



Speech Contest Guide

By Elizabeth Moore, 2017

**Adapted from *Hosting a Successful Speech Contest*,
by Gretchen Coons and Theresa Kasel, U2007**

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Introduction

Do I *have* to have a contest?

Area, Division or District level:

Yes. You must produce a contest in the fall and another in the spring.

Club level:

Maybe not. “Each club in good standing is permitted to choose its contestant for each area speech contest by whatever means the club desires.” *Speech Contest Rulebook*. A club can choose a contestant by volunteers, voting, drawing lots, rock-paper-scissors, a contest . . . whatever means. If they choose to have a contest, ***the club must comply with all the rules of any other contest.***

Holding a club contest is an excellent learning experience, and a lot of work. Read this Guide before deciding.

You’re going to have a contest!

It’s exciting . . . and a little scary.

Contests are all about details—a lot of details. Details can be managed with organization and relentless attention.

The purpose of this Guide is to help you with those details.

When shall I start preparing for my contest?

Now. Right now.

What do I do first??

Go to www.toastmasters.org, select Shop, and do a search for the **current** *Speech Contest Rulebook*. Download and print it. (Later, you will need copies for your duty holders, but for now, just get your own.) Read it; read **all** of it.

This short publication is well-written, and will answer many of your questions. More important, **it is the authority which guides everything about your contest.** It supersedes anything in this Guide, local custom, and anything any other Toastmaster may tell you. If something in the *Rulebook* is not clear to you, call World Headquarters to ask for clarification.

What next?

There are three decisions you must make now—and they may be interrelated:

1. When will my contest be?
2. Where will my contest be?
3. Will I have a contest chair?

We will discuss each in turn in the following chapters.

When to hold a contest

You are restricted by the date of the contest at the level above you.

District contest:

Is scheduled well in advance.

Division contest:

The Division Directors fix dates the day after they are elected.

Area contest:

Must be before the Division contest—preferably at least a week before, to give your contestants time to prepare, and the Division Director time to finalize the program.

Your Division Director will want to attend your contest, so you and the other Area Directors in your Division should not schedule your contests on the same day.

Ask your predecessor about established customs on when the contest is held, e.g., always on Saturday, or Tuesday evening, etc. Then you can decide if you want to follow the custom.

Club contest:

Scheduling is usually easier; it's often in place of a regular club meeting. You will want to avoid scheduling at the same time as other clubs in the area, because your Area Director will want to attend. If possible, club contests should be held **at least a week before the area contest**.

This decision is also dependent on your other decisions. Your preferred venue and/or your contest chair may not be available on your preferred date.

Choose your date as soon as possible, before someone else claims it. After your date is chosen, 1.) notify the stakeholders—your next level Director, and the Areas in your Division, the clubs in your area, or your club members; 2.) post the date on your club website or the d6tm calendar. (You can add a flyer later.)

Where to hold a contest

Club contests are usually held at the same location as the club meetings.

Area and Division contests can be a little more challenging. Your venue should be geographically within your Area or Division. If either is geographically large, rotating the location of contests can prevent participants from feeling slighted.

Ask your predecessor and your stakeholders what has (or hasn't) worked in the past. Some features of an ideal venue:

- Free
- Easy to find
- Ample parking
- No security issues
- Quiet
- Appropriate occupancy
- Breakout areas for briefings and/or sequestering contestants
- Allows food to be brought in
- Area for serving food
- Area for registration
- Available on your preferred date

Few locations will have all of these, and you may have to prioritize.

A club in your Area or Division may have an appropriate meeting space. Corporate clubs may get permission to use a conference or training room.

Failing that, some other possibilities include:

Apartment party rooms

Churches

Community centers

Community colleges

Country club (beware of fees)

Fraternal organizations

Libraries

Rec Centers

Restaurants (private room)

Senior centers

YMCA or YWCA

Other businesses

NOT recommended:

Bars

Bowling alleys

If all else fails, you might be forced to choose a venue that charges a fee, in which case you will have to recoup that cost by charging your guests a fee for the contest. See [Refreshments and Fees](#). **Note: contestants must never be charged a fee.** –*Speech Contest Rulebook*

Some vendors will waive or reduce fees for Sec. 501(c)(3) organizations such as Toastmasters. Ask the District for guidance if your vendor requires documentation of status.

Plan B:

What if your venue burns down?? Have an alternate site in mind.

How long will my contest take?

When reserving a venue, you will need to know for how long.

Club contests have the advantage of being able to schedule the two contests at successive meetings. If this is not feasible, be aware that two contests may exceed the normal meeting time.

Here is how to determine how long the contest itself will take.

- Allow 10 –15 minutes for opening remarks
- Determine the maximum number of contestants you will have, e.g. 5 clubs = 5 contestants. (See *Speech Contest Rulebook*, Sec. 3B, re Areas with 4 or fewer clubs.)
- Determine the maximum time your contestants will speak, then add the minute of silence for the judging between contestants.
- Multiply contestants x max time
- Add 5 minutes for “indefinite period of silence” at the end.
- Add 10 – 15 minutes for ballot counting/contestant interviews, or a break between contests.
- **Repeat for your other contest**
- Add 10 – 15 minutes for recognition of dignitaries, awards, and announcements.
- *For an evaluation contest, you will also need to add 7 minutes 30 seconds for the test speech plus 5 minutes for contestant note-taking.*

That’s just for the contest itself. Add in whatever time you will need for setup and takedown. How much time this takes depends entirely on your venue. Setup may consist of putting registration sheets and programs on a table and placing the timing lights; or it may mean setting up or rearranging tables and chairs. See [Setting Up the Room](#).

At the Area level and above, when registration opens, the contest is an hour from starting: allow 30 minutes for registration/mingling/refreshments and 30 minutes for briefings.

Let’s do an example. You have an Area with 5 clubs, and you are doing a Table Topics and a Humorous Speech contest. You believe you will need a half hour to set up and another half hour for takedown. You want your contest to start at 10 a.m.

Setup	8:30
Registration opens	9:00
Briefings	9:30
Opening remarks	10:00
Table Topics speakers	10:10

$2.5 + 1 \text{ min.} \times 5 \text{ speakers} = 17.5 \text{ min.} + 5 \text{ silence} = 22.5 \text{ min.}$

BREAK 10:30

Humorous speeches 10:45

$7.5 + 1 \text{ min.} \times 5 \text{ speakers} = 42.5 + 5 \text{ silence} = 47.5$

Ballot counting/contestant interviews 11:30

Awards/Announcements 11:45

Adjourn noon

Complete takedown/cleanup 12:30

In our example, it makes sense to reserve your space for 4 hours. It is unlikely that you will use all that time; not all of your contestants will speak the maximum time, for example. But this is what you want to be prepared for.

When you post times on your website and flyer, be sure to include the times of Registration, Briefings, and Contest Begins.

Joint contests

There are advantages to teaming up with another club or another area for a joint contest. You can secure a single venue, although for a longer time. You can share a Toastmaster, Chief Judge, ballot counters, timers, Sergeants at Arms, and Registrars.

You could also have the same judges, following the requirements of the *Speech Contest Rulebook*, Sec. 5.

You would need only one program and one set of scripts. Refreshment costs would be shared.

“Joint contest” is something of a misnomer; really it is sequential contests using the same helpers. For example, you would have one Area’s Table Topics contest, collect those ballots, then have the other Area’s Table Topics contest and collect those ballots. You could count ballots and do interviews after each contest, or after both. You then repeat for the other contest, after a break.

This works best if each has a small number of contestants. It’s important that this be rigorously organized. Make sure the judges understand which contest they are judging.

Should I have a contest chair?

See the *Speech Contest Rulebook* for the Contest Chair's Checklist.

If you are a club officer, Area Director or Division Director (let's call you the Host) responsible for the contest, you may have other things to do and wish to delegate contest duties to a Chair. You may be new to contests, and want an experienced Toastmaster's help and counsel.

Such a person may be difficult to find. There are some inducements:

- At the **club** level, this assignment counts toward project 10 in the Competent Leader manual.
- At the **Area** or **Division** level, it may be a High Performance Leadership project.
- At any level, it is good training for someone who anticipates a leadership role in the future.

It may be easier to induce someone to be your co-chair. This is also a good solution if you have control issues, or definite ideas about contest decisions.

In either case, you must choose a person you trust absolutely.

Whether you have a chair or a co-chair, the duties each of you will perform and the responsibilities you have can be worked out between the two of you, *provided each of you is perfectly clear about who does what, and when*. Very early in the process, sit down with your chair and work through the [Duty Roster](#). Each of you should keep a copy and update it regularly. (Dropbox is a possible method.)

Whatever your relationship with your Chair, you can't simply hand over your contest and forget about it. You must maintain regular contact with your Chair, following up with each other to determine progress.

Contest Roles/Staffing

This list is a very brief description of the roles, with space for you to list the person recruited. Detailed descriptions of roles are elsewhere in the Guide.

Role	Description	Duty Holder
Host	Club officer or Director responsible for holding contest	
Contest Chair	Oversees all aspects of contest. May be host or any capable Toastmaster	
Toastmaster	Master of ceremonies.	
Chief Judge	Briefs judges, selects tie-breaking judge, collects ballots and timer's report, certifies results, oversees judging. Expert on contest rules.	
Voting Judge	Scores each speech and ranks contestants. Number required: Club: at least 5 Area: equal number from each club, or a minimum of 5. Division: equal number from each area, or a minimum of 7. District: equal number from each Division, or a minimum of 7.	
Tiebreaking Judge	Secret judge selected by Chief Judge. Ranks all contestants. Ballot used only if there is a tie.	
Chief Timer	Records time, operates timing lights/cards	
Assistant Timer	Records independent time, assists Chief Timer	
Ballot Counter	Collects ballots and tallies votes.	
Sgt. @ Arms 1	Begins the contest, introduces contest chair, manages stage, guards door during speeches. Note: each door to the contest room must be guarded.	
Sgt. @ Arms 2	Escorts Table Topics and Evaluation contestants in and out of contest room	
Sgt. @ Arms 3	Guards sequestered contestants	
Test Speaker	Gives speech evaluated by all Evaluation contestants. Identity secret until contest.	
Note: all roles above must be filled by Toastmasters (paid members)		
Registrar	Greets and directs all guests and contestants, maintains registration sheets, identifies dignitaries in attendance. Ideally 2.	
Registrar		
Photographer	Optional	

Where can I get all these people??

You may be dismayed to realize that staffing for a club contest is 13 people, in addition to the contestants. The Rulebook provides some leeway for clubs: “unless impractical.” There is no such leeway above the club level.

Staffing may require creativity. At the club level, you may reach a reciprocal agreement with another club for staff, e.g. one club provides judges for another and vice versa—also prevents bias. You may have a [joint contest](#) with another club.

At the Area level, be clear with clubs from the outset that you expect them to staff your contests. Ask your fellow Area Directors for help, and provide help to them. You may also have a joint contest with another Area; see [Joint Contests](#).

Similarly, at the Division level, make it clear to your Area Directors that staffing your contests is part of their job. Ask your fellow Division Directors for their help, and provide it to them. Joint Division contests are rarely practical.

In the end, we do the best we can. We may be able to do with fewer people. For example, we may do with two Sergeants at Arms if the one guarding the door texts the one guarding the contestants, that it is time to send in the next contestant. If fees are not being charged, attendees can self-register. Registrars (if they are Toastmasters) can be ballot counters. At the club level, two ballot counters may be sufficient. The Chair or Host may be able to take a minor role.

The Contest Chair Role

Your role is vital. Your first step should be to meet with the Contest Host to reach agreement on the duties each of you will perform and the responsibilities you have. This can be worked out between the two of you, *provided each of you is perfectly clear about who does what, and when*. Work through the [Duty Roster](#). Each of you should keep a copy and update it regularly. (Dropbox is a possible method.)

Even if the agreement is that you will perform most of the duties, maintain frequent contact with the Host.

The Guide gives advice on choosing your staff, followed by a description of the role for the person chosen. This is followed by chapters on contest details. You should become familiar with all aspects of a contest.

Choosing a Toastmaster

The Toastmaster of your contest (sometimes called Contest Master) is a very important role. He or she is the public face of your contest, and should therefore be poised and articulate.

At the club level, the Chair is often the Toastmaster.

Some Directors choose to Toastmaster their own contests. Avoid this unless you are very confident of success. A great deal happens at a contest that requires the attention of the Director.

For your Fall contest, it's a good idea to choose a Toastmaster who is very experienced, and with whom you are familiar. Throughout the year, observe those you lead for people who might be right for this role. You may wish to choose one of them to Toastmaster your Spring contest. If no one inexperienced is ever given a chance, no one will ever become experienced.

Experienced or not, you must mentor the Toastmaster for the role.

Emphasize to the Toastmaster that this role is different from that of a club meeting, and that protocol must be strictly followed. Creativity should be limited to any opening remarks; apart from this, a script must be used.

Assemble the following folder for your Toastmaster and bring it to the contest:

- Toastmaster script (Toolkit)
- Contestant profiles
- Blank copies of contestant profiles
- Blank copies of Certificates of Eligibility and Originality
- Certificates of Participation
- Playing cards to draw for speaking order
- Pens

On the following pages, which you should share with your Toastmaster, the role is described.

The Toastmaster's Role

Being asked to be a contest Toastmaster means that the person asking has a high opinion of your skills. Do your best to live up to that.

Do not accept unless you are **very** sure that you will be available to fulfil your role. Be clear about the date, time, place, and how long the contest is expected to last.

Ask a lot of questions about what is expected of you; it may be different from the last time you did this. Make sure you and the Chair have each other's contact information in several forms. Ask to be kept up to date of any changes.

Ask the Chair to send you the script you will use to conduct the contest. Study it carefully and ask questions about what you don't understand.

Download and print a copy of the current *Speech Contest Rulebook* and read it carefully.

Ask the Chair to send you copies of the speakers' Contestant Profiles from the previous level. Study these for possible topics for the contestant interviews.

Prepare brief opening remarks for the contest. This is the only part of the contest where your creativity or originality is permitted. The rest of the contest is conducted according to strict protocol, which is covered in your script.

On the day of the contest:

- Arrive **early**.
- Bring with you the following:
 - Your script (Toolkit)
 - Contestant profiles
 - Blank copies of contestant profiles
 - Blank copies of Certificates of Eligibility and Originality
 - Certificates of Participation
 - Playing cards to draw for speaking order
 - *(your Chair may have promised to bring the above items. Bring your own anyway.)*
 - Pens
 - Cough drops
 - Bottle of water.
- When you arrive, find the Chair, and get from him/her the Certificates of Participation and any last-minute instructions. Get a copy of the program.
- Find the Chief Judge. If you don't know him/her, memorize his/her appearance. Find out where he/she will be sitting so you can verify presence. Verify that the timers' briefing will include a request to signal the minute of silence, the test speaker, and contestant interviews.
- Other than your briefing and what is required during the contest, avoid talking to the contestants before the contest. Conversation can create the impression of bias.

During your briefings:

You will follow your script for this, but also keep in mind the following:

- No one may compete who has not submitted a signed Certificate of Eligibility, and if applicable, a Certificate of Originality.
- If the Pledge of Allegiance is not being said, instruct the Sgt.@Arms who is opening, to omit it from the remarks. If it is, be sure there is a flag.
- All props must be set up during the minute of silence prior to contestant's speech and removed from the stage in the minute of silence following the speech. **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.** Contestants must demonstrate to the contest chair prior to the contest that the props can be set up and removed in the allotted times. If a contestant is unable to demonstrate this, the props cannot be used during the contest. —*Speech Contest Rulebook, Section 8.*
- See the *Speech Contest Rulebook, Sec. 5C*, for how to proceed if a contestant is not present for the briefing. If no contestant has appeared by the time the person conducting the contest has been introduced, simply omit that contestant from your list, and when announcing the order of speaking, explain that the contestant will not be competing.
- Contestants should take off any pin, badge, or item that indicates the contestant's club, experience, or TM education level. For example, name badges with the club name or past district role, Triple Crown pin(s), DTM, and pins for club/district officer roles should be removed before the contestant takes the stage (or ideally at the briefing). The contestant can have a simple name badge with only his/her name.
- In large rooms/spaces, the contestants often walk a long way to the speaking area. That complicates things when introducing the contestant. To simplify this, in the contestant briefing, the Toastmaster should instruct each contestant to walk to the speaking area prior to his/her introduction, during the minute of silence (except for contestant #1, who can be near the area right away). Also, the contestant and Toastmaster can be on different sides of the speaking area so the contestant doesn't walk past the Toastmaster; instead, they meet in the middle.
- After the briefing, consider enlisting someone to help you get organized for your interviews: arrange, in speaking order, the Contestant Profiles with the appropriate Certificate of Participation. This person could also hand you these items for each contestant before the interview.

During the contest:

- Do not deviate from the introduction protocol nor make any remark about a speech.
- Be sure that the Chief Judge is in the room.

After the contest:

Return **all** Contestant Profiles and Certificates of Eligibility and Originality to the Chair, along with any material (e.g., script) that he/she has given you.

Choosing a Chief Judge

The Chief Judge ensures that your contest follows the rules. The Chief Judge has many tasks to perform at a contest, and must do them correctly, timely, and in order. A good Chief Judge is unbiased, unflappable, and detail oriented.

See *Speech Contest Rulebook*, Sec. 2B, for eligibility requirements. A Judge's Certification of Eligibility and Code of Ethics must be submitted.

In addition, it is recommended that having served as a voting judge at the level of your contest should be a minimum requirement. Note that at the Division and District level, the Chief Judge may not be a member of any club in which a contestant is a member. *Speech Contest Rulebook*, Sec. 5.

For your Fall contest, it's a good idea to choose a Chief Judge who is very experienced, and with whom you are familiar. Throughout the year, observe those you lead for people who might be right for this role. You may wish to choose one of them to be Chief Judge at your Spring contest. If no one inexperienced is ever given a chance, no one will ever become experienced. However, if you do not find someone appropriate, don't hesitate to choose an experienced person again; it's vital that this role be performed correctly.

Experienced or not, you must mentor the Chief Judge for the role.

On the following pages, which you should share with your Chief Judge, the role is described.

The Chief Judge Role

Being asked to be a Chief Judge means that the person asking has a high opinion of your skills. Do your best to live up to that.

Do not accept unless you are **very** sure that you will be available to fulfil your role. Be clear about the date, time, place, and how long the contest is expected to last.

From the outset, you and the Chair should establish the following:

- Exchange contact information in several forms.
- Make sure that the venue selected has a private space to brief judges.
- Establish whether you or the Chair will recruit:
 - Voting judges
 - Ballot counters
 - Sergeants at Arms
 - Timers
- Establish whether you or the Chair will create judges' folders
- Establish whether you or the Chair will print:
 - Judges' Certifications of Eligibility and Code of Ethics
 - Ballots (both sides!)
 - Tiebreaking ballots (both sides!)
 - *Speech Contest Rulebook*
 - Timing sheets (2 for each contest)
 - Counters' Tally Sheets (3 for each contest)
 - Form 1168 Results (1 for each contest)
 - Form 1182 Notification of Winners (1 for each contest)
 - Certificates of Appreciation

There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, so long as both understand who is to do what, and you trust each other. The greater your trust issues, the more you will want to do yourself.

Download, print and read the **current** *Speech Contest Rulebook*.

Maintain frequent contact with the Chair; keep each other apprised on the status of recruiting helpers and preparing materials.

If you are recruiting, begin early. See [The Judges' Role](#).

If you are printing, start early and print extras.

If you are assembling folders, they should contain the following:

Voting judges:

- Judges' Certification of Eligibility and Code of Ethics
- Ballots for each contest being held, printed on both sides. Cut the ballot on the dotted line except for about an inch in the middle. This reduces the noise of tearing off the ballot.

- An envelope for each contest. Some Chief Judges like to write the name of the contest, or the name or a number assigned to a judge, on the outside of each envelope.
- Blank paper for note taking.
- You can put a pen in the folder, or make sure to put a box of pens in the briefing room.
- Folder should be a neutral, inconspicuous color

Tiebreaking Judge:

- Judges' Certification of Eligibility and Code of Ethics
- Tiebreaking Judges' Ballot for each contest being held
- An envelope for each contest. They should be discreetly marked to differentiate them.
- A Certificate of Appreciation.
- Folder should be a neutral, inconspicuous color

Chief Judge's folder:

- Speech contest rulebook
- Chief Judge's briefing script (Toolkit)
- List of judges with contact information
- Extra copies of Judge's Certifications
- Extra ballots
- Extra envelopes
- Results forms, one for each contest
- Forms 1182 for each contest
- Certificates of Appreciation for judges, plus extras for subs
- Pen.

Your other helpers do not need folders, but you may wish to put Counters' Tally Sheets and Timing Sheets in folders to keep them organized. It's helpful if the different types of folders are different colors.

Keep a list of judges, along with their contact information. Notify judges, ballot counters, and the Toastmaster of the time and place of the briefing, and make it clear that you will not summon them; they are expected to appear at the appointed time. Ask timers to report to the timing station 10 minutes before briefings are to start.

On the day of the contest:

- Arrive **early**.
- Bring with you all the forms and folders you have agreed to bring, including your own folder, pens, and a signed Judge's Certification for yourself.
- Check in with the Chair. Verify whether Form 1168 is to be delivered to the Chair or to the Host.
- Locate the briefing room. Put copies of the program there.
- Determine where you will sit during the contest and let the Toastmaster know. It should be easy to get in and out of, and visible to the Toastmaster.
- Choose your Tiebreaking Judge, if you have not already done so. This person's identity is known only to you. Choose someone very experienced, who will not be biased. At an Area or Division contest, another Area or Division Director is a good choice; at a District contest, a Past District Director. Quietly brief this judge, if necessary. At the Division level and above, verify that the

tiebreaking judge is not a member of a club in which any contestant is a member. Remind him/her that **all** contestants must be ranked, and that you will collect the ballot. Get the signed Certification before the contest. Supply a pen if necessary. **The tiebreaking judge does not attend the briefing.**

At the briefing:

You will follow the script, but also keep in mind the following:

- With luck, your timers will arrive first, and you can brief them at the timing station. If not, they can be briefed after the judges, in which case be sure that the Toastmaster knows you're not yet ready to begin.
- Judges are supposed to be anonymous. Bellowing to the assemblage that judges should follow you to the briefing room does not support this. If your judges do not follow your instructions to meet in the briefing room, quietly fetch them.
- Begin the briefing (after introducing yourself) by distributing the Judges' folders. Ask the judges to sign the Judge's Certifications. Remind the judges to read before signing. *You may wish to brief ballot counters while they are doing this.*
- As you collect each Judge's Certification, give that person a Certificate of Appreciation (already printed with judge's name). This will serve as your roll call. Make sure that you have the appropriate number of judges for this contest. See *Speech Contest Rulebook*, Sec. 5A. Memorize faces so you can monitor whether they are in the room at the start of each contest.
- After the ballot counters have been briefed, suggest that while the judges are being briefed, the ballot counters use that time to write contestants' names on the top sections of their tally sheets. This will expedite the ballot counting process.

During the contest:

- Make sure all judges are in the room during the contest. Keep track of them; if one must leave the room, don't let the Toastmaster call the next speaker until the judge returns.
- Listen to the speeches so you will be aware of content in the event of a protest.

After each contest:

- After the last contestant has spoken, wait one minute (time it with your phone) before standing up. Collect the timing sheets.
- When your Tiebreaking Judge is ready, collect that ballot. Stand quietly at the back of the room.
- When your ballot counters have each brought you their assigned ballots, count to be sure you have them all. Announce "Mr./Madam Toastmaster, all ballots have been collected." Proceed to the briefing room.

Ballot Counting:

- Ask ballot counters to open the envelopes, verify that ballots have signatures and printed names, and alert you if there are protests.
- Have one counter read off points each judge gave contestants, while the other records that on the tally sheet. Then have them switch roles and do it again. Ask each counter to verify the others' math.

- When that is complete, check the timing sheet and strike off any contestant disqualified for time.
- If (and only if) there is a tie, open the Tiebreaking ballot yourself and use it to break the tie.
- **Keep the counters' tally sheets, ballots, and timing records until after the contest.**
- Prepare Form 1168, calling attention to any time disqualification, and deliver it promptly to the appropriate person.
- Use the counters' tally sheets to list contestants on Form 1182.

If there is a protest: Refer to *Speech Contest Rulebook*, Sec. 7, and to the Chief Judge's briefing script.

After all contests:

- Pay attention to the announcements of the winners; if it is not correct, interrupt immediately to correct the error.
- After winners are announced, destroy ballots, tally sheets, and timing records. (Take them home to shred.)
- Present Form 1182 with contestant order to the Chair, reminding him/her to complete it with contact information and submit it to the next level of competition.
- Give any unused forms to the Chair so they may be used at the next level.

Choosing Judges

Voting judges may present your greatest staffing challenge.

Club contests: 5 judges who are paid members are required.

Above the club level: Judges must be

- *Paid members for at least 6 months
- *Have completed a minimum of 6 projects in the Competent Communication manual
- Not currently competing elsewhere at any level
- Have no issues of bias or perceived bias

At Area contests:

*There shall be an equal number of voting judges from each club in the area, **or** a minimum of 5 judges.

At Division and District contests:

*There shall be an equal number of voting judges from each area in the Division, **or** a minimum of 7 voting judges. In addition to the above requirements, judges must not be members of any club in which any contestant is a member.

The “equal number” may be difficult to achieve. A possible solution is to recruit judges from other Areas or Divisions.

The fairness of the contest results depends on the quality of the judges. Choose carefully. Good judges are:

- Fair
- Impartial
- Accurate
- Trustworthy
- Knowledgeable about contest rules
- Good listeners.

On the following page, which you should share with your judges, the role is described.

**Speech Contest Rulebook*

The Judge's Role

Being a contest judge is an honor; being asked to serve is a compliment.

You can't brag about it, though. Your role is secret forever.

When you are asked to be a judge:

- Be clear about the date, time, place, and how long the contest is expected to last. If there may be impediments to serving, be clear about that.
- Exchange contact information, in several forms, with the person asking.
- Get judges' training, if available.
- Download ballots for the contests you will be judging, and study the judging criteria.
- As the contest nears, verify all information, including the location and time of briefings. Ask about security and parking.
- Should it become impossible to serve, notify all concerned immediately.

On the day of the contest:

- Arrive **early**.
- Proceed to the briefing room, or let the Chief Judge know you have arrived.
- Listen carefully to the briefing, even if you are experienced; rules change. **Follow all instructions.**
- Take care of any needs so that you will not have to leave the contest room until the break.

During the contest:

- Listen.
- You are permitted to take notes. At a minimum, you may want to write the speech titles on your program as a memory aid.
- Do not begin to score a speech until it is over.
- Some judges fold over the ballot so they don't see the scores they have given the previous speaker. This is noisy. Another solution is to block the previous scores with your envelope.
- At the end of the contest, you may believe you know the winner, only to find that you haven't given that contestant the highest score. Review to determine if you scored incorrectly or if you have some bias.
- Sign your ballot and print your name.
- You **must** choose a first, second and third place winner, unless there are fewer than 3 contestants.
- Take the top portion of your ballot home with you and dispose of it there.
- Choose the best speech.

Care and Feeding of Contestants

We don't choose them, but they require our attention.

If possible, you will want to attend the contests at the level below you. Bring your contest flyers to put on the registration table.

After the contest, meet with the winners, congratulate them, give them a flyer, and remind them that if they can't attend your contest, the second-place winner should compete. Be sure they have your contact information.

The *Speech Contest Rulebook*, Contest Chair's Checklist, #9, says we must do this:

“Notify the contestants of the time and place of the contest and pre-contest briefing two to six 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)”

Two to six weeks may not be possible. Provide the contestant with the following page, and follow the contact timeline in the [Contest Duty Roster](#).

One way of keeping track of the arrival of your contestants on contest day is to make, ahead of time, name tags with only their names. Put these on the registration table for them to put on as they arrive. (This may prevent them from wearing other identification.) When the name tags are gone, your contestants roster is complete.

Be gentle with contestants. They're stressed.

The Contestant's Role

Congratulations! Everyone shares your excitement. You do have a few responsibilities.

Before the contest

- Be clear about the date, time, place, and how long the contest is expected to last.
- Gather information about the site, including parking and security.
- Complete your Contestant Profile with all information requested.
- Exchange contact information with the contest Chair.
- If you cannot make the contest, notify the Chair as soon as possible so that the second-place winner can take your place.
- Pay your dues, and be sure that your club has paid dues. This is a requirement to compete.

On the day of the contest:

- Arrive **early**.
- Bring with you:
 - Props
 - Contestant Profile
 - Certificate of Eligibility and Originality
 - Bottle of water.
- When you arrive, tell the registrar that you are a contestant; then check in with the chair, then find the Toastmaster.
- Listen carefully to the briefing. **Follow all instructions.**
- Be aware that if you go over or under time, you will be disqualified, even if you are the only contestant; watch the timing lights.

After the contest:

- Win or lose, be sure that the Chair has your contact information.

Refreshments and Fees

You are not obliged to serve anything at a contest, but people have come to expect this, and may become testy if it's not done.

You can't claim the cost of refreshments on your expense report, but you shouldn't have to cover the cost yourself. There are several options:

- If your contest is at a restaurant, attendees can order and pay for their own food before or after the contest, or during the break.
- Have a potluck. This is a tradition in some locations.
- Ask for donations, keeping in mind that you may not recoup your costs.
- Charge a fee.

If you charge a fee, you will have to decide early on what to serve, so you can determine the fee and put this information on your flyer. Surprise fees don't go over well.

If you charge a fee, your registrar will have to collect it. Provide him/her with change. Tell your registrar that they **must not charge the contestants**. Some locations have a tradition of not charging various dignitaries, but this is now largely regarded as undemocratic, as well as a hassle for the registrar.

What to serve? This varies wildly. At a bare minimum, **water**; speaking is thirsty work. Also keep in mind:

- Avoid messy food. Everyone at the contest wants to look presentable.
- Avoid noisy food. Some will still be eating during the speeches, and opening soda cans or eating chips can be disruptive.
- Whatever you serve will have to be cleaned up later.
- You may be able to delegate this responsibility. Someone who wants to help, but not be the chair, may be willing to take over refreshments.

The Program

Decide very early who will create the program, who will print it, and who will bring it to the contest.

Create a base program early and fill in information as you learn it. For example, enter the date, time, and place as soon as that is decided. Fill in your helpers as they are recruited, and your contestants as you learn who they are. You may be able to put off printing until the last minute, so that the information will be current, but creating the whole program at the last minute rarely works well.

See [“How Long Will My Contest Take?”](#)

Create a program with times listed for every entry and print this off for the Chair, Host, Chief Judge, and Toastmaster. Then delete all times except Registration, Briefings, and Contest Begins, and use this version for everyone else.

The Speech Contest Toolkit has an excellent example of a contest program, but if you adapt it for your use, be sure to change **all** the relevant information.

Include thanks to a sponsor and/or host club.

The following should **never** be in the program:

- Names of voting judges or tiebreaking judge
- Education status or club of contestants
- Name, nor speech title, of a test speaker
- Contestant speech titles.
- If you’re not doing the Pledge of Allegiance, don’t put it in the program.

Trophies and Certificates

Trophies:

Above the club level, the District will purchase all trophies. Be clear about when and where you will collect these.

Clubs may buy trophies from club funds if the club votes to do so.

You will receive first, second, and third place trophies, but it may be that not all of these are presented at the contest. See *Speech Contest Rulebook*, Sec. 5M.

Example: 5 or more contestants: 3rd, 2nd, and 1st place winners announced (in that order.)

 4 or fewer contestants: 2nd and 1st place announced

Winners who are not announced may be given their trophies in private.

Certificates:

Winners' Certificates are included in all Speech Contest Kits and should be printed on card stock.

Certificates of Participation are also included and it's a nice touch to print these on card stock as well.

Throughout the Guide we have mentioned Certificates of Appreciation. Consider emailing these to helpers.

Setting Up the Room

No matter how careful the plans, this always seems chaotic. Don't panic.

- Arrive early, and bring help if possible.
- Survey the room for obvious disasters.
- Set up the registration table with programs, registration sheets, pens, flyers for next level contest, name tags if using, cash box and change. If setup runs late, registration can proceed while you finish.
- Put up directional signs, if needed.
- Room temperature okay? Lights work? Sound system present and working?
- Enough chairs? Arrange them as desired.
- Briefing/sequester room unlocked and lights working? Put a sign on the door.
- Set up the timing station where it can be seen by the speakers but not the audience. Test the lights and the stopwatches.
- Set up the refreshment area
- Display the trophies, omitting any that will not be used (see [Trophies and Certificates.](#))
- Have a table available for candidates for Toastmasters offices. They will set up the display of campaign materials **themselves**.
- Check off list of items to be brought from the [Contest Duty Roster](#)

Recognizing Dignitaries/Presenting Awards

Usually the Host does this, but the Chair can do it if that is preferred. Both should be clear about who will do this.

Dignitaries

Recognize dignitaries at the end of the contest, just before or just after announcements; this ensures that you will know about latecomers. After the contest is underway, the Registrar will bring you the sign-in sheets. You will use this to determine whom to recognize. The following, from the D6 Yearbook, is the list of dignitaries recognized, *in the order they should be recognized*:

These guidelines list the order for dignitaries at Toastmasters events. All dignitaries should be introduced or recognized at all District events and Division and Area contests.

- Visiting Non-Toastmasters Dignitaries (Example: City Mayor)
- Current International Officers (including Immediate Past President and Executive Director)
- Current International Directors (International Director from Region 4 first, followed by other Regions)
- Current District Officers (District Director, Program Quality Director, Club Growth Director, Immediate Past District Director, Public Relations Manager, Administration Manager, Finance Manager)
- Current Division Directors (alphabetically by Division)
- Current Area Directors (numerically by Area)
- Current District Officers from other Districts (numerically by District and beginning with the highest-ranking officer first)
- Past International Presidents (start with most recent; Immediate Past International is a **current** officer)
- Past International Directors (start with most recent, Immediate past is **not a current officer**)
- Past District Directors (start with most recent, Immediate Past District Director is a **current** officer)
- Past District Directors of other Districts (alphabetically by District)
- Introduce current officers before past officers (e.g. Area Directors before Past International Directors)

NOTE: If for some reason dignitaries are introduced before the contest, do not include anyone who is competing,

To be consistent, recognize **only** those listed above. It's a good idea to make a list for yourself, so you don't miss anyone in the announcement. Consult the District Directory to make sure of titles and to be sure you get the order right. Do not recognize anyone who is not present. Do not change history; if someone was a Past District Governor, say that; don't change them into a Director.

If the list is long and/or time is short, do this before announcing: ask each dignitary to stand as you speak their name and remain standing. Ask the audience to hold their applause to the end, then applaud all who are standing.

Awards

When ballot counting is completed, the Chief Judge will bring you Form 1168 listing the winners. **Read this carefully**, paying particular attention to time disqualifications. With luck, you will have time to enter the winners' names on the Certificates. If not, do so after adjournment.

Awards should be presented after announcements, to prevent an early exodus.

You will present awards with the Director to whom you report; if you are a Division Director, with the Trio. Before presenting, announce that there were disqualifications for time, if that is the case. Do not announce who was disqualified. (Later, you may tell that person in private if you wish.)

Try to work out in advance who will present the certificate and the trophy. Use your left hand to give the certificate or trophy; hopefully, the recipient will take it with his left hand, leaving your right hands free to shake (the "grip and grab"). If done right, this looks smooth and presents a good photo opportunity.

If you are short on time and/or patience, announce in advance that photos will be taken after the contest is adjourned, and that winners can return immediately to their seats after receiving their awards.

After awards are presented, congratulate winners, thank everyone for coming, and announce that the contest is adjourned.

Don't go anywhere, you have more to do.

After the Contest

- Be sure that the next level Director has Form 1182, completed, all Contestant Profiles, and all Certificates of Eligibility and Originality
- Check in with winners to be sure that they know when and where the next level contest is, and that they can be there; if not, immediately notify the next level Director.
- Pass along any unused forms
- Take down and clean up.
- Clear security
- Go somewhere else.

Contest Duty Roster

Task	Assigned to	Target date	Date completed	Notes
8 – 12 weeks before contest				
Study Speech Contest Rulebook				
Select contest date				
Select and meet with Chair, if any				
Research venue				
Decide on refreshments and budget				
8 weeks before contest				
Select & reserve venue				
Create base program (Toolkit)				
Inform stakeholders of date & venue				
Post date & venue on calendar				
Arrange for audio support				
Create flyer				
Post flyer on website				
Recruit Toastmaster, give Toastmaster Role chapter				
Recruit Chief Judge, give Chief Judge Role chapter				

Print flyer				
Distribute flyer at lower level contests				
2 – 4 weeks before contest				
Download & print contest kits for both contests—Multiple copies as needed				
Print out Chief Judge and Toastmaster scripts; email to each				
Add contestants' names to program as they become known.				
Recruit Test Speaker, if Evaluation contest				
Recruit voting judges				
Recruit ballot counters, timers, & S@As				
Create Table Topics question, if TT contest				
Continue to add to program				
Collect trophies from the District				
Arrange for lectern				
Assemble folders for judges and timers (see Chief Judge Role)				
Confirm venue reservation				
Print certificates of appreciation (Toolkit)				
Print registration sheets (Toolkit)				
Notify contestants, send information packet				

1 week before contest				
Mentoring session with Chief Judge				
Mentoring session with Toastmaster				
Order food/finalize menu				
Email contestants with reminder, parking/security info, briefing time & place				
Email voting judges with reminder, parking/security info, briefing time & place				
Make signs: directions and contest in progress, do not enter, sequester room				
Email timers, ballot counters, Sgts.@ Arms, & registrars with reminder, parking/security info, briefing time & place				
Confirm venue reservation again				
1 – 2 Days before contest				
Use Eligibility Checker on contestants & judges; address any issues				
Finalize and print program				
Buy and/or prepare refreshments and serving items				
Create master list of all contest officials				

Contest Day				
BRING:				
• Flag (if pledging)				
• Refreshments & serving items				
• timing lights, cards, stopwatches, extension cord				
• trophies				
• Winners' certificates				
• Judges' folders				
• Forms for ballot counters & timers				
• lectern				
• Chief Judge folder (see Chief Judge Role)				
• Toastmaster's folder				
• programs				
• signs				
• registration sheets (Toolkit)				
• District Directory				
• Cash box/change				
• Pens				
• Name tags				
• Master list				
• Printed copy of Duty Roster				
Set up registration table				

Notes