

Table Topic Master

Table Topics is the impromptu speaking session of the meeting, also known as “thinking on your feet” or “speaking off the cuff”. The Table Topics master prepares questions using the meeting theme, gives the question to the meeting then chooses someone from the audience to respond.

Your primary goal as Table Topics Master is to give speaking opportunities to those with no assigned duties, or those meeting roles with a minimal speaking component such as timer, or chairman. Before the meeting, ask the visitors if they would like to participate, but involve them towards the end after they have seen a few other members in action. Avoid asking the speakers and evaluators as they will be speaking later in the meeting.

How to prepare a list of participants. Follow this quick and easy method of preparing a list of Table Topics participants:

- Write the names of everyone present, including visitors.
- Cross off the speakers and evaluators.
- Cross off the General Evaluator and Toastmaster.
- Write the numbers 1 to 10 against the names in the order of more experienced members to newer members and visitors.

Introducing the session. Explain the purpose of Tables Topics (mainly for the benefit of guests) and give a **brief** introduction to the topic. Keep your introduction as short as possible, as we want to hear from participants, not you!

Explain the timing of one minute per speaker. Ask the timer to give a green light on 40 seconds, yellow on 50 seconds and red light at 60 seconds. A brief press of the buzzer can be given 15 seconds after the minute, then repeat the buzzer at 10 second intervals to get the speaker to stop and sit down.

How to formulate a question. Keep the question fairly brief to allow the speaker to use imagination and creativity for in interesting response. For example, using the theme of “Bastille Day”, some typical questions could be “*What do you think is France’s greatest export*”, or “*French and German are often taught in High School. Do you think it is useful to continue teaching French?*”

How to ask a person to respond. Give the question first, then ask the person to respond. As the person moves to the speaking area, shake their hand and welcome them. Step aside to let the person speak. After they finish, lead the applause then move back to the speaking area to introduce the next speaker or wrap up the session. By leaving the person's name to the end, every member listens carefully and thinks how they would respond if asked.

Cross the names off your list after you call up the speakers as it is easy to lose track of who has already spoken.

Voting for the favorite topic. Our club has a fun tradition of asking everyone present to vote on their favourite table topic. The name of the favourite speaker is written on a small piece of paper, folded up and passed to the chairman who counts the votes. The Yak-Yak award is then announced by the Chairman at the end of the meeting.