



# EFFECTIVE CLUB SERVICE AND CLUB VISITS

A Guide for Area Governors



**WHERE LEADERS  
ARE MADE**

# TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL



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A Guide for Area Governors

### TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL

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# AREA GOVERNOR GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE CLUB SERVICE AND CLUB VISITS

Your primary responsibility as an area governor is to ensure that every club in your area is a quality club with members benefitting from the Toastmasters International program. This guide is designed to help you be a successful area governor.

Every club should be achieving the club mission by “. . . providing a mutually supportive and positive learning environment in which every member has the opportunity to develop communication and leadership skills.” Clubs achieving the club mission have two things in common: great educational programming and strong membership. Successful clubs move members through the Toastmasters International program. For example, successful clubs encourage each new member to earn a CC and proceed on to Advanced Communicator Bronze, Silver, and Gold awards.

Successful clubs attract new members by actively pursuing new members, inviting people to attend meetings, and keeping existing members learning and growing through the Toastmasters program. When new members join clubs and current members stay in clubs, more people obtain the benefits of Toastmasters. As an area governor, you are a service leader. Your job is to help clubs recruit and retain members and help clubs deliver quality programming.

Area-club assistance is a powerful service tool for ensuring quality clubs. In particular, area club visits are an opportunity for you to better understand challenges and successes. The area-club visit is an opportunity to provide valuable feedback and assistance to a club so that every member can learn, grow, and achieve.

Area governors are required to visit each club in their area a minimum of two times during the year and complete an Area Report of Club Visit. A copy of the form is included at the end of this booklet or you can submit it online at [www.toastmasters.org/members](http://www.toastmasters.org/members). Area visits must be completed by October 31st (1st visit) and April 30th (2nd visit) and the corresponding report must be received at WHQ by November 30th (1st visit) and May 31st (2nd visit). It is important to develop an ongoing relationship with your area clubs. You are urged to visit area clubs and offer assistance as often as possible.

## AREA-CLUB VISIT SERVICE STANDARDS

Area-club visits can positively effect a club's health. However, just like a good speech, a good area-club visit requires preparation, a great delivery, and a few finishing touches. Here are several standards that should be part of every area-club visits.

### PREPARING FOR THE VISIT:

- ▶ **Contact the club president at least one month before you plan to visit.** Remember, as area governor, you are there to serve the club.
- ▶ **Establish and build rapport by asking about the president's experiences as a Toastmaster, the club's history, and his or her involvement with the district.** Knowing the club's history will help you understand gaps and enable you to provide meaningful assistance. The president will appreciate your interest and be more likely to communicate openly with you in the future.

- ▶ **Request time on the program to explain the purpose of the visit** (i.e., offering support, helping meet club needs, building membership, promoting educational programs, sharing district goals, etc.).
- ▶ **Send the club president a copy of the Area Report of Club Visit Form.** This will allow club officers to understand what you will be talking to them about during your visit.
- ▶ **Ask if the meeting will feature award presentations, new member installation ceremonies, or any other special events.** These activities may affect the content of your own presentation, and you may be asked to participate.
- ▶ **Find out if the club has submitted its semiannual report yet.** If not, offer assistance.
- ▶ **Familiarize yourself with the names of club officers.** Club officers are volunteers and need to be appreciated as individuals.
- ▶ **Ask if the club needs help or has any concerns.** Prepare to address these during your visit. If you don't know how to help a club, contact your division or district governor.
- ▶ **Ask the club president to schedule some time to speak with you after the meeting.** This will give you a chance to speak with club officers and complete the Area Report of Club Visit Form.

## THE VISIT:

Before the meeting:

- ▶ **Dress appropriately.** Set a standard of professionalism.
- ▶ **Arrive early; mix and mingle with members.** Arriving punctually is a minimum requirement. Arriving 10 minutes early is ideal.
- ▶ **Wear your name badge and Toastmasters pin.** Wearing your badge and pin shows your dedication to Toastmasters and it also reminds members that a name badge makes them much more accessible to guests.

During the meeting:

- ▶ **Stick to your allotted time on the meeting schedule.** Be concise and remember that your visit is only one part of the agenda.
- ▶ **Briefly review the club mission.** This ensures that everyone is familiar with the club's purpose.
- ▶ **Motivate and educate with information about what it takes to be a successful club.** Explain and promote the Distinguished Club Program.
- ▶ **If you give a speech, make it a manual speech.** Set an example. Success in Toastmasters comes through giving manual speeches and receiving effective oral and written evaluations.
- ▶ **Listen actively.** Communication involves more than just talking.
- ▶ **Using the Area Report of Club Visit Form as a guide, tactfully evaluate the club.** Look at areas such as attendance, program quality, treatment of guests, guest and new member orientation, etc. This will help you give feedback to the club later on.
- ▶ **Look for future leaders.** Look for and encourage members who may have the potential to be future district leaders.

- ▶ **Publicize programs** (e.g., training sessions, the Distinguished Club Program, contests, and membership building).

After the meeting:

- ▶ **Meet with the executive committee to address any club needs and review and complete the Area Report of Club Visit Form.** If time can't be scheduled after the meeting, set up a time when you can telephone the club president and address any club needs. Remember, club cultures vary and successful clubs have many different approaches to the Toastmasters program. Maintain an attitude of service and respect when interacting with club officers.
- ▶ **Review Club Success Plan and performance in the Distinguished Club Program.** If the club is not pursuing Distinguished Club Program goals, discuss the program's importance. Bring a copy of the program (Item 1111) with you so officers can see that program goals are simple and achievable and that pursuing them will improve club quality.
- ▶ **Let the club president know they will receive a copy of the Area Report of Club Visit Form once submitted online.**

## AFTER THE VISIT:

- ▶ **Submit the Area Report of Club Visit Form online.** Go to [www.toastmasters.org/members](http://www.toastmasters.org/members). It will automatically be sent via email to the district governor, lieutenant governors, division governor and club president.
- ▶ **Follow up on any questions, needs, or concerns expressed by the club.** Lay the groundwork for future communications and club success.
- ▶ **Write a thank-you note to the club.** A small gesture can go a long way.
- ▶ **Keep in touch with the club president monthly.** Be available to respond to any questions or concerns from club members throughout your term.

## GOOD RELATIONSHIPS GO BEYOND THE CLUB VISIT

Building good relationships with clubs takes more than just two visits. You need to keep in touch with the clubs in your area at least once per month. Here are just a few ideas and activities which can help you stay connected and provide clubs with ongoing quality service:

- ▶ **Telephone calls and email.** What's the easiest and most immediate way to keep in touch with clubs? From time to time, simply pick up the phone and call each club's president or keep in contact via email. Doing so adds a personal touch to your communications, goes a long way toward breaking down barriers, and is great for building rapport. Be sure to encourage club leaders to always feel free to contact you!
- ▶ **Additional visits.** Clubs are complimented when the area governor takes the time to visit beyond the required two annual visits. If possible, make an extra visit early in the year at a time when the club can benefit most.

- ▶ **Area communications.** Although it takes extra time and planning, a letter, newsletter, or email is an effective way to communicate upcoming events and deadlines.
- ▶ **Club officer installations.** Clubs appreciate area governors who attend officer installations and, if requested, officiate at these events.

## USING THE AREA CLUB VISIT FORM TO SERVE CLUB NEEDS

The Area Report of Club Visit Form is a vital part of a successful club visit. It provides you with an easy-to-follow, comprehensive, one-page guideline for tactfully evaluating each club and its members. It's important for you to become familiar with the form before visiting your clubs.

Included at the end of this booklet is the Area Report of Club Visit Form, also available online at [www.toastmasters.org/members](http://www.toastmasters.org/members). It is divided into four major areas: 1) Membership Growth; 2) Educational Program Excellence/Standards; 3) Club Excellence Standards; and 4) Toward the Future. Let's briefly review each of the four sections.

### I. MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

The information gathered in this section includes:

#### **Is the Club at charter strength?**

At first glance, a club with fewer than 20 active members may appear healthy. Only seven or eight people are present – still, they all seem to be performing their roles with efficiency and enthusiasm. Sooner or later, however, these members are likely to feel overburdened. Meetings that feature the same people over and over again will also tend to become stale. Also, speakers all want a larger audience. In order to keep meetings vital and interesting and avoid member burnout, clubs should always work toward maintaining 20 or more members.

**What you can do:** When visiting a club with fewer than 20 members present, ask the officers about membership and determine some of the reasons for low membership. Emphasize the importance of increasing their numbers. Recommend club building strategies such as presentation of the survey program, Moments of Truth (Item 290), which asks members to consider six different aspects of club climate that can encourage – or discourage – membership. Other strategies might include increased publicity and membership drives.

**List your ideas:**

**Club membership programs/new member recruitment/goals.**

Membership is not just a problem for small clubs. Even the strongest clubs experience some attrition. All clubs need to recruit and retain members. By implementing membership programs and actively recruiting new members, declines in membership can be avoided.

**What you can do:** After the meeting, ask the president if the club has an active membership campaign. If not, recommend publications such as:

- A Simple Membership Building Program (Item 1621), and
- Membership Building 101: Your Club's Pattern for Success (Item 1622), both of which may be obtained free of charge by contacting World Headquarters.

**List your ideas:**

**Membership goals.**

A club operating at less than charter strength needs to work toward a goal of 20 or more members. Clubs reaching that goal should work to maintain their numbers.

**What you can do:** Determine what the club's goals are for each month and for June 30. Remember, clubs must have a net gain of 5 members or 20 paid members by June 30 to qualify for the Distinguished Club Program.

**List your ideas:**

**Will the club conduct a Speechcraft this year?**

Speechcraft brings Toastmasters training to the community and is a great membership building tool. It can strengthen club membership, provide additional learning opportunities for members, and help promote an awareness of Toastmasters to nonmembers.

**What you can do?** If the club expresses interest or needs help, offer to assist the club officers and presenters in setting up a Speechcraft Program. When interviewing club leaders regarding these goals, ask what the club will do and how you can help the club achieve its membership goals. Each club needs to know that the district expects them to set attainable goals that will encourage their members to achieve and excel!

Also, don't forget that the Successful Club Series modules, Finding New Members for Your Club (Item 291) and Closing the Sale (Item 293) can help encourage membership growth.

**List your ideas:**

## II. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM EXCELLENCE/STANDARDS

Achievements in the basic and advanced communication and leadership manuals are fundamental to the Toastmasters program. Through these achievements, members are able to measure their progress and track their success. While reviewing the Area Report of Club Visit Form, be sure to ask the vice president education or other club leaders:

**Which members will commit to CC, AC, CL, AL, and DTM achievement during the year?**

This part of the form has special significance since it can help you and other district officers develop a follow-up list that will help measure the success of the district. CCs, ACs, CLs, ALs, and DTMs are also a measure of the club's success in helping members develop communication and leadership skills.

**What can you do:** Write down member names and projected dates for earning the awards. Call the club president to provide follow-up and encouragement!

**List your ideas:**

**Will the club be conducting one of the following from the Successful Club Series: Moments of Truth (Item 290), Finding New Members for Your Club (Item 291), Evaluate to Motivate (Item 292), Mentoring (Item 296)?** These can be great tools for helping clubs succeed.

**What you can do:** Bring copies of these valuable modules with you to the club visit. Explain that the modules benefit the club and can help make the club successful. Also, the presenter of the module gets credit toward a Competent Leader award or Advanced Toastmaster Silver award.

Suggest that the club obtain these modules by ordering these and other materials online at [www.toastmasters.org/shop](http://www.toastmasters.org/shop).

**List your ideas:**

**Are all projects from the Competent Communication, Advanced Communication or Competent Leader Manuals?**

Every manual project helps members develop specific skills needed to become better speakers and leaders, so it is important that all members work within manual guidelines.

**What can you do:** If some members are not using the manuals, discuss the benefits of gradually building speaking and leadership skills when working within the framework of the manuals. These manuals provide a structured learning experience and encourage effective evaluation.

**List your ideas:**

### **Will the club conduct modules from Toastmasters International's Successful Club Series?**

These modules are great educational tools for club members and can help improve club quality. During the year, a club should conduct each of the following Successful Club Series Modules: Moments of Truth (Item 290), Finding New Members For Your Club (Item 291), Evaluate to Motivate (Item 292), Closing the Sale (Item 293), Keeping the Commitment (Item 297), Mentoring (Item 296), Going Beyond Our Club (Item 298), and How to be a Distinguished Club (Item 299). Clubs that deliver these modules are focused on excellent club programming and extending the benefits of Toastmasters to others.

**What can you do:** If the club has not conducted these modules or is unaware of them, get the commitment of the club officers to order these modules from World Headquarters and get the dates when the club will be conducting the modules. Also, remind club officers that presenting two modules in the Successful Club series fulfills one of the requirements for the Competent Leader Award. So they can present the modules, benefit the club, and help themselves achieve recognition as a club leader. Order these and other Successful Club Series modules directly from World Headquarters or online at [www.toastmasters.org/shop](http://www.toastmasters.org/shop).

**List your ideas:**

## **III. CLUB EXCELLENCE STANDARDS**

The quality of a club's environment can be one of the most important aspects contributing to its growth. Determine whether your clubs are meeting the standards they need to be successful. Delivery of the Toastmasters educational program can vary with each club's culture and it's important to respect the different ways clubs can successfully deliver the benefits of Toastmasters.

### **Club Meeting**

#### **Was the meeting well-organized, productive, and run on time?**

Other indicators of a good meeting include printed meeting agendas at every seat, well-planned speeches, constructive evaluations, and a Table Topics session that gives priority to those not scheduled for major meeting roles.

**What you can do:** If the club is not running its meetings on time, ask the officers about it. Depending on the causes:

- Suggest that an officer present a speech on the benefits of running a meeting on schedule.

Most clubs maintain strict policies of time management. Once members understand these policies and realize that meetings need to begin and end on time, they are more likely to comply eagerly.

**List your ideas:**

**Were guests made to feel welcome, given information, and asked to join?**

When a visitor first walks into the meeting site, it's important that the sergeant at arms and other members greet the guest, ask him or her to sign the club's guest book, and give the guest a name badge. During the course of the meeting the guest should be introduced. Once the meeting is over, the vice president membership should be ready to discuss the benefits of Toastmasters and help the guest fill out an application, if the guest decides to join. Clubs should invite every guest to apply for membership.

**What you can do:** If club members seem awkward in the presence of guests, recommend that the club use guest materials and set aside time in the agenda for guest recognition. All members must make it a priority to welcome guests.

**List your ideas:**

**Recognition**

**Does the club use the Distinguished Club Program/Club Success Plan? Are the club Officers committed to achieving Distinguished, Select Distinguished, or President's Distinguished Club?**

Club officers need to know that both the Distinguished Club Program and the Club Success Plan are powerful tools for measuring a club's success and identifying areas for improvement. The Distinguished Club Program promotes achievement in those areas most critical to a club's success. The Club Success Plan helps clubs establish goals, plans, and strategies that clubs can use to achieve recognition.

**What you can do:** Ask to see the Club's Success Plan. If it doesn't have one, review the Distinguished Club Program/Club Success Plan (Item 1111) and its benefits, then offer to help the officers complete a Club Success Plan. The plan is available online at [www.toastmasters.org/members](http://www.toastmasters.org/members).

**List your ideas:**

**Does the club immediately submit educational applications to World Headquarters? Does it quickly recognize member achievement? Does the club use the Member Progress Chart?**

Recognition of member achievement is critical to overall club quality and success. When a member completes the requirements for a CC, AC, or other educational or leadership award, the application must be sent to World Headquarters immediately. This ensures proper member recognition and motivates continued achievement by the member and other club members.

**What you can do:** Ask the club president and the vice president education about the Member Progress Charts and ask how long it takes the vice president education to submit educational award applications to World Headquarters. Stress the importance of promptly recognizing member progress and achievement. Encourage the club to formally recognize those who receive their CC, AC, etc. One option is for the club to present each member with a badge or pin from World Headquarters, noting their new educational achievement.

**List your ideas:**

### **New Members**

**Does the club orient new members within two weeks, explain the Toastmasters International recognition system/programs, and immediately assign mentors to new members?**

New members need to be oriented about the club and the Toastmasters International educational program so new member needs can be determined. Also, assigning a mentor to a new member helps ensure that the individual is successful from the start.

**What you can do:** Ask if the club orients new members using the Toastmasters International New Member Orientation Kit (Item 1162). If not, the club should order the kit from World Headquarters and use the materials in the kit with every member who joins. Also, each new member receives a note in the New Member Kit, directing him or her to ask for a mentor. Check with the club and determine how they assign mentors. If they do not assign mentors, encourage the club to deliver the Successful Club Series module, Mentoring (Item 296).

**List your ideas:**

**Does the club formally vote in and induct new members?** The Club Constitution requires clubs to vote in new members. Voting in and inducting new members is a great way to welcome new members into the Toastmasters program. Many clubs do not vote in members, allowing a person to become a member as soon as he or she signs the membership application form. Voting in members protects the club. The vast majority of people who complete a membership application are readily voted into membership and welcomed. However, from time to time, a person will ask to join who has been a disruptive visitor or who may cause other problems within the club. Clubs are private associations. A club has the right to determine its membership as long as it does not discriminate based on age (exception: people under age 18 are prohibited from joining a Toastmasters club), race, color, creed, gender, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, or physical or mental disability (so long as the individual, through his or her own effort, is able to participate in the program). By voting in members, a club formally recognizes the value of a new member while protecting the interests of the club.

**What you can do:** If a club is not voting in members, encourage the club officers to read the Club Constitution available at [www.toastmasters.org/members](http://www.toastmasters.org/members). Explain how voting in and formally inducting new members can make new Toastmasters feel special and welcome and protect the club.

**List your ideas:**

## Club Officers

### **Do club officers attend club officer training and understand their roles and responsibilities?**

Trained club officers who understand their roles and responsibilities are essential. When officers don't understand their jobs and don't attend training, they lack the tools and resources to effectively help clubs. Get club officer to commit to training. Their clubs will be better for it.

**What you can do:** First and foremost, encourage each club officer to attend club officer training. It takes only a few hours to attend, but can make a tremendous difference in the success of each club. Make sure each club officer receives his or her copy of the club officer manuals sent to each club president in May. World Headquarters produces a manual for the president, vice president education, vice president membership, vice president public relations, secretary, treasurer and sergeant at arms, all of which are available online at [www.toastmasters.org/members](http://www.toastmasters.org/members).

### **List your ideas:**

**Does the club submit dues renewals on time?** Submitting dues promptly to World Headquarters ensures that members keep receiving the Toastmaster magazine and other benefits of membership in our organization. Submitting dues on time is also one of the goals clubs need to achieve in order to receive Distinguished Club Program recognition and impacts the Distinguished Area Program goals. Refer to the respective programs online at [www.toastmasters.org/members](http://www.toastmasters.org/members) for more details. When a club does not submit dues on time, it can be an indicator of club challenges.

**What can you do:** During your visits or contacts in September and in March, determine if clubs are in the process of collecting/submitting dues. If not, encourage the club president to start the process. Offer to help the club if there is confusion about submitting the report form, membership list, and dues payment. Encourage clubs to submit dues as early as possible so these are received at World Headquarters by the deadline dates.

### **List your ideas:**

**Does the club submit new member applications promptly?** To get off to a fast start, new members need to receive their Competent Communication and Competent Leadership manuals and other material in the New Member Kit. If a club delays submitting new member applications, it takes longer than it should for a member to get started on achieving his or her CC or CL. After receiving the membership application and voting the new member in, the club should immediately submit the application and dues to World Headquarters. Within a few days of receiving the application, World Headquarters will mail the New Member Kit.

**What you can do:** Ask the club president if the club mails new member applications to World Headquarters within 24 hours. If not, explain how important it is to get new members on track and achieving their CCs, CLs and beyond. Get the club's commitment to send those new member applications in as soon as possible!

**List your ideas:**

**Does the club submit club officer lists on time?** Although this may seem like an administrative detail, it is extremely important. Club officers, particularly the club president, receive several mailings and email correspondences from World Headquarters and the district. It is important for WHQ to have up-to-date contact information.

**What you can do:** Encourage all clubs to send their club officer lists so that the lists arrive at World Headquarters on or before June 30. Encourage clubs electing officers semiannually to send their club officer lists so that those lists arrive at World Headquarters on or before December 31. Remind the clubs that they get credit toward goal achievement in the Distinguished Club Program if World Headquarters receives the lists on time.

**List your ideas:**

## IV. TOWARD THE FUTURE

In addition to resolving current issues, it is important to plan for the future. To assist each club, area governors should consider the following issues:

- ▶ **The club's strengths.** Be sure to praise the most positive aspects of the meeting. Look for ideas you can share with other clubs!
- ▶ **Areas needing attention.** Mention one or two areas which could be changed. You will find that club members appreciate new ideas that help make their club more exciting.
- ▶ **What can you and other district officers do to provide support?** First, ask the club how you can help and better support them. Perhaps all it will take is a little extra support and attention from you. On the other hand, if membership is a problem or another dilemma arises, consult your division governor and the district's officers. The lieutenant governor education and training will be able to supply or refer club officers to specific programming materials from Toastmasters International's Supply Catalog; the lieutenant governor marketing should be consulted for information about membership building.

If a club's membership has dwindled to nine or fewer members a club specialist can be assigned by making a request to the district governor. The assignment lasts a year. During that time the club specialist works with the club's leaders to bring the membership number back to twenty members. If successful, the club specialist receives credit toward the Advanced Leader award.

- ▶ **Recommendations for action.** For every aspect that needs attention, offer some meaningful solutions. If a club simply wishes to measure its progress, one of the members might consider presenting the Moments of Truth program from The Successful Club Series (Item 290). This program discusses six service areas –
  - First Impressions
  - Fellowship, Variety, and Communication
  - Membership Orientation
  - Program Planning and Meeting Organization
  - Membership Strength, and
  - Achievement Recognition

All clubs should monitor these six service areas on an ongoing basis. If a club needs an immediate increase in membership, have the club conduct one or more of the membership building campaigns sponsored by Toastmasters International. You can help and support the club in its efforts to improve, but it is important that club officers and other members take ownership for meeting any challenges.

Recommend that the club conduct a Speechcraft program. Since Speechcraft is a four- to eight-week training program for non-Toastmasters, presenting a Speechcraft is an excellent way to introduce potential members to Toastmasters.

- ▶ **Members interested in future leadership roles within the district.** It's never too early to be on the lookout for people who could eventually take on leadership roles! If anyone is interested in developing their leadership skills at an area or division level, be sure to list their names in the designated space. When speaking with the club, promote the benefits of serving as area governor. Ask if anyone who received the Competent Leader Award is interested in taking the next step toward the Advanced Leader Award. The leadership growth and experience is invaluable.

The Area Report of Club Visit Form is a valuable tool that will help you discover which clubs need assistance. Most importantly, the Area Report of Club Visit Form gives you the opportunity to assess a club's overall health with easy-to-use, objective questions.

Your recommendations and support can make a tremendous, positive impact on the future success of a club. You can help all your area clubs be successful in delivering quality programming so that more people enjoy the benefits of Toastmasters.

## NOTES

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[www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org)