

The Toastmaster Role

Prior To The Meeting

As “The Toastmaster” you drive pre-meeting organization and act as the “Master of Ceremonies” (MC) during the night of meeting. In many Toastmaster chapters the VP of Education assigns each of the scheduled roles. The method used at Westside differs in that our scheduling system is voluntary. There are tradeoffs going this way.

With voluntary signups for roles, individuals know their schedule and availability. There should be fewer people dropping out as one’s personal schedule is known and aligned with the club schedule. The challenge is more with the sudden and unexpected changes in a given person’s schedule.

It’s the Toastmaster’s show; he/she is the one responsible for nailing down the meeting roles. Check out the club’s online schedule to see how the meeting is shaping up. The Toastmaster can send out an email to all the club members via our Westside Google Group, using westside-tm@googlegroups.com as the email recipient, in encouraging people to sign up along with having prepared speakers pass along speech specifics; timing, title, and the Pathways project type as applicable.

Once the scheduled roles are reasonably solid try to generate a meeting agenda if you’re able. Office productivity software found in Microsoft, Apple, or Google environments will do this well enough. Meeting agenda templates to use as a starting point can readily be found online.

An agenda can be posted online as a Google Doc, one good option by going to <https://docs.google.com>. Include the agenda link when sending out organizing email to club members. If using this approach, make sure to set the agenda as a shareable document so others can view it. To improve upon this, print out agendas and bring those to the meeting. One challenge here is fewer people have printers these days.

Another consideration though not a necessity is developing a theme which can generate a more cohesive feel to the meeting. Often the Table Topics Master will try to align the spin of their impromptu questioning for members to the general thrust of a meeting theme.

The General Evaluator is responsible for making Evaluator assignments, meaning who evaluates whom for the prepared speakers.

Leading On Meeting Nights

On the evening of the meeting it is recommended showing up somewhat earlier, particularly if all the roles have not been filled. Distribute printed agendas around the room if you have them. There may be some coordination and people trying out roles for the first time may have questions.

Last minute surprises do happen often enough – adapting to those circumstances is regular feature for the Toastmaster of the meeting. Westside Toastmaster meetings now have a hybrid format which adds some complexity. The Timers role is more challenging, ensuring both in-person and virtual participants understand where they are along the timing curves. With our meeting space, lights can be turned off in the front of the room so that Zoom online participants can be more easily seen in the image projected up on the wall.

It is also a good idea for the meeting Toastmaster to sit closer to the front of the room so they can more quickly move into the speaking space as control is passed and people are introduced.

After the meeting is opened by the Sergeant-At-Arms (SAA), the club President will usually ask guests to introduce themselves and deal with any club business or announcements. Then the President will introduce you as the Toastmaster.

On the earlier end of your in-meeting role you'll help provide context for how meetings work and flow to any guests and newish members either through your own explanation or by introducing meeting “functionaries”, including the Timer, Grammarian, or Filler Word (Ah/Um) Counter.

You may have a topical theme that underlies the meeting. That can be expanded upon before, amidst, or after the other explanation on meeting flow from yourself and the functionaries.

After these preliminaries the meeting progresses into Table Topics where you will introduce the Table Topics Master to conduct that session. Depending on the lineup of prepared speakers the length of this portion of the meeting can be adjusted to keep the evening's proceedings ending on time. One or two speakers where the speeches are not lengthy, then the Table Topics session can run longer. After the Table Topics session has concluded we normally have a meeting break.

As Toastmaster you determine the length of the break. Then we start the prepared speaking part of the program. For prepared speeches be sure to know which speech projects speakers are targeting, their title, and applicable timing constraints.

Introduce each speaker in turn. Once the speaker has finished their presentation the Toastmaster would call upon members to provide written feedback on the evaluation forms that have been distributed around the room.

At the conclusion of the prepared speaking program the Toastmaster calls on the Timer for their report and subsequently asks for members to vote for "Best Speaker" among the qualifying speakers (those that finished within the time limits). The SAA will come around the room and collect the votes.

The next section of the meeting, Evaluations, would then ensue. The Toastmaster, would introduce the General Evaluator who is in charge of that portion of the meeting. The General Evaluator introduces each of the Evaluators assigned to prepared speakers in succession. Then the General Evaluator asks for the Grammarian's and Filler Word (Ah/Um) Counter's reports, followed by the delivery of their own overall meeting evaluation. Control then is returned back to the Toastmaster.

At this point the Toastmaster will be presenting award ribbons for Best Table Topics, Best Evaluator, and Best Speaker. The Sergeant-At-Arms will have tallied the votes for the three major sections of the meeting and those results will be communicated to you as Toastmaster. After passing out the award ribbons, make any closing comments and return meeting control to the club's President.