**[Speech Contest FAQ](https://www.toastmasters.org/Footer/FAQ/Speech%20Contests)**

**Where can I find more information or resources on speech contest?**

The first place to look for further information is the Speech Contest Rule Book. This contains all the rules for speech contests, several checklists with common steps to run or participate in a contest, and a list of available resources. Additionally, you can find more resources included in the [speech contest kits](https://www.toastmasters.org/resources/resource-library?t=1169) which are all available for free as digital downloads including certificates, ballots, tally sheets, and other supplies for conducting a speech contest.

**Who is ineligible to compete in any speech contest?**

In general, any individual who is performing the role of a contest official including judges, counters, sergeant at arms, and a contest Toastmaster cannot compete in a contest in which they are serving or in a contest in which the outcome of the contest they are officiating will be affected.

Additionally, district, region, and international leaders should not be competing in speech contests. This includes current officials and candidates for future roles.

Lastly, education session presenters and event committee chairs for the event where the contest is being held may not compete.

For a full and complete list of all individuals who may not compete, review section 2.A.4 of the Speech Contest Rulebook.

**What happens if I pay my dues on time, but my club treasurer doesn’t submit my dues to World Headquarters?**

You are, unfortunately, ineligible to compete. To compete in a speech contest, you must be a paid member of a club in good standing. The only way to maintain your paid membership is to make sure your club treasurer submits your dues to World Headquarters by October 1 for the October renewal period and by April 1 for the April renewal period. For new, dual, transfer, or reinstated members, the membership application and applicable dues must be received by World Headquarters prior to competing in the first contest. Review section 2.A.1.b

**Can a member compete in two contests if the areas are in different divisions or districts?**

No. A member can only compete in one area contest of a given type, review section 2 A.8.a of the Speech Contest Rulebook.

**Can a member serve as a contest chair at one contest and compete in another?**

Yes, as long as the contest where the member is competing and the contest where the member is serving as a contest chair are not at the same event.

**Example:** Jane Doe is competing at District G's annual conference in the Tall Tales Contest. She cannot serve as a contest chair for any contests at District G's annual conference.

Jane is not competing in District F's annual conference. Jane Doe can serve as a contest chair for any contest at District F's annual conference.

**Are contestants required to have completed a minimum number of speeches, projects, or levels to participate in a speech contest?**

The only speech contest with a requirement of this type is the International Speech Contest. To participate in any level of the International Speech Contest, a member must have completed at least six speeches in the Competent Communication manual or two levels in the Toastmasters Pathways learning experience prior to the club contest. \* Beginning July 1, 2019, a member must have completed at least six speeches in the Competent Communication manual or earned certificates of completion in Levels 1 and 2 of any path in the Toastmasters Pathways learning experience.

For clubs that chartered less than one year before the area contest, the charter members are permitted to compete without having completed this requirement.

**What is a contest official? Can they serve more than one role?**

The following are contest officials: contest chair, contest toastmaster, event committee chairs, chief judge, voting judges, tiebreaking judge, timers, sergeant at arms, and counters. Officials should not serve in more than one role at the same contest and they may not compete in the contest at which they are serving as an official.

**Who can be an alternate speaker?**

The alternate speaker is the next person who is eligible to be a contestant after the first-place winner, when applicable. The alternate speaker is not limited to the next person in line for the contestant spot. For example, if the first-place winner from Division A is not available, then the second-place winner from Division A would be considered the alternate. If the second-place winner from Division A is unavailable, then the third-place winner would be the next alternate, and so on until the last place contestant would be the alternate. If no other contestants are available, there would be no alternate.

**Does the chief judge, judge contestants?**

No, while the chief judge is a judge, he or she does not judge the contestants. The role of the chief judge is to appoint and advise the judges, counters, timers and tiebreaking judge. The chief judge also conducts the judges’ briefing before the contest, collects the time record sheet from the timers, collects the ballot from the tiebreaking judge, handles protests and delivers the list of winners to the contest chair at the end of the contest.

**What does it mean that “a member serving as a chief judge, voting judge, or tiebreaking judge beyond the club level for a contest in which the member is stilling competing or intends to compete” is ineligible?**

Beyond the club level, a member cannot judge a contest where the contest result could lead to the member competing against the contest's winner.

**Example Scenarios:**

John Smith wins Area B's Evaluation Contest. He is asked to judge Area C's Evaluation Contest. If he judges at Area C's Evaluation Contest, he is ineligible to continue competing in the district's Evaluation Contest.

Jane Smith is disqualified from Area B's Tall Tales Contest. Because she is no longer competing in the Tall Tales Contest, she can judge Area C's Tall Tales Contest. Similarly, if Jane Smith loses Area B's Tall Tales Contest, she can judge Area C's Tall Tales Contest.

**An area with five clubs has one club that is not in good standing. Can the clubs in good standing in that area send two contestants to the area contest?**

Yes. Areas with four assigned clubs or fewer in good standing may have clubs send two contestants to the area contest.

**Note:** The decision whether or not to allow two 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 any club contests being held. Once the decision is made, it must be implemented consistently throughout the district in all clubs, areas, and divisions affected.

**What does the rulebook mean when it says a speech must be “substantially original?”**

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.

If there are only two contestants in a speech contest, and the first-place winner is unable to attend the next level of competition and the other contestant is disqualified, can we nominate someone else to attend the next level of competition?

No. You cannot nominate a new contestant to compete at the next level of competition nor can you allow the disqualified contestant to compete.

**Can members be charged an entry fee in order to compete in a speech contest?**

No. Requiring members to pay an entry fee would be considered an addition to the eligibility rules outlined in the Speech Contest Rulebook. Rules can only be added through the administrative protocol with the approval of the Chief Executive Officer and International President. This provision is found under Speech Contest Policy in the Speech Contest Rulebook.

**Example:** Contestant A is competing in a speech contest at a district conference and intends to only compete in the contest. Contestant A is not attending any of the other conference sessions. Contestant A cannot be charged a registration fee. Contestant B is attending education sessions at the district conference in addition to competing in the speech contest. Contestant B can be charged a registration fee.

**What are the rules regarding usage of music, media, or props in a speech?**

The use of props (which include music and PowerPoint presentations) are allowed during speech contests in accordance with speech contest rules. Please review the Use of Props section of the Speech Contest Rulebook for complete details.

**What are the guidelines regarding video or audio recording of a district speech contest?**

If a recording is made for any purposes other than to be used in regional quarterfinal judging, the districts determine the guidelines regarding video or audio recording of a district contest. Any guidelines established must not contradict the Speech Contest Rulebook and must consider the safety of contestants and audience members.

Any recordings to be used in regional quarterfinal judging must follow the rules outlined in the International Speech Contest Rules found in the Speech Contest Rulebook [.](https://www.toastmasters.org/resources/resource-library?t=Speech%20Contest%20Rulebook) All contestants must complete the Speaker’s Certification of Eligibility and Originality form (Item 1183) and the International Speech Contest Region Quarterfinals Video Release form (Item 1193).