

TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL



Speech Contest Judges Training Program

Presenter's Guide

Toastmasters International
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PRESENTER: Here is the recommended way for your seminar program to begin...

- 1. Have all program materials in place before the meeting is called to order. These include visual aids, script/outline, handouts and certificates.*
- 2. The president opens the meeting according to club custom ... call to order, invocation, flag salute, introduction of guests, etc.*
- 3. Following this, the president announces the program title and introduces you.*
- 4. Assume control of the meeting and begin your program.*
- 5. If you are presenting the program outside your club, introduce yourself and begin your program*

*Evaluator
vs
Judge -*

Presenter's Script/Outline

INTRODUCTION

Speech contests are an important part of the Toastmasters program. They provide an opportunity for experienced speakers to compete against their peers. They also provide an opportunity for non-competing Toastmasters and the general public to learn by observing proficient speakers. So contests are a total learning experience, benefitting both the competitor and the listener in the audience.

It's important that all speech contests are conducted properly, in a way that encourages speakers to compete and others to attend to observe. Good judging is vital to this. Good judging leaves the contestants and the audience feeling that the contest was fair and that the right choice was made.

PRESENTER: Ask participants to raise their hands if they have ever left a speech contest feeling that the judges selected the wrong contestant as winner.

What happened at the contest you attended? Perhaps the judges really didn't select the best speaker. Or perhaps they did, but their decision didn't agree with yours. How do you know? How can you make sure that, when YOU judge a contest, you select the best speaker as winner?

Today we're going to explore speech contest judging and learn how to judge so that the best speaker is indeed the person announced as winner. We'll be discussing judging for the International Speech Contest only, although many of the principles we'll cover may apply to other contests.

THE INTERNATIONAL SPEECH CONTEST

Each year thousands of Toastmasters compete for the coveted title of "World Champion of Public Speaking," which is decided at the International Convention in August. The competition begins with club contests, and winners compete upward through the area, division, district, regional and International levels.

At every level the contest requires the participation of many Toastmasters. All of us should be familiar with the most important participants and some of their responsibilities:

- **Contest chairman.** The contest chairman is responsible for the entire speech contest. He or she makes room arrangements, orders materials, oversees and promotes the contest, appoints committees, pays the bills, etc.

J-OH #1 Contest Participants

- **Contestants.** To be eligible to compete at any level of the International Speech Contest, an individual must have been an active Toastmaster in good standing since the previous July 1, and have completed at least six projects in the Communication Leadership Program manual. One exception is made to this rule: A charter member of a club chartered since the previous July 1 is eligible to compete, provided the club is officially chartered before the area contest.

The following are ineligible to compete in any contest: Incumbent International officers and directors; district officers (governors, any lieutenant governor, area governor, secretary or treasurer) whose terms expire June 30; International officer and director candidates; immediate past district governors; district officers or announced candidates for the term beginning the upcoming July 1; past first place International winners.

A Toastmaster who is a member in more than one club and meets all other eligibility requirements may compete in each club contest in which he or she is a member in good standing. However, should he or she win more than one, he/she can represent only one of them at any level beyond the club. No Toastmaster can compete in more than one area contest—even if the two areas are in different divisions or different districts.

Speakers must prepare their own five- to seven-minute speeches, which must be substantially original. Any quoted material must be so identified during the speech orientation.

- **Timers.** Two timers are appointed by the chief judge. One is provided with a stopwatch, and the other with an electric speech timer with indicator lights. The timers record the official times of each speech and submit them to the chief judge immediately after the speeches have concluded.
- **Counters.** Three counters are appointed by the chief judge. At the conclusion of the contest speeches, the counters collect the sealed ballots from the judges. They then leave the room and count the ballots.
- **Chief judge.** The chief judge appoints and counsels counters, timers and a tiebreaking judge. He provides judges with a brief pre-contest orientation. He oversees the counters and gives the names of the winners to the contest chairman.
- **Tiebreaking judge.** The tiebreaking judge is selected by the chief judge and is known only by him. The tiebreaking judge ranks ALL speakers numerically on the special Tiebreaking Judge's Ballot, seals it, and gives it to the chief judge, who opens and counts it only in the event of a tie by the contest judges.
- **Judges.** All judges are selected by the chief judge, and they must meet several requirements.

They must be members in good standing. Judges at the area, division, district, regional and International speech contests should have been members in good standing since the previous July 1 and have completed at least six Communication and Leadership manual projects. For regional and International contests, judges should be at least an ATM and have previously judged a Toastmasters speech contest at the area, division, district or regional level. At area, division and district contests, judges should be selected from a club or area not represented by the speech contestant.

A judge's duty is to select a first, second and third place winner from among the contestants.

WHEN YOU'RE THE JUDGE - OBLIGATION

When you're asked to judge a speech contest, you have several obligations. You have an obligation to:

- The contestants. Contestants are entitled to a truly professional performance by each judge. Contestants expect—and deserve—fairness and impartiality. They should receive nothing less.
- Toastmasters International. Our organization has a reputation for excellence—excellence in speech training, excellence in meetings, and excellence in speech contests. Bad judging creates animosity and tarnishes our good reputation. It demeans the contest, the officials, and our district and International leaders.

J-OH #2 **As Contest Judges . . .**

- The audience. The audience deserves a good speech contest. This includes fair and unbiased judging. Whenever judges fail to make the best choice, the audience is cheated. They're also discouraged from attending or participating in other contests.
- Ourselves. As a Toastmaster, you have made a personal commitment to self-improvement. This commitment includes being dedicated to making the correct decision when you are judging a contest. You owe it to yourself to do your best.

YOUR DUTY AS A JUDGE

Before we discuss how to judge a contest, we must first understand the purpose of a judge, and the difference between judging and evaluating.

A judge's duty is not to evaluate the speakers. An evaluator appraises a speech, measures the speaker's presentation against his or her purpose, then advises the speaker on how to improve the speech. A judge's duty is only to pick a winner—to select the speaker who has given the best speech on that day. The judge's decision is confidential. Judges are not to explain their decision to contestants, or tell contestants how they could improve. To do so distracts judges from their purpose, and can cause them to judge improperly. The result is a bad decision.

J-OH #3 The Responsibility of a Judge . . .

QUALITIES OF A JUDGE

Now let's consider some of the qualities judges must possess if they are to make good decisions.

PRESENTER: Ask participants to brainstorm qualities of a good judge by asking, "If you were organizing a speech contest and had to select judges, what qualities would you look for?" Write answers on a flipchart and refer to them later when appropriate. The following qualities should appear on your list. If not, add them, then discuss all five.

Good judges are:

- **Accurate.** Good judges are dedicated to making a correct decision. They fill out the judging form correctly, and add point totals carefully.
- **Fair.** Good judges are totally impartial. Good judges don't allow friendship, affiliation, age, sex, race, creed, national origin, profession or disapproval of speech topics to interfere with their decision.
- **Trustworthy.** Good judges realize that contestants, contest officials, and the audience have entrusted them with the responsibility of selecting the best speaker as winner. They live up to that trust. Unfortunately, there have been cases where judges have marked down better speakers so a favored speaker could place. Good judges would never dream of doing such a thing.
- **Knowledgeable.** Good judges know the current contest rules. They study the rules before each contest, and they make no exceptions to the rules. They are familiar with the judging form, and they know how to judge properly.

J-OH #4
Good Judges
Are . . .

- **Good listeners.** Good judges listen carefully to each speaker. They don't daydream or become distracted.

HOW TO JUDGE A CONTEST

As we mentioned earlier, sometimes we come away from a speech contest disappointed with the decision of the judges.

We know that the judges are well meaning and capable Toastmasters. But for some reason their decision differed from ours. Why does such a wide gap in perception occur? Can you and I do something about it?

You must realize that judging is a *subjective* process, which we try to make *objective*. If we could be totally objective, there would be no problem. We would need only one judge. But it's almost impossible for anyone to be totally objective. Each one of us has likes and dislikes that unconsciously affect our decisions. That's why we have a panel of judges. With several judges, we can overcome the bias of any one judge.



BARRIERS TO OBJECTIVITY

- *First or Last Speaker is Best*

Research shows that people who studied lists tended to remember first and last items best. It's believed that, similarly, the first and last speakers in a contest have a slight advantage over others.

The first speaker is remembered because he or she becomes a reference point, and other speakers are measured against this person. The last speaker can leave the most memorable impression. Those "sandwiched" in the middle can turn the risk of being forgotten.

J-OH #5 **Barriers to** **Objectivity**

A judge must attempt to compensate for this effect by paying close attention to all contestants. If the first or last speaker is indeed best, fine. But don't automatically judge him so.

- *Let's Help the "Underdog"*

Judges will at times want to give a break to a new Toastmaster . . . or to one who has overcome a handicap. The temptation must be overcome. All Toastmasters must be judged only by the criteria on the judging form.

- *Halo Effect*

This phenomena occurs when we attribute a favorable trait to a person just because that person possesses another favorable trait. "Mary teaches speech . . . she should win." "Joe has a dynamic delivery, therefore his content must be good."

Resist giving a speech high marks because of dynamic delivery, or because the speaker dresses well, etc. Evaluate each speaker only against the criteria.

- *Reverse Halo Effect*

This is the association of one unfavorable trait with another unrelated trait. "George has bad grammar, so his speech content must be weak or faulty." Resist the temptation to downgrade a score in an area because you're not happy with performance in another area.

- *Second Time Around*

"Betty gave this speech at the Division contest, and it sounded better then." Always judge as if this were the first time you've heard the speech and the speaker.

- *Give Someone Else a Chance*

“He won at the Area contest last year, but lost at the Division contest. Let’s let someone else go forward this year.” Past performance must never influence the current performance.

- *Not the Norm*

Occasionally a club, region of a country, or a country has social behavior patterns that are not common to other clubs, regions or countries. Sometimes judges, if not familiar with these patterns, may let them influence their decision.

For example, not long ago Toastmasters in some parts of the U.S. felt that a contestant must stand behind a lectern when speaking. Judges were harsh on those who didn’t. That’s wrong. It’s acceptable to speak with or without a lectern, no matter what the standard is in your club, area or district.

Now you can understand why some people leave a contest disappointed that a certain speaker didn’t win. Sometimes because of the norms or values these people have, they have a narrow view of what is bad or good.

As a judge, consider what your club, district or national norm usually is for a good speech. Do you expect everyone to fit your norm or value? If so, you may be out of step.

- *Prejudices and Personal Preferences*

Tastes, preferences, beliefs and prejudices are the most prevalent barriers to unbiased judging.

All of the things that make us unique—our likes and our dislikes—prevent us from being totally objective. We can't set aside all of our likes and dislikes, but we can try to be more fair by asking questions such as:

1. What do I like or dislike about this speech?
2. Is what I like or dislike relevant to this speech?

If you can answer these questions fairly and openly, you can guard against your prejudices affecting your judging.

- *The Unknown Judging Form*

If you're not familiar with the judging form, you may spend time analyzing it rather than listening to the contestants. Don't let that happen. Study the form before the contest.

Eliminate all barriers to objectivity. Strive to be fair and unbiased at all times. If you can't, then do the speaker a favor. . . don't judge. The credibility of the Toastmasters program depends on you and how well you perform as a judge.

PRESENTER: Ask for questions.

HOW TO JUDGE

PRESENTER: In this segment of the program, you will explain the use of the form in the judging procedure.

You can use the Judge's Guide and Ballot in several ways to choose the winner of a speech contest. Remember, however, that you are selecting a winner, not evaluating the speaker.

The Format of the Ballot

The top part of the ballot is to help you in your decision making. It is not given to the counters.

The bottom portion is the official ballot. It must be complete and show three different names. No ties are allowed. An incomplete ballot will not be counted and will be discarded. Tiebreaking judges must rank all speakers, not just the top three.

The ballot must be signed by you, the judge.

The Process of Making a Decision

There are many ways to make your decision. One way that helps eliminate bias is to refrain from using the ballot while the speech is being delivered. Merely take notes, carefully cataloging what the speaker did well or poorly. Then, when the speech is completed, enter the point values for each category on your ballot. This way you're not influenced by one category. Take notes on the second speaker. Compare the second speaker to the first in each category, decide who is best, and award points to the second speaker based on your decision. Use the same method for judging each speaker.

When points are totaled, you can easily determine first, second, and third places. If there's a tie, or if you're not satisfied, use your notes to refine your assessment.

Let's review four additional methods for choosing a winner:

1. Use the point values suggested for each rating (excellent, very good, good, fair).

2. Use other points available in the range (e.g. if "excellent" is 20 points, you can opt to assign 17 or 18 points, if you do not feel the contestant epitomizes excellence).
3. Use a system of pluses (+) and minuses (–) to rate speakers as they compete. After all contestants have spoken, assign points.
4. Put the first contestant's name in the *far right* column and mark the ballot. Fold that column under, then judge the next speech. Fold that speaker's column under. You won't be influenced by your rating of previous speakers.

Working Through The Judge's Guide and Ballot

There are three basic judging categories: Content, delivery, and language. Let's examine each category.

- * *Content*. Content is defined as: "That which gives substance, meaning, and purpose to a speaker's message." This category has the largest number of qualifying statements and represents 50% of the value of the speech. Here you determine how well the speaker communicated a message.

Areas to consider are:

Speech Development

- Was the speech *structured* so as to have a clearly defined opening, body and conclusion?
- Was the speech *organized* so that the speaker's ideas were clear and easy to follow? Could the listeners perceive them? Visualize them? Were they presented in logical sequence?

- Did the speaker move from point to point, thought to thought, smoothly, using effective transitions?
- Was the speaker's purpose clear and well defined?
- Was the speech paced well?
- What support material did the speaker use? Were facts, examples and illustrations used effectively to compliment the speaker's positions?

Speech Effectiveness

- How did the audience react to the speech? To the subject matter?
- Was the subject matter relevant to the audience? To the occasion?
- Was the subject matter presented with clarity? Did the audience understand the speaker's goal?
- Did the speaker consider the audience and occasion when preparing the speech?
- What was the purpose of the speech? (Entertain, Inform, Persuade, Inspire)
- What did the speaker intend to accomplish? What did the speaker actually accomplish?
- Did the speaker achieve his or her purpose? How?

Speech Value

- Did the speaker have something to say? A clearly defined message?

- Did the speaker's message have substance and logic?
 - Were the speaker's thoughts original or a rehash of old ideas?
 - Was the speech in good taste?
 - Did the speaker's message contribute to the listeners' knowledge? Did it stimulate their thinking process? Their growth?
- * *Delivery*. This is the second category. Delivery is defined as: "The mechanics of delivering the message." This represents 30% of the value of the presentation.

Areas to consider are:

Physical

- How does the speaker look? Neat? Sharp? Is he or she properly attired? Slovenly? An "I don't care" look?
- Do attire and accessories compliment or detract from his effectiveness? Does he have a professional appearance?
- Does the speaker stand alert? Erect? Or is he rounded, bent and lifeless?
- Do gestures have purpose? Do they compliment words and message? Are they effective? Meaningless?
- Do his facial expressions reveal the "emotional" side of the speaker's message?

- Is eye contact sharp and direct? Does it cover the entire audience? Does it reflect the speaker's interest for the audience?
- Do body movements have purpose? Do they add to or detract from the speaker's message? His effectiveness?

Voice

- Does the speaker's voice have a good quality? Is it firm to show strength, assured to show confidence, warm to convey friendliness, and pleasing to win the audience?
- Is the speaker's voice modulated and flexible to show feeling and emotion?
- Is the rate compatible with the message?
- Is the volume adequate?
- Were words spoken with clarity or were they slurred and indistinct?
- Did the speaker's style, pace and demeanor build a strong contact with his audience? Did they contribute or detract from his or her effectiveness?
- Did the speaker show a concern for the audience?
- Did the speaker "believe" in his message? Was he confident?
- Did the audience "believe" in the speaker's message?

- Did the speaker speak with, and convey, enthusiasm for his message?
- * *Language.* The last category is language. Language is defined as: "The speaker's word choice and grammatical skill."

Areas to consider are:

Appropriateness

- Is the speaker's language compatible with the speech and the audience? Do his words fit the occasion and the audience?
- Does the speaker's language promote understanding of his message as he intended it to be understood? Do the listeners know what the speaker is saying?
- Has the speaker chosen words that will "sell" his message?
- Do his words accurately convey his message?

Correctness

- Has the speaker used correct grammar, correct pronunciation, and good enunciation?
- Is his diction (choice of words to express ideas) effective?
- Do all of the above reflect study and preparation?
- Is the speaker master of the words he has chosen to convey his message?

Note that the judging form does not include a space for speech time. That's because timing is the Timers' responsibility, not the judges' responsibility. Judges will not time the speeches and will not consider the possibility of undertime or overtime when judging a contestant's speech.

Protests

As mentioned earlier, contestants must prepare their own five- to seven-minute speeches, which must be substantially original and certified as such in writing to the chief judge by the contestants prior to the presentation of the speeches. Any quoted material must be so identified during the speech presentation.

Determining the originality of a speech can be difficult. We all draw upon the ideas of others whenever we compose a speech, and we use them to contribute to the point we're making. So what makes a speech "substantially original"? Let's consider some examples that would not be considered substantially original speeches:

- A six-minute speech in which four minutes is devoted to quoting another person or published work, even though the quote is properly attributed to its source.
- A speech in which part of the material is taken from another source that is not credited.
- A speech that has been taken entirely from another source which may or may not have been credited.

Originality!

When a contestant's speech is thought to be unoriginal, any judge or contestant may protest to the chief judge and/or contest chairman before the announcement of the winner and alternates. The chief judge and contest chairman then call all of the judges together to discuss the speech in question. If necessary, the judges may call in the speaker himself or herself. Should a majority of the judges agree, the contestant may be disqualified on the basis of originality. The contest chairman will notify the contestant of a disqualification regarding originality prior to that announcement before the meeting at which the contest took place is adjourned. All decisions of the judges are final.

Before You Judge a Contest

Before you judge a contest, review the judging criteria on the back of the ballot. And study the Judge's Code of Ethics at the bottom, too. Attend the orientation session held by the chief judge.

Give Your Support

When you're asked to judge a contest, you're being asked to judge it according to the given contest rules and judging standards. Don't agree to be a judge, then make up your own rules and judging standards, or complain about those in use. This isn't fair to the contestants, the other judges, or the audience. Support the rules and judging standards by word and deed. Don't publicly criticize the contest before or afterward, and don't reveal scores and ranking.

J-OH #7 Judge's Code of Ethics