greet everyone, helpers and attendees, and thank them for coming. Circulate. *Smile*. Everyone will feel better, including you. The following positions need to be filled by helpers. Assigning them well ahead of time will help. Ask them early, then remind them later that they agreed to the jobs, and explain fully what they are expected to do:

Greeter/Traffic Coordinator (optional)

Positioned where attendees first appear. Is cheerful, welcoming, provides parking instructions and other directions and information as needed.

Registration (at least 2)

Be sure they have the list of prepaid registrants to check off.

Protocol Officer

is supplied with current list of District officers, listed in proper order for acknowledgment, and checks off those whose names are on list who show up. This should be a person familiar with all current Area & Division governors by sight.

Sergeant at Arms/Audio

Check with Contest Chair for how tables will be set up, whether there will be a head table, where the lectern will be placed, whether there is a mike & speakers, how they should be placed to avoid feedback, whether they work, how speakers will be miked if cordless (and who will do it). If the latter, assign an **Audio** person to mike each speaker before going on stage, and unmike them afterwards. Ensures physical order of things, and availability of all necessary equipment, including but not limited to gavel, flag, certificates, timing devices, club and area banners, trophy table, and extension cords.

Raffle Sales

Assign two people — you will double sales! Raffle Chair should supply tickets. Be clear about how tickets are priced but allow room for generosity — the idea is to encourage people to buy them. Supply \$20 in one-dollar bills to make change.

Invocation/Pledge of Allegiance/Opening Thought

“God — Country — Man” is the appropriate order. If you have an invocation, it comes before the Pledge of Allegiance; if you have an opening thought, it comes afterwards. In either case, request that it be brief.

Set-up Committee

Clean-up Committee

Wrap

Make acknowledgments; work with the Treasurer to balance the books; write thank yous to everyone involved. Repeat: If you have good publicity, provide good value for the cost, and have attractive raffle prizes, your contest will go well. But the best insurance for a *great* contest is to encourage competition at the club level. Make sure they know what the contest is about — appropriate material, length of speech, importance of rehearsal and feedback to polish their efforts, and high personal value of competing. Many a District (and above!) winner entered their first contest in response to peer pressure.