

THE TOASTMASTERS EXPERIENCE

You may be more comfortable communicating by electronic mail or telephone than in person. Speaking to large or small groups, or even one-to-one, may intimidate or frighten you. Yet good communication skills are vital if you want to be successful. Corporate leaders say that the ability to communicate well orally is one of the most important skills their recruiters look for in job candidates. Businesses want people who express themselves clearly and confidently, and are persuasive and comfortable communicating with a wide range of people, from top executives to assembly-line workers.

Most schools and universities don't offer this type of training. Toastmasters does. In Toastmasters you'll learn how to formulate, express, and sell your ideas and yourself with poise and confidence. You'll improve your ability to listen and evaluate others' ideas, and you'll learn leadership skills along the way.

By joining your Toastmasters club, you've embarked on a journey that will greatly improve your life.

HOW IT WORKS

The Toastmasters program is not a college, trade school, or other formal course in public speaking. You'll find no instructors, professors, or classrooms. No one's work is graded and no tests are administered. In Toastmasters, members learn by studying the manuals, practicing, and helping one another. Learning takes place in the club environment. Club meetings are workshops where you study and practice communication and leadership skills with others who are there for the same reasons you are. You learn by doing and by watching fellow club members.

During club meetings you'll build "quick thinking" skills as you give one- to two-minute speeches on general subjects during Table Topics. You'll introduce speakers, conduct meetings, and perform other roles that will give you plenty of practice in a variety of communication experiences. But your greatest learning will come from preparing and presenting speeches based on the projects in this manual.

This manual has 10 speech projects, each designed to develop your speaking skills one step at a time. Every project builds upon what you've learned in the preceding project, so you should present the speeches in numerical order. You'll begin with "The Ice Breaker" speech. Since it will be your first speech before the club, it will be based on an easy subject – yourself. In subsequent speeches you'll learn the importance of organization, speech purpose, proper word usage, body language, and vocal variety. You'll also learn how to do research, use visual aids, speak persuasively, and inspire others. Read each project and Evaluation Guide carefully before you prepare your speech. This is your workbook, so you may write in it.

Most of your talks will be only five to seven minutes long. This gives you enough time to develop your topic while still keeping club meetings to a reasonable length, but the principles you learn in a five- to seven-minute speech apply to a 40-minute formal address or a two-minute impromptu speech. You'll learn to speak with confidence, clarity, persuasiveness, and enthusiasm.

An evaluator will give you verbal and written feedback on every speech you present. The evaluator provides a personal opinion of your talk, pointing out its strengths and offering suggestions for improving your next speech. Evaluations have one purpose: to help you become a more effective speaker. Eventually, as you gain more experience, you will evaluate the speeches of others.

This manual teaches you the basics of public speaking. After you finish it, you can begin refining and enhancing your basic speaking skills with the *Advanced Communication Series*. This series consists of 15 manuals with five speech projects each. Some manuals focus on career-related presentations, such as public relations and technical speeches, while others address topics such as interpersonal communication, humor, and storytelling. You choose the manuals to complete and the skills you want to learn.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

You'll learn more than just communication skills in your club. You'll build leadership skills when you complete the 10 projects in the *Competent Leadership* manual. You can develop additional skills by serving as a club officer, formulating and implementing plans to help the club meet members' needs. You may also complete the *High Performance Leadership* program, working on a leadership project related to your personal or professional life. Serving in leadership positions at other levels of the organization also will help improve your leadership skills.

THE REWARDS ARE MANY

Not only will you learn speaking and leadership skills, you will be recognized for your efforts. At any club meeting, you may present one speech for award credit. Once you've completed all 10 projects in this manual, you will receive the Competent Communicator award, a certificate you can display at home or in the office. If you wish, Toastmasters International World Headquarters will also send a letter to your employer about this accomplishment.

But that's only the beginning. Toastmasters provides two educational tracks: a communication track, in which you develop your speaking skills, and a leadership track, in which you develop leadership skills. When you participate in the communication track, you can be recognized as an Advanced Communicator Bronze, Advanced Communicator Silver, and Advanced Communicator Gold. When you participate in the leadership track, you can be recognized as a Competent Leader, Advanced Leader Bronze, and Advanced Leader Silver. The tracks are not mutually exclusive. You may work in both tracks at the same time, and you are encouraged to do so. The ultimate recognition is the Distinguished Toastmaster award, given to those who have worked in both tracks and have received the Advanced Communicator Gold and Advanced Leader Silver awards.

THERE'S MORE!

Toastmasters offers other communication and leadership opportunities as well, from speech contests to speakers bureaus.

Throughout this manual you'll find references to manuals, books, and other programs that may help you further develop your speaking and leadership skills. You may purchase these items online at www.toastmasters.org/shop.

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

By now you realize just how much you can do and learn in Toastmasters, and you're eager to begin. You will get a great start if you do the following:

1. **Ask your vice president education for a mentor.** A mentor is a friendly, experienced fellow member who will help you with your first few speeches and answer any questions you may have as you begin working in the Toastmasters educational program. The mentor was once a new member like you and knows how important help can be to someone just starting the program.
2. **Ask the vice president education to schedule you to give your first speech, "The Ice Breaker," which is Project 1 in this manual.** If the schedule permits, most likely you will give your first speech at the next meeting or at least be assigned to another meeting role that requires speaking up in front of fellow club members. The sooner you begin speaking in the club, the faster you will learn. Also ask the vice president education to orient you to the club. During this orientation, the vice president education explains how the club operates, the learning opportunities the club provides, and your responsibilities as a member. Both of you will discuss your goals and how the club can help you achieve them.
3. **Read the section "About Your Club."** This section explains what happens at a club meeting, as well as the meeting roles you will be asked to fill and how to fill them. You will also learn about the club's leaders and their responsibilities.
4. **Study *Effective Evaluation* (Item 202) online at www.toastmasters.org.** Every speech you give in the club will be evaluated by another member, and you also will be asked to evaluate others' speeches and leadership roles. Evaluations provide the feedback all members need to improve their skills, so it is important that you know how to evaluate. *Effective Evaluation* (Item 202) reviews how to evaluate and what to do with the evaluations you receive. Read *Your Speaking Voice* (Item 199) and *Gestures: Your Body Speaks* (Item 201) after you have completed two or three speech projects. Both will help you develop some key speaking skills.
5. **Finally, begin preparing your first speech.** Carefully read Project 1, including the Evaluation Guide, and work with your mentor to develop a speech about yourself. Prepare thoroughly and practice your speech repeatedly. Preparation and practice, not only for this first speech but for every speech you give, will help you overcome any nervousness you may have and make you a better speaker.

ONE LAST THOUGHT

More than four million people will confirm that the Toastmasters program works, but it works only when you prepare carefully, actively participate, and speak as often as possible.

Apply yourself, and you will experience the benefits you want in all aspects of your life.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

For your first speech project, you will introduce yourself to your fellow club members and give them some information about your background, interests and ambitions. Practice giving your speech to friends or family members, and strive to make eye contact with some of your audience. You may use notes during your speech if you wish. Read the entire project before preparing your talk.

OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ To begin speaking before an audience.
- ▶ To discover speaking skills you already have and skills that need some attention.

Time: Four to six minutes

THE ICE BREAKER

By now you've heard speeches by club members and have probably participated in Table Topics. This is your opportunity to give your first prepared talk and "break the ice."

The best way to begin your speaking experience is to talk about a familiar subject – yourself. Of course, this subject is too broad for a short four- to six-minute presentation. You must narrow it by selecting three or four interesting aspects of your life that will give your fellow club members insight and understanding of you as an individual. These might include your birthplace, education, or family. You could explain how you came to be in your present occupation and tell the audience something about your ambitions. Or you could explain the effect an incident from your youth has had on your life. One speaker donned hats as she talked about her life. She wore a chauffeur's hat as she talked about driving her children to their activities, a fireman's hat as she discussed the crises or "fires" she encountered daily at her work, and a chef's hat as she told of her love of cooking.

Once you have the highlights of your talk in mind, weave them into a story, just as if you were telling it to a group of friends. Share significant personal experiences. The more personal your talk, the warmer the relationship will be between you and the audience.

OPENING, BODY, AND CONCLUSION

Like any good story, your talk needs a clear beginning and ending. Create an interesting opening sentence that captures the audience's attention. Memorize it, if necessary, and use it even if a better idea occurs to you just before you speak. Then devise a good closing and memorize it, too.

A memorized beginning and ending enable you to start and finish your talk with confidence and ease. In any speech, it's best to select a few main points (three or four at the most) and emphasize them by using examples, stories, or anecdotes. If you merely state a fact and then continue, most of your audience will miss the point. You should make a point, say it again in different words, illustrate the point, and then state it once more in order to be clearly understood. This is a good skill to learn. Choose your points and illustrations carefully. Too much information may overwhelm the audience.

If you think you will need notes, write a brief speech outline on note cards, which you can place on the lectern. Refer to them only when you need them. Remember, you're speaking, not reading. Many speakers begin

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by writing out an entire speech, then breaking it into parts, with a key word for each part, and finally writing just the key words on one note card.

PREPARING YOURSELF

Now the talk is ready, but are you ready to present it? Practice the talk until you are comfortable with it. You won't need to memorize the body of the talk, since you already know all about the subject. As mentioned earlier, you should memorize the opening and conclusion.

Present the talk to a family member, a friend, or your Toastmasters mentor. Ask for comments. They may give you some helpful suggestions. If you have an audio recorder, record the talk and listen to it carefully, making any necessary improvements. Using a recording is one of the best ways to improving your speaking ability.

Instead of thinking of this presentation as making a speech, think of it as a talk before a group of friends, sharing information of interest. Don't be afraid of the audience. They have already experienced the same feelings you're having. They want you to succeed and they're eager to help you!

Appearance is important. Be well-groomed and appropriately dressed for your presentation. When you look right, you feel good about yourself. You'll then forget about your appearance and concentrate on your talk. You will have increased confidence because you know you've made a good first impression with the audience.

PRESENTING YOUR TALK

Once you've prepared and practiced your talk, relax. Nervousness is common to every speaker, no matter how experienced. In fact, you can put this nervous energy to work for you by using it to add excitement to your delivery. No one is going to notice a little quavering in your voice, and it will soon disappear anyway as you become involved with what you're saying. (More information about controlling nervousness appears on page 79.)

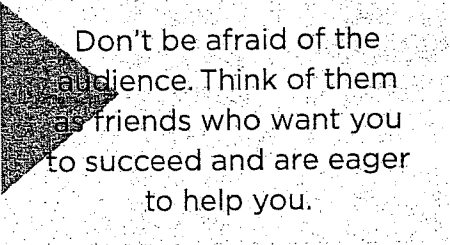
While being introduced, take a deep breath and slowly exhale. This will help your voice sound resonant and natural. Begin by facing the Toastmaster and saying, "Mr. (or Madam) Toastmaster," then face the audience and say, "Ladies and gentlemen..." or "Fellow members and guests..." Pause, then begin with your memorized opening.

While speaking, make eye contact with various members of the audience, first looking directly at one person for a few seconds, then looking at another, so people feel included in your talk. As you do this, glance periodically at the timer. If the red light comes on

while you're talking, move smoothly to your conclusion and finish quickly. Observe time limits whenever you speak.

Don't worry about what to do with your hands. Leave them at your sides if this makes you more comfortable. You'll have opportunities to practice gestures later.

Finish with your memorized conclusion. Some speakers say "thank you" at the very end to signal to the audience that they are finished, but this is not necessary. Instead, after you say your concluding words, nod at the Toastmaster of the meeting and say, "Mr. (or Madam) Toastmaster" and enjoy the applause.



Don't be afraid of the audience. Think of them as friends who want you to succeed and are eager to help you.

YOUR EVALUATION

After you finish, you'll probably begin evaluating yourself even before you return to your seat. You may think you left out some of the best parts. Every speaker thinks that. Just congratulate yourself on having delivered your first speech, then write down the things you did well and the things you want to improve to make your next speech even better.

To supplement your self-evaluation, an experienced club member has been assigned to evaluate your efforts. Before the meeting begins, give this manual to your evaluator so he or she may make notes on the evaluation page of this project. This gives you a permanent record of your progress. If you want the evaluator to observe something in particular, be sure to inform the evaluator in advance.

Ask other members for additional comments after the meeting (some may give you their own brief written comments during the meeting). All of these comments may not be useful to you, but you should consider them carefully. Remember, each evaluation is an opinion of how that person perceived you and your presentation. These opinions usually (but not always) will be helpful to your self-development.

SPEAKER'S CHECKLIST

- ▶ Bring this manual to the meeting whenever you are scheduled to speak.
- ▶ Review your presentation with your mentor.
- ▶ Discuss any special points with your evaluator before giving the speech.
- ▶ Give the evaluator your manual before you speak, so he or she can make written comments on your performance.
- ▶ Have the vice president education initial the Project Completion Record after you complete each project. This will give you credit toward your Competent Communicator award.
- ▶ Don't be discouraged if your evaluator misunderstood your point. Evaluators have varying degrees of experience in speaking, and evaluation is a learn-by-doing skill, just as speaking is.
- ▶ If you have not already done so, read *Effective Evaluation* (Item 202). It will help you understand how to get the most out of the Toastmasters program.

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **THE ICE BREAKER**

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: In this speech the new member is to introduce himself/herself to the club and begin speaking before an audience. The speech should have a clear beginning, body, and ending. The speaker has been advised to use notes if necessary and not to be concerned with gestures. Be encouraging and point out the speaker's strong points while gently and kindly mentioning areas that could be improved. Strive to have the speaker look forward to giving another speech. Your evaluation should help the speaker feel glad about joining Toastmasters and presenting this speech. In addition to your verbal evaluation, please write answers to the questions below.

- ▶ What strong points does the speaker already have?

- ▶ How well did the audience get to know the speaker?

- ▶ Did the speech reflect adequate preparation?

- ▶ Did the speaker talk clearly and audibly?

- ▶ Did the speech have a definite opening, body, and conclusion?

- ▶ Please comment on the speaker's use of notes.

- ▶ What could the speaker have done differently that would have improved the speech?

- ▶ What did you like about the presentation?