

# TOASTMASTER®

August 2008

**Dos and Don'ts of  
Speaking to Children**

**A Disingenuous  
Discussion**

**Protocol for**  
**Globe-Trotting**  
**Toastmasters**

**The Canada Revenue Agency:  
Its 22 Toastmasters Clubs  
Offer a Wealth of Benefits**



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## TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL

P.O. Box 9052 • Mission Viejo, CA 92690 U.S.A.  
 (949) 858-8255 • Fax: (949) 858-1207  
 Voicemail: (949) 835-1300  
[members.toastmasters.org](http://members.toastmasters.org)

## CONTACTING WORLD HEADQUARTERS

For information on joining  
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The TOASTMASTER Magazine (ISSN 00408263) is published monthly by Toastmasters International, Inc., 23182 Arroyo Vista, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688, U.S.A. Periodicals postage paid at Mission Viejo, CA and additional mailing office. POSTMASTER: Send address change to THE TOASTMASTER Magazine, P.O. Box 9052, Mission Viejo, CA 92690, U.S.A.

Published to promote the ideas and goals of Toastmasters International, a non profit educational organization of clubs throughout the world dedicated to teaching skills in public speaking and leadership. Members' subscriptions are included in the \$27 semi annual dues.

The official publication of Toastmasters International carries authorized notices and articles regarding the activities and interests of the organization, but responsibility is not assumed for the opinions of the authors of other articles. The TOASTMASTER magazine does not endorse or guarantee the products it advertises.

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# Looking Back, Looking Ahead

Where did that year go!? I'm sure it was just yesterday you elected me as your International President, and this month you'll elect someone else! As I look back on one of the most challenging, rewarding and quickest years of my life, I can honestly say... it's been quite a ride! Now if you've ever been on a ride at the amusement park or summer fair, you know that every ride has its ups and downs. Sometimes you wish it would last forever, and sometimes you pray for it to stop. You ask yourself: "What was I thinking when I got on this one?" – then you get off and tell all your friends they should go on the ride too!

This past year has been full of (mostly) ups and (a few) downs. And that's inevitable with leadership, whether at the club, district or international level. Carole and I have had the awesome privilege of visiting thousands of Toastmasters across Canada, the U.S., Australia and Malaysia, and hopefully I have reached a couple hundred thousand more through this column. The strength of Toastmasters International is in its members, and that point was reinforced with every Toastmaster we met, wherever we went. At every stop we saw the results of dedicated volunteer leaders giving their all to ensure that each member gets the most out of the Toastmasters experience.

Sure, there have been a few "downs" – unexpected challenges, the odd disappointment, not to mention delayed flights and lost luggage! But that's life as a leader, and one simply has to deal with the downs and move on. All in all, it has been a tremendous shaping experience for me personally, and I hope I have contributed to the shaping of each one of you in some way.

Looking ahead – our organization is poised for greatness! We have a proven product: a person who is in better shape for having pursued self-improvement as a communicator and a leader. We have the opportunity to expand into untapped markets around the world, and to shape our world in the process. Let us be courageous as together we face the challenges offered by a great future for all of us, and for all whose lives we touch.

Thank you to all Toastmasters around the world, for the honor and the privilege of serving as your President for the past year! Thank you to our immensely capable World Headquarters staff: Your "day in, day out" support to keep the machinery of TI operating effectively is vital to our success. And to my chère Carole: I cannot thank you enough for joining me on this ride!

Chris K. Ford, DTM  
 International President

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*By Terri Morrison*

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**The Toastmasters Vision:**

Toastmasters International empowers people to achieve their full potential and realize their dreams. Through our member clubs, people throughout the world can improve their communication and leadership skills, and find the courage to change.

**The Toastmasters Mission:**

Toastmasters International is the leading movement devoted to making effective oral communication a worldwide reality.

Through its member clubs, Toastmasters International helps men and women learn the arts of speaking, listening and thinking – vital skills that promote self-actualization, enhance leadership potential, foster human understanding, and contribute to the betterment of mankind.

It is basic to this mission that Toastmasters International continually expand its worldwide network of clubs thereby offering ever-greater numbers of people the opportunity to benefit from its programs.

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*By John Cadley*



Do you have something to say? Write it in 200 words or less, sign it with your name, address and club affiliation and send it to [letters@toastmasters.org](mailto:letters@toastmasters.org).

## LETTERS

### Inspirational Toastmaster

After reading the article "Humor is the Key" (May 2008) by Julie Bawden Davis, I couldn't stop thinking about my own tough experiences. I agree with Andy Ransom that humor makes us feel happier and more satisfied. I notice that when we joke, people are attracted to us. Strained relationships can be repaired with a friendly joke.

I am very impressed with Andy's achievements. He has to cope with everyday challenges, yet he finds enough strength to help others

As Andy noted, teaching can go both ways: He learns from people and they learn from him.

The article is very encouraging; it makes you look at your life from a different angle. Andy has just shifted the purpose of our existence to a very important goal – to make people laugh, to make people happy, to enjoy life together.

Irina Popova • Pickering Powerhouse Toastmasters  
Pickering, Ontario, Canada

### Sharing the Toastmaster

I was sitting in a waiting room not long ago, leafing through the usual boring, outdated, uninteresting magazines, when it suddenly occurred to me that this would be the perfect place to leave my *Toastmaster* magazines.

I love receiving the *Toastmaster* each month, and I devour it from the front page to the back, but then it settles among my other monthly magazines, wistfully waiting to be picked up to be read again and again.

Of course, by this time the next *Toastmaster* has arrived, so like the proverbial red-headed stepchild, the previous magazine sits lonely in its corner, waiting for attention.

Now, I cover the mailing label on my *Toastmaster* magazines with a label that has the name of our

club, where and when it meets, and its Web site address – and then, with permission, I place it in that waiting room.

Why not place your *Toastmaster* magazines in your doctor's, dentist's, hairdresser's, accountant's, auto dealer's or lawyer's waiting room? What a great way to share the news of Toastmasters, while giving people an interesting and informative magazine to read!

Sue Boe, CC • Suncoast Toastmasters • Tampa, Florida

### Smiling Singaporeans

My hat goes off to Eric Feng ("How to Make a Singaporean Laugh," June). I visited Singapore when I was in the Navy. I remember the list of dos and don'ts, including consequences.

Eric Feng did an outstanding job of displaying Singaporeans in a positive light. Now we know that Singaporeans have a sense of humor! I remember the Singlish spoken there. During my visit, I told a taxi driver that I wanted to go to Clifford's pier. This conversation, along with the ride, went around in circles. Each time I tried to tell the driver that I wanted to go to Clifford's pier, he replied "Clifford's what? Clifford's who? Clifford's fear?" After circling the area, and once passing Clifford's pier, I finally arrived at my destination.

Gerald Adams • Downtown Speakers Club • Knoxville, Tennessee

### Affirming the Positive

I was disappointed to see that Paul Endress ("The Art of Persuasion," May) recommends using an "affirming the negative" type of question in his

article: "That wouldn't be important to you too, would it?"

This is a poor method of communicating that my husband and I try to eliminate from our discussions. If I answer "Yes" to this question, does the questioner think it isn't important to me (correct), or does he think it is important to me (incorrect).

A better way to ask the question is "affirming the positive": "Would that be important to you, too?" This method removes both the ambiguity imposed by trying to answer the first question and the unintended declaration that the questioner knows what the listener's preferences are.

Eilene Lyon • Earlybird Toastmasters • Durango, Colorado

### Motivated by Magazine

I always look forward to the *Toastmaster*. In his article, "Unlock Your Leadership Potential," (July) Victor Parachin advises that whatever you do, do it with total commitment. I was impressed by the many motivating examples used in the article. They helped get the author's message across about personal transformation. After reading this article, I knew: "Tomorrow I want to wake up and live my life 100 percent!" Thank you for injecting a motivating factor in my life!

Marija Novar • Klub Toastmastera • Zagreb, Croatia



**Toastmasters helps bridge cultural and career gaps.**

# From China to the U.S.

**H**uh? What is a Toastmaster again?" That was my response when I first heard about Toastmasters. This was four years ago, when I was living in Hong Kong. I am a Hong Kong Chinese and had never heard about Toastmasters from anyone in my circle of friends or networks. But now I was curious, and I e-mailed one of the local clubs, asking if I could visit.

At the club meeting, I was intrigued by how Toastmasters helped its members improve their public speaking skills. I was also amazed to find out there were as many as 40 clubs in Hong Kong using different languages. Being a corporate trainer at that time, I immediately knew that Toastmasters would help refine my speaking, facilitating and listening skills. I also thought it would be a great place to brush up on my Mandarin and English.

After my initial experience, my hobby became "club hopping": I went from one Toastmasters club to the next, visiting a variety to see which one I should eventually join.

In the midst of this club hopping, I received a call from a friend in an event company. "Do you have time to be the emcee for the Banking and Finance Technology Forum next week?" he asked, telling me that his emcee backed out at the last minute. I paused for a while on the phone. I had done emcee

work for corporate and personal events before, but I had never spoken in front of the Chief Information Officer of the Hong Kong Government or hundreds of professionals at a convention.

Before I could say anything, my friend said, "I know you can do it...We'll pay you well. My assistant will call you soon." Click.

Since this was a last-minute assignment, I didn't have time to meet with the company or any of the speakers. All I could do was download the speakers' biographies from their Web sites. It's nerve-racking when you feel that you aren't well prepared. Things got even better: When the convention started and I introduced a speaker, the PowerPoint equipment didn't work – his slides didn't come up on the screen. The man was already on stage, but he simply refused to speak without the PowerPoint slides. There was an awkward silence. I had to go back to the podium and try to keep the audience entertained while the technical team fixed the problem....So much for being part of a technology forum when the technology doesn't work.

At that moment, I wished I had been a Toastmaster for 20 years, and that my Table Topics skills were already perfected.

After my emcee experience, my desire to join Toastmasters became



even stronger. However, because of my husband's job in the military, we had to relocate to the United States – specifically, to Holloman Air Force Base in Alamogordo, which is a very small town in New Mexico. I had a hard time finding a job where I could use my skills and education. Despite the difficulties I faced, I wanted to make the most of it in my new home. So I decided to begin graduate studies – and Toastmasters.

There is no better way to learn than to be actively engaged in the process. The Desert Basin Club in Alamogordo averages six meetings every month, and I took full advan-

tage of such a surplus of opportunities. I finished my Competent Communicator award in less than three months, and completed Advanced Communicator Bronze, Advanced Communicator Silver, Competent Leader and Advanced Leader Bronze in another 12 months.

I have gained so much from Toastmasters that I decided to give back. Currently, I am the VP Public Relations and Webmaster for the Desert Basin club, as well as the Area Governor in District 23, promoting Toastmasters while learning some special skills that I wouldn't have the opportunity to learn otherwise.

One of the promotional activities I did for the club was to appear on a local TV program talking about Toastmasters. After the TV interview, the production manager said he was impressed

with what he saw; he asked if I would be interested in doing reporting for the TV station. Soon after, I started to write for the local newspaper, and a new Web company opened in Alamogordo and began using me as a freelance Web reporter and producer.


All of these things have been spinoffs from my experience with Toastmasters.

Before these recent developments, I had read an article in the *Toastmaster* magazine's July 2007 issue called "From Toast to Host." It talked about a Toastmasters member in Hong Kong named Brian Hodgson who became the host of his own TV show. I never thought that shortly after reading that article, I would

have the chance to produce my own videos. Now I know that anything can happen as long as you

**"Toastmasters is a life saver. What more can you ask for?"**

have the appropriate support and training – like the kind you get with Toastmasters.

I cannot thank Toastmasters enough. It not only helped me improve my communication and presentation skills, but it also helped me advance in my career. Toastmasters is a life saver. What more can you ask for? 

**Angie Palmer, ACS, ALB**, is a member of the Desert Basin Toastmasters club in Alamogordo, New Mexico. Reach her at [angiepalmer@gmail.com](mailto:angiepalmer@gmail.com).

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Toastmasters offers a Wealth of benefits  
for Canada's Revenue Agency.

**CRA:**

# A Treasure Worth Tapping

By Carl Duivenvoorden, DTM

**T**he Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) has struck gold. From coast to coast, Canada's tax department has tapped into Toastmasters and its many dividends. When you look closely, it's easy to understand why.

The CRA's history with our international organization started in 1991, when it chartered a Toastmasters club in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. It was called the Achievers Club. That group caught the attention of CRA offices across the country. Interest spread, and the Agency's Toastmasters network grew. One demonstration meeting held in Ottawa in February 2001 attracted 78 attendees. The effort (which featured future International President Chris Ford as General Evaluator) led to the chartering of three Toastmasters clubs in less than two months. Today, the CRA is home to 22 thriving clubs across Canada.

## **Avid Support Given – and Acknowledged**

Strong corporate clubs only happen when management support is strong, and it's clear that CRA Toastmasters have solid buy-in across the organization, starting at the very top. William V. Baker, commissioner and chief executive officer of the CRA, counts workforce excellence among his top







priorities. And that leads to real results: In its latest employee survey, the Agency found that the overall percentage of employees who felt the CRA was providing support for career development had increased since 2002 – about the time the Agency's Toastmasters clubs began to make their presence felt.

"Every manager and executive in the Agency makes a commitment to support learning," Commissioner Baker says. "Toastmasters is a great example of an innovative way of supporting the development of our employees through a mutually beneficial partnership that allows our employees to use their new expertise to advance their careers."

Deborah Danis, a CRA director in Toronto, says, "The [Toastmasters] program offers tangible ways for people to learn self-confidence, effective interactive communication, team leadership, impact and influence... the list goes on. And club members have a great time while they're learning."

For those reasons, the Agency covers membership dues and provides meeting rooms for its clubs. Some of the Toastmasters groups even offer support for members attending conferences or participating in contests beyond the club.

For their part, the corporate clubs regularly try to show management why they're so valuable. Senior managers are welcome to join, in order to see and experience the power of Toastmasters firsthand. And they are always invited to attend special events such as contests, open houses and "bring your boss" days. In Ottawa, the CRA's Information Technology Branch (with four Toastmasters clubs and another in formation) even has a member assigned as a branch liaison to provide regular club and member progress reports back to management.

### **A Forum for Learning Work-Related Skills**

Toastmasters is a perfect fit for the CRA's competency-based approach to training and learning. Deb Johnstone, a CRA training and learning

▼ **CRA's Prose Club members, front row from left: Karlene Williams, club president Cathy Hayward, Susan Monaghan, Beverley Miranda, Shirley Wang, Joanne Clarke. Back row from left: Colin McHenry, Frank Schilder, Craig Fielding, Alan Capes, Maurice Bonin.**





coordinator in Saskatoon, says, “We recognize Toastmasters as a valuable element of the individual learning plans of our workforce.” Since the CRA’s standard 30-minute lunch break is too short for an effective Toastmasters meeting, members are granted extra time for meetings, which can then be claimed as a personal learning credit.

“Toastmasters provides the opportunity for us to develop skills we can use every day,” says Cathy Hayward, president of The Prose Club in Ottawa. “Our members learn to become better speakers, listeners, evaluators and leaders.” And those skills play directly into the competencies the CRA evaluates in its employees, including effective interactive communication, self-confidence and team leadership.

The results are evident. Frances Sauvé, an assistant director at the Toronto East Tax Services Office, says, “It’s amazing to see such transformation happen. It starts with improved self-confidence and grows from there. Before long, people are joining in discussions, volunteering for committees and contributing more at meetings.” Hayward credits Toastmasters for getting her into a new job she loves. “Toastmasters made me realize I was capable of more, and gave me the confidence to apply for a position I wouldn’t have otherwise considered,” she says. “The job includes quality review of presentations, briefings and other communications products for my director general. I apply what I’ve learned at Toastmasters to help ensure clear, concise key messages specific to the target audience. It’s a great skills match.”

As an agency of the Government of Canada, the CRA provides bilingual services across the country. So it’s not surprising to learn that the CRA Toastmasters network includes both English and French clubs. In fact, many employees intentionally join a club that operates in their second language so they can hone their linguistic skills.

▲ **Milestone speeches – From left, Colin McHenry earned his Advanced Communicator Silver award and Craig Fielding earned his Competent Communicator award this year.**

One club, Le Réseau de Scarborough, even coordinates its meetings with onsite French language training, enabling a French teacher to serve as grammarian at every meeting and offer one-on-one help beforehand. Martina Durova, a member of the So-So Club at the Southern Interior B.C. Tax Services office, says, “English is my second language. Before I joined, I would lose my vocabulary and couldn’t put thoughts together. Now, I am practicing weekly. I can think on my feet, control those butterflies and present my thoughts in front of an audience.”

### Secrets to Success

CRA clubs combine formality with fun: formality, to achieve the business of learning; and fun to keep members motivated and coming back. “We call our Wednesday meetings ‘our oasis in the middle of the week,’” says Hayward. “We get to network with people from across the organization.”

Theme meetings are a common practice, and often provide a chance for a bit of fun and stress-relief while learning. Member achievements are acknowledged with ribbons, plaques or letters from management. Some clubs have year-end events to celebrate success and recognize their “Toastmaster of the Year” and “Rookie of the Year.”

The Heron Club in Ottawa has a theme for every meeting, and presents a monthly “Sparkplug Award” for member enthusiasm and achievement. “It must be a sought-after trophy,” chuckles Heron Club President Hallam Carter. “We had one disappear from someone’s desk once!”

Members are also encouraged to take part in contests and other special events beyond the club. “Contests compress the learning cycle of Toastmasters,” enthuses



Hayward. "Seven years ago, I couldn't have imagined myself in a contest – but now I've competed in front of 350 people not just once but several times!"

Clubs use the Distinguished Club Program to gauge success, with excellent results. "We've been Select or President's Distinguished every year since we chartered," Beata Bozek of InfoMasters in Ottawa says proudly.

### Meeting the Membership Challenge

CRA clubs have the advantage of recruiting to a specific target audience, but they also face the reality that everyone's top priority is doing his or her job at the Agency. So a combination of marketing strategies is used. Club information is included in orientation kits given to new employees. Clubs submit articles to internal newsletters, and host pages on the CRA's intranet with information about Toastmasters, membership and meetings. The Confederation Club in Summerside, P.E.I., staffs a Wellness Day booth, where visitors can learn about the club. "We've also presented at managers meetings, and we offer Speechcraft to give people a taste of what they can learn through Toastmasters," says Club Treasurer Beth Simon.

Local Toastmasters clubs periodically hold open houses so interested staff can learn more about the programs offered. "People may have the impression that our meetings are stuffy, but this is a way to get them past that barrier," says Ellen Engensperger of the Said-So Club. Carter, of the Heron Club, adds, "Some people say, 'I don't need that,' but I tell them this is an opportunity not to be missed. Toastmasters will get you where you want to go!"


### Transformations

The magic of Toastmasters is evident in member testimonials. Carter says he's become a different person. "I was beyond shy – I'd avoid meetings, and sometimes I

wouldn't even answer the phone," he recalls. "But I realized that I couldn't go on this way – I needed to face my fear. So I joined Toastmasters three years ago, and it has been amazing. Now, I can stand before any group. But more importantly, I've realized a level of self-confidence and self-esteem I've never had before." A colleague, Pat Ross, joined the same club, and within three months she chaired an open-house meeting for her own division's staff and management.

Johnstone, the CRA training and learning coordinator, says her Toastmasters experience gave her the confidence she needed to become National President of the Canadian Institute of Management. "The Robert's Rules of Order I learned at Toastmasters have helped me run meetings much more effectively," she notes. She's also gone on to emcee National Public Service Week awards at her workplace.

Yvonne Taylor of the Verbal Attax club in Toronto says, "I was really shy when I joined five years ago, but now I have no problem speaking in front of an audience. I sometimes surprise myself (and my family). I've come to enjoy presenting the CRA's outreach programs to community groups." Such progress and dedication led her to be recognized with the Assistant Commissioner's Employee of the Year Award for Ontario in 2007.

Across the country, CRA Toastmasters clubs are thriving – bringing value to management and transformation to members. For the Revenue Agency, Toastmasters is a treasure worth tapping. 

**Carl Duivenvoorden, DTM**, is a speaker, writer, consultant and Past District 45 Governor. He lives in Upper Kingsclear, New Brunswick, Canada, and can be reached at [www.changeyourcorner.com](http://www.changeyourcorner.com).

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Remember these tips next time you face an audience.

# Seven Staples of Public Speaking

**Y**ou have earned a reputation as an authority in your field. Others want to hear what you have to say. So you're about to become a public speaker.

Yet, whether you are leading a seminar before a small group of your peers or delivering a keynote address to thousands of strangers, unless you have years of speaking experience, you are likely to feel awkward or uncomfortable when the microphone is in your hand.

It's a common reaction – most people simply do not enjoy speaking in front of an audience. But your anxieties can be lessened if you remember these seven simple strategies:

**1 Do not try to hide behind technology.** A common – and disastrous – mistake is to say, “I’ll put my presentation on PowerPoint. Then nobody will focus on me.” Wrong. A bad speaker with PowerPoint is still a bad speaker. PowerPoint, used with restraint, can be an enhancement to your presentation. It is never, however, a substitute for preparation.

It doesn't matter how many PowerPoint slides you have or how many bullet points you've squeezed on them, no one will ever leave a program saying, “Wow! Those were great bullet points!” Instead, if they leave saying, “Wow! The presenter sure knew his stuff, and he illustrated his points well,” then you have done your job and exceeded most people's expectations.

**2 The audience is rarely the enemy.** When asked why people fear public speaking, a common response is, “Because the audience is just waiting for me to screw up.” Wrong. While it is true that audience members may not always agree with your message, they almost never want you to fail. That is, no one comes to a presentation saying, “I hope the speaker screws up.” Why not? Because a bad presentation is painful. Instead, since most people hope for a good performance, most people are inherently on your side from the start. Therefore, even in an audience of strangers, most will be allies, not adversaries. Take comfort in their support.

**3 Begin by choosing one of four objectives.** Everyone knows that before you start any project, you should determine your objective. Yet many speakers skip this essential step, preferring instead to “just wing it.” Bad idea. When you wing it, it shows, and no one is ever happy with the result. Good speakers, however, always begin their projects by asking themselves, “Is my objective to inform, to persuade, to inspire or to entertain?” You can choose one, two, three or all four, but you must choose at least one. Remember, if your objective isn't clear to you, the audience will never figure it out. Don't expect them to do your work for you.

**4 Speak with your audience, not to them.** Speaking styles change

over time. William Jennings Bryan, considered a great orator a century ago, would have a hard time finding an audience today. That's because his style of grand oratory is long gone. Today's audiences generally want short, practical presentations – more tightly focused and with an emphasis on “What's in it for me?” These days, lectures, especially long ones, are not well received. Today's best speakers know that a good speech is good conversation. And the best speakers speak conversationally while keeping it brief.

**5 Nothing can top a good story.** The essence of public speaking is simply this: Make a point, tell a story. Make another point, tell another story. People don't remember points. But they do remember stories.

So where do you get good stories to make your points? Some speakers turn to such sources as the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books. Bad idea. The stories in those books aren't *your* stories. They happened to – and they belong to – other people. Instead, just pay attention to the little stories of the little things that happen to you on a daily basis. As soon as you start using your personal, real-life stories and anecdotes, you will never have to turn to someone else's material again. And as soon as you start anchoring your points with your personal stories, audiences will start remembering you.



**6 Write it out.** Yes, write your speech word for word, but don't ever stand there and read it. You probably have been bored to tears by a speaker who stood motionless behind a lectern while he read his speech. Reading a speech shows a lack of preparation or a lack of commitment to the message.

So if you are not going to read it, why would you take the effort to write it word for word? It's because writing a speech encourages brevity and precision. Have you ever heard a speaker take 10 minutes to make a point that could have been made in one or two? That's what happens when the speech is not well written or well edited.

Good speakers pack the most information into the least time because they are good editors. But you can't edit what you haven't written. Therefore, write

**"People don't remember points.  
But they do remember stories."**

out your thoughts, then edit aggressively. Finally, rehearse your tightly edited stories to the point where you can deliver them by referring to no more than a few note cards.

**7 There is no substitute for practice.**

Few people speak well extemporaneously. The greatest speakers you have ever heard are the ones who have expended the greatest effort. Speaking is a skill that takes practice. So practice your presentation aloud, at full volume, until it flows smoothly and you are comfortable with its rhythm. It will sound entirely different when practiced aloud than when merely

rehearsed in your head. The audience will hear the "aloud" version, so you'd better be sure you are comfortable with what they are going to hear. **T**

This article originally appeared in *Performance Magazine*, 2006.

**David Brooks, DTM**, is a member of West Austin II Toastmasters club in Austin, Texas. Since winning the Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking in 1990, he has coached six subsequent World Champions and dozens of finalists. Reach him at **www.DavidBrooksTexas.com**.

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Johnny Campbell, DTM holds the designation of Accredited Speaker, and was inducted into the Toastmasters Hall of Fame in 2007.

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# Small



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**T**he next time you're nervous about giving a manual speech to your club, be grateful that you're not facing an even tougher crowd: kids. Unlike most adults, children let a speaker know exactly what they're feeling at all times.

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As a storyteller, I do a fair amount of speaking to groups of children, whether as an emcee, performer or presenter. So I've learned a few things about what makes kids' faces light up – and what doesn't.

The most important thing to remember about working with children is the age-old rule first stated by the Greek philosopher Aristotle more than 2,000 years ago: Know your audience. Sometimes, speakers behave as if kids are simply short adults. They do everything they do so well with grown-up audiences without recognizing that in many ways, kids experience the world differently than adults do. They have different needs and interests. The more we know about how children think and communicate, the better we can reach them.

**Sit tight.** Kids usually like sitting on the floor – even young teens. If it works for your space, try it. If you've got a small group, I encourage you to sit down there with them. If you can't, try not to tower above them, causing them to strain their necks and stare at your chin. Instead, pull up a chair.

**Warming up.** Unless you're speaking in an extremely formal setting, it's usually a good idea to mix with the crowd a little before you speak. This way they get a sense of you, and you of them. This is even more useful when working with children. When both speaker and audience share some ground rules in advance through behavior, sense of humor and tone, your talk is bound to go more smoothly.

**Be concrete.** If a picture is worth a thousand words, word pictures are worth millions. Try speaking in vivid terms rather than in broad generalities. For example, if you're talking about global warming, numbers and statistics won't mean a lot to kids. You might want to tell little ones a story about Suzy, the polar bear who lost her home as the ice caps melted. For older children, find real-life examples they can relate to, and help them feel they are right there in the story by using physical details (sweat pouring down someone's forehead) instead of statements that are less specific (it was 100 degrees in the shade).

**Visual aids.** Speaking of pictures, visuals are even more important with children than they are with adults. Children have a shorter attention span and may be distracted in the middle of an explanation. But if the pictures are there, they can always turn to them. Large, crisp, enlarged color photos or professional-looking PowerPoint presentations are fine. Just be aware that any time you have to darken a room, you risk losing some of your audience's attention. Handouts are also a plus.

**Break it up.** Children spend a lot of time with media that decrease attention span, whether it's MTV or a video game. Don't assume that they can follow an hour-long discussion.

If you can schedule a break in the middle of a long program, do so; otherwise, build breaks into your talk. Change the tempo. Play some music or bring on another person to do a short segment. Play a quick game. Anything that allows your audience to shift gears every 10 to 40 minutes or so, depending on their age, will help them focus longer.

**Encourage participation.** The younger the children, the more they love call-and-response. Toastmasters are often encouraged to start off a speech with a question; with

The dos and don'ts of speaking to children.

# Audiences

By Caren S. Neile, Ph.D., ATMS/CL

kids, you may want to plan short questions throughout your speech, or solicit comments.

One of the best speakers I ever saw “checked in” with her audience midway through her presentation, asking them what they liked most about what she had done or said up to that point. Just be aware that children

**“Sometimes, speakers behave as if kids are simply short adults.”**

are very frank and even more unpredictable than adults when it comes to input. If you don’t have much time to spare, be prepared to cut off participation before everyone has had their say.

**Get them moving.** One form of participation is to get kids on their feet. Can everybody stretch or do a dance

at their seats? Can someone write on the board for you? Do you have props that children can bring up as needed?

I once asked six children to come up to the front of the room before I told a story. At certain points in the performance, I gave each of them key words to remember, telling them that they would be responsible for repeating them as needed. This made the story more fun for everyone. I specifically chose children who looked like they needed a boost at that point in the program – but who I could tell wouldn’t misbehave once they were facing the group.

**Keep it calm.** Stimulation is important, but we don’t want our audiences to run wild. I learned this the hard way early in my career by over-stimulating a group of 200 middle-schoolers. It took several minutes, and several teachers, to regain control once I’d wandered through the audience and got them riled up. I quickly learned that balance and moderation are key here, as in most things.

By Pandora Scooter

**Ditch the jokes and self-accolades; ask them questions and be direct.**

**A Tough Crowd:**

## How to Win Over Teenagers

*“Teenagers?! How can you do it?  
That’s a scary audience.”*

I hear this all the time. I’ve been teaching, giving workshops and performing for high school students for the past 15 years. Over and over I hear from seasoned public speakers that they are turned off by the very notion of speaking to teenagers. Why?

“Teenagers don’t care.”

“They don’t listen.”

“They’re unruly.”



Well, it’s true that, on the whole, teenagers like to seem as though they don’t care and are not listening, and they do wind up behaving in an unruly way if there’s nothing to focus their attention. But after 15 years of




**Learn the language** – to a point. Is it cool to be “cool” or is it better to be “hot”? A bit of teenage slang is useful for a speaker, but some rules apply. First, check with a teen “expert” to be sure you’re using the words correctly. Then, don’t use too many of them. It’s like wearing clothes that are too young for us – we end up looking silly rather than fitting in.

**Let them go.** Sometimes, just sometimes, you need to lose a child in order to find her. That is, some children listen quite well even though they don’t appear to. I will never forget the story a colleague told me of a child wandering around the back of a classroom while the woman performed a folktale. The next day, who could recite every word of that story? The child who listened best when her body was moving. As long as children are not disrupting the group, you may need to let them listen in their own way.

**Send it home.** Have you ever asked a child, “What did you do in school today?” only to be told, “Nothing”?

“Nothing” usually means nothing memorable. But if a child comes home with a sticker, a bookmark, a vegetable dye tattoo or a drawing she made of something the speaker talked about, she’ll have something concrete to talk about herself. The only take-home I don’t generally recommend is food – that is, unless you’ve checked ahead of time that children are allowed to have it. Some parents prefer their young children not be fed without their knowledge.

One final note: I began this piece by noting that there are many differences between children and adults. But you may have noticed that to some extent, these suggestions apply to all audiences. Keep them in mind whenever you speak and you can be assured you’ll reach not only kids but the adult listener’s inner child, as well. 

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**Caren S. Neile, Ph.D., ATMS/CL**, directs the South Florida Storytelling Project at Florida Atlantic University and is a member of the Boca Raton Toastmasters club. Reach her at [cneile@fau.edu](mailto:cneile@fau.edu).



working with them, I’ve found that there are some basic tenets to winning over this crowd that are successful (nearly) every time:

### Get Down to Business

It’s especially important with a young audience that you use an attention-getting opening that aptly *challenges* their expectations. Teenagers are used to adults assuming they care about whatever the topic is and that they’re there by choice. Remember, with a young crowd, they’re there because they were told to be there. So your job is to make it clear to them that *despite* this fact, they can still get something out of their time with you.

Before I even introduce myself to the group, I dive into a quick exercise or

poem, or I pose a quick question. For instance, when doing a poetry workshop for a large class of 13- and 14-year-olds, I start off as soon as they are in their seats: “Everyone cover your eyes! Now, no peeking. Everyone

who has ever written a poem, raise your hand. Put your hands down. Thank you. Now you can open your eyes.” Then, I continue, “Looks like we have a lot of writers in this group! That’s exciting to me.” Now, the kids have no idea how many people from their group raised a hand, but they do know that a) we’re there to talk about poetry; b) I’m in charge, and c) they’re going to participate. All that without my having to do any explaining. The short way to remember this tip is: Do, don’t talk.

Here’s a word of caution about starting off with jokes: Generally speaking, jokes don’t go over well with teenagers. Jokes make it obvious that you’re trying to win them over, and they instinctively put up resistance. And, if the joke bombs, you’ve just made your life a lot harder.

### Keep Your Intro Short

Unless you have some really great name-dropping credits, keep your biographical information to a minimum. Teenagers don’t care that you won some academic fellowship or that you were nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. Don’t even mention that you’ve been on television or in the movies if the shows aren’t very mainstream, because the kids will just ask, “Which ones?” and then you’ll be stuck at a disadvantage. I usually keep my intro short and sweet: “I’m Pandora Scooter. I’m a spoken-word artist. And I love working with kids.”

### Be Direct and Honest

Standing in front of 50 inner-city high school students I’d just met, I was charged with the task of teaching them in

45 minutes how to write a play. This was hard enough. But a student in the front row had his head on his desk, which was distracting me. I walked over to him and knocked on the desk. He didn't move. "Excuse me. Are you OK?" He didn't move. I repeated the question. He raised his head slowly and looked at me quizzically. "Are you OK?" I asked again.

"Yeah," he responded.

"Well, then would you keep your head up? You're distracting me with your head down like that."

I think he was so baffled that an adult was taking him to task, kindly, directly and honestly, that he sat up for the rest of the workshop and even participated.

Don't avoid asking tough questions. If teenagers are talking while you're talking, find out why. Ask them. I've stopped performances for high school students to ask the audience questions like, "What's going on with you guys?" or "Why are you talking while I'm talking?" Usually, I have to cajole the students to answer, to prove to them that I'm really interested in their responses. Usually, I get some apologies and some excuses (Example: "We're hungry" or "We're tired"). Whatever the reason, the important point to make is that you're paying attention to them, that you're not going to ignore their behavior. This puts them on notice and, most of the time, keeps their attention on you.

And don't avoid *answering* tough questions, either. I was once asked if I was famous. My answer was, "Not yet."

The young girl who asked me responded, "You wanna be famous, Miss?"

**"Remember, with a young crowd, they're there because they were told to be there."**

And I said, "Yes. I do." There was silence in the face of my voicing my dream so bluntly. I asked the students, "Do you want to know why I want to be famous?" The kids responded positively. I answered, "Because I want to be able to make a lot of good things happen for a lot of people and I think I can do that if I'm famous." I believe they respected my honesty and felt they could share in my dream.

Another time I was asked by a girl in a workshop if I was a lesbian. I stopped for a moment and responded, "Have you ever asked a teacher you thought was straight if they were straight?" She shook her head. I followed with, "Then I don't think I should answer your question. Because if it doesn't matter to you if a teacher is straight, then it shouldn't matter to you if a teacher is gay." This

started up a whole discussion in the class about whether or not it matters to them, which was truly illuminating and exciting – for me and for the students.

### Show Respect and Gratitude

You have no idea how far a "Thank you for listening to me," or a "You all are a great audience" goes with teenagers. I usually throw in a compliment or an expression of gratitude about a third of the way or half way through my workshop or presentation – long enough into it for them to know that I have something to base it on. It works wonders.

### Eye Contact

Make sure to make eye contact with this audience. Avoid talking above their heads. Speak directly to individuals. Make references to individuals like, "This young lady in red, here, seems to really like this idea." Or "You with the baseball cap in the last row – you don't like that poem? Why not?" Again, you need to remember that, for the most part, this audience is so used to being ignored, especially when they're in groups, that the act of paying attention to them, in itself, keeps them absorbed.

### Make Yourself Accessible

Announce your e-mail address or phone number at the end of the presentation. Go on. Give it out. Less than five percent of the students will ever use it, but they'll all remember that you trusted them enough to give it out. And that will go over a long way with them. They'll carry what you said with them on a deeper level and remember it for a longer period after your presentation is over. And the ones who do use your number are mostly the ones you want to speak with, anyway, so it's a win-win situation.

At the end of your presentation, invite the students to come up and speak with you, or stand at one of the exits and thank them for listening and being there. You'll find that more students than you think are appreciative of your presentation and they'll let you know it, too.

Teenagers are our future CEOs, politicians, teachers, engineers, doctors, mothers and fathers. They deserve the wealth of knowledge that we, as the adults in their community, have for them. Reaching them is important. By being honest, direct, respectful, grateful, clear and attentive, you can make the difference in many young people's lives. I encourage you to embrace this audience and share your powerful messages with them. **T**

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**Pandora Scooter** is a native of Washington D.C., and currently lives and works in New Jersey, where she is a performance artist and teaching artist. She can be found online at [www.pandorascooter.com](http://www.pandorascooter.com).



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**Children and Toastmasters  
learn from each other.**

# Helping Kids Tame Their Butterflies

✦ Ten-year-old Micah sat at the conference room table, arms folded across his chest. No way was he going to get up and talk! No matter what his father told him about the “Get Those Butterflies Out of My Stomach!” public speaking session at Lucent Technologies’ “Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day.” No matter what he promised his dad. But finally, we three members of Cosmopolitan Toastmasters club in Whippany, New Jersey, tossed out a Table Topic he might be able to answer with confidence. “Tell us something about your siblings. Do you have any?” Micah raised his hand. He stood up from his chair and swung around to the front. “Do I have any brothers or sisters?” His hands gripped the table’s edge. “No!” He smiled. When his dad entered the room later and asked, “Did you speak?” Micah proudly responded, “Yes!”

For Micah, just the one-word response to a Table Topic was a defining moment. He had indeed spoken. It was also a defining moment for the three of us hosting the session. How could we get everyone to participate?

## Table Topics as the Focus

We started with the program by welcoming all the kids and asking them to introduce themselves, and then we moved into Table Topics. The three of us rotated roles as Toastmaster, Topicsmaster and evaluator during the four sessions we were hosting. As a warm-up in each session, we asked each participant to name their

favorite and least favorite school subjects. This helped the kids, who ranged in age from 8 to 14, to find kindred spirits in a group of strangers.

To help kids understand the format of the sessions, we role-played a Table Topic, a response and an evaluation. Our purpose was to focus on positive things the kids did – for example, eye contact with the audience, body talk, vocal variety – so we could encourage them to speak on their feet.

We carefully chose our Table Topics, 10 in all, including: “Should dogs be allowed to eat in restaurants?”; “If there were an invasion from Mars, what would you do?”; “Should comic books be allowed as book reports?” and “Some say, ‘Dogs drool and cats rule.’ Do you agree or disagree?” We received many interesting, and often comical or passionate responses. In fact, we had to limit the number of responses to certain popular questions, such as, “Should homework be banned?”

## A Win-Win Learning Experience

The innocence and pure creativity of these kids astounded and exhausted us. We learned how to better reach kids and how a statement, in this case a Table Topic, could be interpreted so differently. We learned to be ready for any challenge, such as an overeager speaker. Most importantly, we observed progress. We encouraged each kid to speak at least once and those who spoke more than that demonstrated distinct improvement

in their confidence, poise and projection. In fact, we specifically asked them how they felt about their second speech versus the first, and they acknowledged the relative ease of their second time speaking. No more butterflies! We also refined our ability to provide substantive, supportive feedback to continually encourage their speaking.

But the learning didn’t stop there. The three of us learned from each other. Each of our styles differed and throughout the sessions we gained greater appreciation of each of our skills. For instance, Barbara was nurturing and often asked a young speaker how he felt when coming up to speak, how those butterflies were doing. The child perked up when talking about it. Nora, the most experienced evaluator among us, gave us a high bar to reach on providing helpful feedback. Shimali provided good insights on poise and projection, and motivated the children to share their feelings, beliefs and ideas.

## Next Steps

Our club is looking forward to our next Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day event. We are exploring opportunities with local area high schools to start a Toastmasters Youth Leadership program. Butterflies, be gone! **T**

**Shimali Agarwal, Barbara Krasner, CTM, Nora Nerses, CTM,** are members of Cosmopolitan Toastmasters club in Whippany, New Jersey.





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# Training Teens to Be Toastmasters

**D**o you want to make a difference? You can do so by using the skills you've learned at Toastmasters to help teenagers become the leaders of tomorrow.

I know, because last summer I participated in the Toastmasters Youth Leadership Program. Rich Aubin and I – who are both members of Tamalpais Toastmasters in San Rafael, California – led the program for Kaiser Permanente. The health care organization includes the Toastmasters project annually as part of its two-month summer internship program for underserved high school students in Northern California.

The Youth Leadership program is one where Toastmasters like you and me can help young people with their public speaking and communication skills. And the impact can be enormous. Becoming a

with 500,000 middle school and high school students. Many of the teen-parent speakers gained the confidence to turn their lives around.

That rewarding experience was repeated when I participated in the Toastmasters program last summer. The students in the Kaiser Permanente program – called KP L.A.U.N.C.H. – had been placed in internships to get them acquainted with various careers in the health care field. The Toastmasters sessions lasted one hour each week – for eight weeks.

The Kaiser Permanente coordinators and Toastmasters leaders were amazed by how much the teens' confidence and communication skills had been boosted with just those eight sessions.

Here are some reasons for the dramatic improvement:

deal gone wrong – with gun shots fired – and yet another discussed being pressured into having sex in eighth grade.

Being a speaker gave these teens a voice, an ability to share their opinions and capture their emotions. The Toastmasters leaders – and the Youth Leadership program participants – realized that the teens were solving problems for themselves as they spoke. By sharing their lives and challenges, the teens were able to move forward instead of remaining the victim they were describing in their stories.

## Self-Confidence

To be able to give a speech in front of an audience is a tremendous accomplishment. All of the KP L.A.U.N.C.H organizers reported that the teens groaned when first told they would be participating in a Toastmasters program. In the end, however, they loved speaking and were excited about their new ability to express themselves in front of a group.

The supportive atmosphere and positive feedback provided the nurturing each participant needed in order to take the “speaking in front of an audience” risk. Their self-confidence was visible to all. They were validated and empowered – and they trusted themselves.

One teen told of “arriving from the rice fields in Southeast Asia to a new life in San Jose”; another talked of “how to kill a shark”; and yet

**“Being a speaker gave these teens a voice, an ability to share their opinions and capture their emotions.”**

speaker can be a life-changing event for teenagers. For the last 14 years, I have trained more than 400 young people who are teenage parents. I helped them to speak out on the importance of preventing teen pregnancy.

These young moms and dads have shared their stories about the challenges of being a teen parent

## Teens Felt Heard

Teens are often talked to, talked about and marketed to, but how often are they listened to? By being speakers, it gave them an audience. All the adults were surprised at the personal, and often scary stories the teenagers shared. In my group, one teen talked about suicide, another told of witnessing a drug





another reflected on "how my sister's suicide changed my life."

### Leadership

To be a leader, a person needs self-confidence, a plan, organized thoughts, and the ability to speak so others will trust and follow. From the various Toastmasters activities, the teens learned such skills:

- Table Topics helped them think on their feet.
- Rotating as Toastmasters officers let them experience leadership responsibilities.

- Evaluating each other helped them develop critical thinking.
- Introducing speakers made them feel important.
- Putting together their speeches helped them develop organizational skills.
- Providing and receiving positive feedback gave them the courage to take risks.


### A Crucial Program

As an advocate for teens, I have seen how easy it is to turn them around in a positive way. But they need caring adults to listen to them

and to teach them skills they can use now and in the future.

If your company offers a summer internship program for high school students, please consider conducting the Toastmasters Youth Leadership Program.

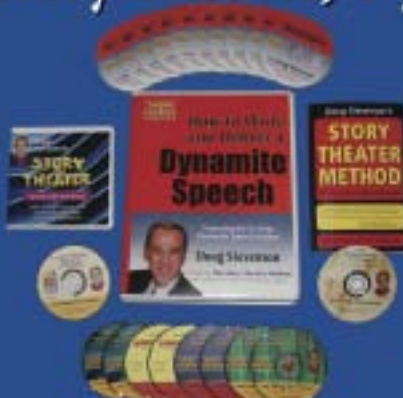
You'll earn the kinds of evaluations we did:

- "This was great!"
- "I'm more confident and energetic and ready to get up and speak."
- "I can organize my thoughts better now."
- "These skills I can use all my life."
- "I had no idea speaking was so much fun!" 

**Carolyn Kellams, ACB**, is past president of Tamalpais Toastmasters in San Rafael, California.

**Note to Readers:** To conduct a Youth Leadership program, order the Youth Leadership Educational Packet (Item 811). This program is in the process of being revised but is still a valuable and fully functioning program. The new Youth Leadership program will not be ready for some time. Meanwhile, the existing program is available and very popular.

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Always follow your host's lead.

# Protocol for Globe Trotting Toastmasters

By Terri Morrison

**P***reparing for an international presentation can be fraught with concerns: travel arrangements, conference logistics, security and – oh yes, your speech!*

Before you step up to the microphone to address an international audience, it's a good idea to learn about your attendees. Inquiring about the protocol and business practices in each country will help you avoid delivering an embarrassing faux pas along with your brilliant presentation.







Here are three tips that may help build your credibility while speaking abroad:

### **1 Say my name correctly.**

Names represent much more than just a moniker in many countries. They can be a link to an individual's heritage: his or her parents, grandparents, or even the town where he or she was born. Therefore, mangling a name is more significant when the person's name is actually a patronymic – a family name.

For example, if you were extremely close friends with the former President of Russia, *Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin*, you might address him as

you to a roomful of eminent guests. In response, you graciously state: "Thank you very much, Ernst, for that kind introduction. It is an honor and a pleasure to address this illustrious group!"

That may be an appreciative line in Muncie, Indiana, but it's too informal in Munich. Using the director's first name in front of such distinguished company is not acceptable. Correct protocol mandates that you say the doctor's title(s) and last name in public, at least until he invites you to switch to his first name...20 years later!

In some countries, it is a challenge simply to discern which is your host's first name and last. For example, in China, the family name (or surname), is written first, followed by a middle name (which used to be called a generational name), and then the first name. So if you were speaking at the upcoming Olympics, and the president of China, *Hu Jintao*, was in the audience, you would address him correctly as *President Hu*. Not, as one U.S. executive blithely blurted out, *President Tao*! (He may as well have called him "Bubba.") Additionally, Chinese wives do not generally take their husband's

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**"When you are in the limelight, and all eyes are upon you, committing an appalling faux pas in international etiquette can ruin your credibility."**

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Vladimir Vladimirovich. Among themselves, Russians often address each other by their first names and patronymic. Thus, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin's first name is Vladimir (which has been translated to mean "Great, glorious ruler"), and his middle name means "son of Vladimir."

And this tradition is more widespread than you might think. Many cultures – from Arabic to Swedish to Spanish – incorporate their parents' names into their own. If you cannot pronounce the name correctly, you not only insult

the person in front of you but his or her ancestors as well.

Of course, you should be careful about more than pronunciation. Formal situations present their own challenges. Let's say that your first presentation is in Germany, where your host, the *Geschäftsführer* (CEO or executive director), Dr. Ernst Kohler, formally introduces

surnames – they keep their maiden names. Thus, it is not proper to address *Liu Yongqing*, the wife of President Hu Jintao, as *Mrs. Hu* – she is correctly known as *Madam Liu* or *Madam Liu Yongqing*.

There are many more naming conventions in Latin America, the Middle East and Africa. One good source is *Merriam Webster's Guide to International Business Communications* by Toby Atkinson. Another one – which I co-authored – is *Kiss, Bow or Shake Hands: How to Do Business in More Than Sixty Countries*.

**2 Write the date right!** As one of your sharply designed PowerPoint slides comes up, you notice that some audience members look puzzled. This may be because you wrote a delivery date, release date or even your birth date with the month first, then the day and then the year. This is an interesting habit in the United States, but one that is not followed worldwide. Writing dates differently has caused innumerable miscommunications on everything from scheduling appointments to closing contracts.

For example, let's say your slide says: "Delivery by 10/09/08." That means October 9th, 2008, correct? Not if you are in France, Qatar or Brazil, where they write the day first, then the month, then the year. So for these

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# Rude Moves

By Terri Morrison

**B**elow are some gestures you want to avoid when giving a presentation in other countries:



## **"A-OK!"**

In the United States, making this gesture signifies that "all's well!" However, in France it means "zero"; in Japan it can mean "money", and in Brazil, Guatemala and Paraguay, it is obscene.



## **Wink!**

Guard your gaze. Winks can communicate everything from "This is our little secret" in North America to a romantic invitation in Latin America, to a vulgar insult in India or China.



## **Get the Point?**

Pointing at a person with your index finger is considered rude. Different cultures point with their chins, or they extend their entire open hand toward the object.



## **A Smile**

A smile is not a universal expression of genuine pleasure around the world. In many parts of Asia, a smile can be used to cover up embarrassment, shock or fury. And the French only smile when they have a reason; they assume that anyone wearing a constant grin in public is either condescending or feeble-minded.



## **Thumbs Up!**

This seemingly innocuous gesture is fine in America, but it's rude in the Middle East (don't hitchhike with your thumb out in Israel). It's obscene in parts of Africa (e.g. Nigeria), and may mean you want five items in Japan!



## **Showing the soles of your feet, or using your left hand to eat**

These are inappropriate behaviors in the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, parts of Africa and many other locales. If in doubt, follow the lead of your hosts and you'll make the correct gesture.



## **"C'mere!" "Come Hither..." or "Here Spot!"**

Never beckon anyone by curling your index finger upwards. While this gesture works in the United States (particularly when flirting), it is exceedingly bad manners in many parts of the world. That is how you summon an animal. Instead, turn your palm down and wave your fingers, or whole hand, in a scooping motion.

people, 10/09/08 (or 10.09.08) would mean September 10th, 2008! If you receive irate phone calls in mid-September from such international clients, it is your fault because you have missed your own deadline!

In China, Hong Kong or places using materials with certain international formats, the year is listed first, then the month, then the day. That would make 10/09/08 September 8th, 2010, in Beijing. If your Chinese clients demur when you present your offer, it may be that your

delivery date is too protracted for them to do business with you.

**3 Don't Move!** Subtle non-verbal communications are the standard in much of Asia, and those minimal gestures transmit tremendous amounts of information. Therefore, if you take the podium and start gesticulating wildly – punching out your points with your fingers in the air, or whacking your right hand into

your left palm – your crowd may pay more attention to your body language than your speech content.

Tracey Wilen, an author who specializes in women's experiences internationally, has written about an anecdote that illustrates this point. According to the story, a female executive was addressing a group in Japan and noticed a gentleman in the first row who seemed to be making faces at her. He squinted, pursed his lips, and grimaced throughout the first half of her presentation. His bizarre facial contortions disturbed the presenter enough that, during the break, she asked her host if there was something wrong with the gentleman in the first row. She thought perhaps he was ill, or suffered from a nervous tic. To her horror, the perpetrator rushed over moments later, bowed abjectly, and declared:

"Honorable (Ms. Presenter), I am so sorry if I offended you in any way! I was so mesmerized by your presentation, I had no idea I was imitating you!"

Metaphorically, he was singing along with her animated facial movements! Not good.

Subtlety is best in high-context cultures (like Japan, where much communication depends on cultural awareness). Be discreet in your body language. Actually, avoiding any gestures is prudent until you see your clients use them first.

To complicate matters further, many non-verbal communications have entirely different meanings from one country to another. Here are three standard interactions examined from several cultural perspectives:

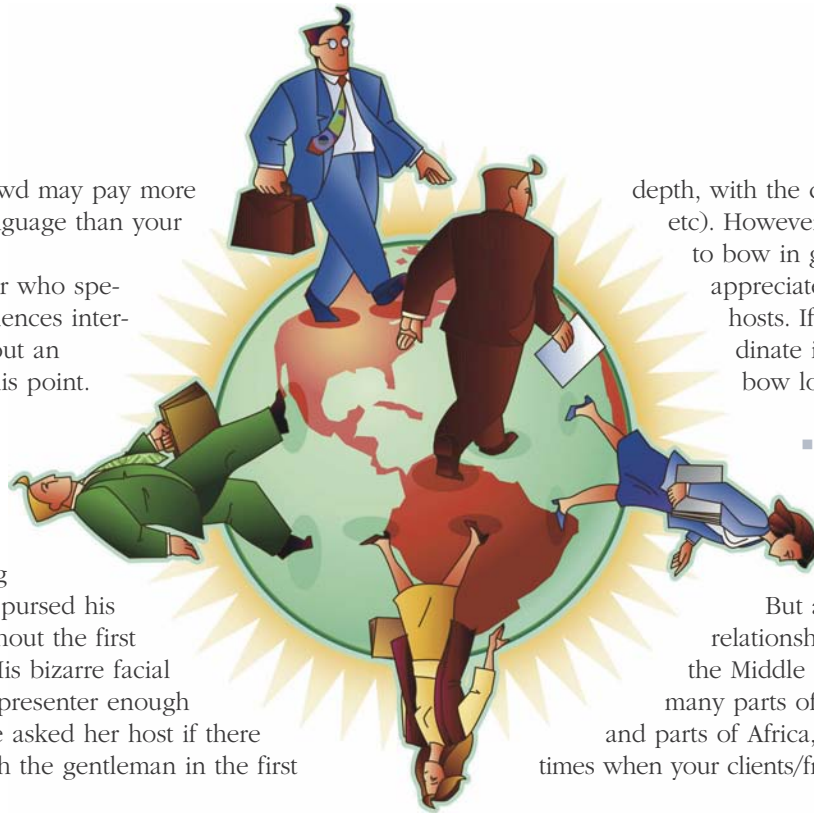
- **Shaking Hands.** In the United States, a firm grip has long been an indicator of strength of character, but styles of handclasp can definitely vary around the world. In Asia, a gentle, extended grip is normal and doesn't belie the negotiating strength of the participant. Many cultures disapprove of publicly touching the opposite gender. Devout Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Jews must not touch the opposite sex, so follow your hosts' lead.

- **Bowing.** The tradition of bowing is so complex that many Japanese attend classes in the proper protocol of the bow. It is rare that an international visitor would be able to appropriately execute a formal bow (to the right

depth, with the correct duration, etc.). However, a polite attempt to bow in greeting will be appreciated by your Asian hosts. If you're the subordinate in the relationship, bow lower.

- **Kissing.** Most initial business meetings around the world don't involve a kiss.

But after establishing a relationship with clients in the Middle East, Latin America, many parts of the Mediterranean and parts of Africa, there may be times when your clients/friends initiate a





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## “Many cultures disapprove of publicly touching the opposite gender.”

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brief kiss on either cheek, accompanied by a handshake, hug or pat on the back. Historically, Russian men have been known to participate in a rather intense embrace, which included a kiss or two.

In the Middle East, the same custom can occur between males, followed by an extended period in close proximity. And if you are in Brazil, kisses between the sexes often happen after only one meeting. Wherever you are, be certain that you never back away from a kiss from your host. You do not want to undermine your new business relationship by being coy about your personal space.

Clearly, people around the world are not alike. Different cultures have different customs, priorities, ways of thinking and negotiating. When you are in the limelight, and all eyes are upon you, committing an appalling faux pas in international etiquette can ruin your credibility. Instead, build your credibility by properly addressing your audience, getting your dates right and checking your body language. And when the time is right, go for the big hug. 

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**Terri Morrison** is a co-author of *Kiss, Bow or Shake Hands: How to Do Business in More Than Sixty Countries* and *Dun & Bradstreet's Guide to Doing Business Around the World*. For more information, visit <http://www.kissboworshakehands.com>.



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# A Disingenuous Discussion

**I** *Disingenuous* is an interesting word. It's the opposite of *ingenious*, of course, which means open, honest and candid. So a disingenuous person is one who wishes to *appear* ingenious for reasons that are anything but.

I think of that word whenever liquor marketers urge me to "drink responsibly." Now, liquor marketers are no dopes. They know that drinking is precisely what responsible people do when they're sick of being responsible. They get up, go to work, come home, help the kids with their homework, pay the bills and take out the garbage, after which they say, "That's enough responsibility for one day. I'm gonna have a couple of pops."

Our friends at the breweries and distilleries are being disingenuous, are they not? They're asking us to do something they know we won't do, because it makes *them* look responsible. They are, after all, selling a product frequently associated with car wrecks, criminal behavior, terminal disease, broken families and office Christmas parties everybody spends the month of January trying to forget.

By asking us to "drink responsibly," they can continue to promote their product aggressively ("drink") while escaping all culpability for the ill effects of its consumption ("responsibly"). Notice they don't say "drink less," which is in fact the responsible thing to do. They leave it up to you to supply your own interpretation of "responsible" at the very time when you have no intention of being so. How disingenuous!

Much like another favorite oxymoron of mine: educational television. Let's be clear about this.

Television is the national narcotic. People watch television to induce a vegetative state just short of neuro-necrosis. To suggest that TV viewers want to be, or even *could* be, educated in such a condition is disingenuous with a capital D.

Why, then, the phrase? Well, here again you have an industry which is ever-so-slightly self-conscious about the nature of its product. First, you have the paradox of highly intelligent people using all their intelligence to craft shows that require no intelligence to watch. Then there is the actual content: sex and violence, unfunny comedies, sex and violence, imbecilic game shows, sex and violence, boorish reality shows, sex and violence, sponsor-saturated sports shows, sex and violence, opinion-saturated news shows, sex and violence, and crime shows full of sex and violence.

I suppose one could say it's educational to see how many ways people can be murdered in an hour, but that's not what they mean by educational television. Rather, the thought seems to be: *Look, we know you hate yourself for wasting the precious hours of your life in front of a TV, watching shows that either bore, irritate or repulse you, right along with the commercials that insult the intelligence you're not using. The truth is, we don't feel so great about giving them to you.*


*So let's make a deal. We'll create just enough educational television so we can answer the critics who call us soft-core pornographers, and you'll have something to put on a survey when they ask about your viewing habits. Who knows? Maybe you'll actually like watching the migration patterns of the golden plover.*

Yeah, maybe.

Disingenuous as these phrases are, however, they pale in comparison to an utterance by a Hillary Clinton adviser when it was still unclear whether she or Barrack Obama would get the Democratic nomination for president. The adviser opined that if somehow the two became deadlocked, they might engage in a power sharing arrangement. That's right, power sharing. As if Stalin, say, had said to Trotsky, "Look, I'm thinking of conquering the world but I don't want all that power, wealth and immortality for myself. You want in?"

People want power precisely so they won't have to share. They're sick of sharing. They shared once and they didn't like it. The only power-sharing arrangement people enter into willingly is marriage, and we all know how well that works. No, the Clinton adviser was being disingenuous. Knowing her candidate was losing, she proposed a scenario in which the other candidate would look like he *wasn't winning*, because anyone who has to share power clearly doesn't have it.

It reminds me of the time when I was 8 years old and the neighborhood bully was beating me senseless. Staunching my bloody nose with one hand, I held up the other and said, "You look tired. If we quit now I'll agree to call it a draw." He was so confused he walked away.

Ingeniously disingenuous, don't you think? 

**John Cadley** is an advertising copywriter for an agency in Syracuse, New York. Reach him at [jbcdley@mower.com](mailto:jbcdley@mower.com).



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