

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | OCTOBER 2020

TOASTMASTER®

And the winner is ... **Mike Carr,**
2020 World Champion
of Public Speaking



**How to Rock
a Presentation**

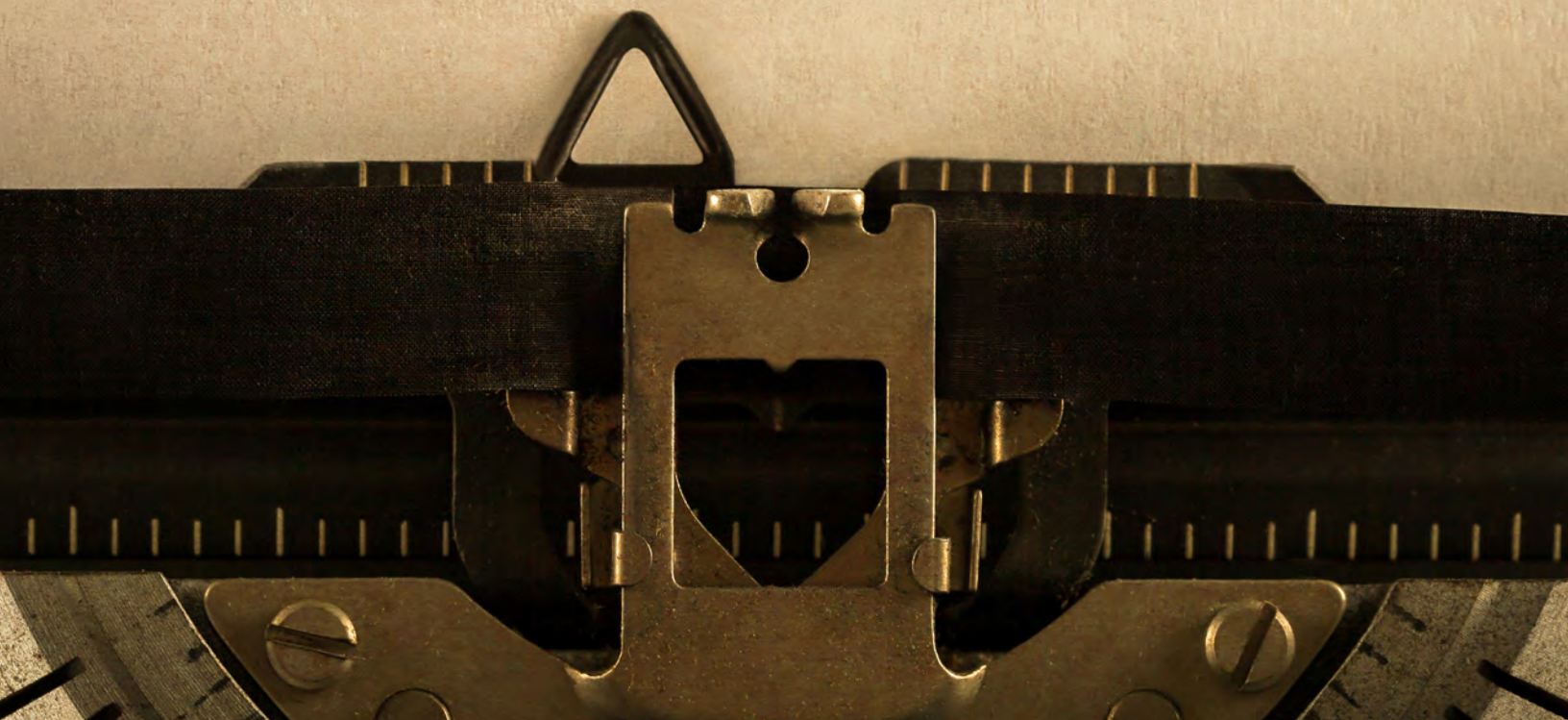
**Tips and Tricks
for Table Topics**



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Convention Conveys Worldwide Community



Since the appearance of COVID-19 in early 2020, we have all had to make tough and often emotional decisions. One of the toughest decisions World Headquarters and the Board of Directors had to make this year was how best to conduct the 2020 Toastmasters International Convention. How could we create the level of community, networking, and inspiring programming that is such a part of our convention? Could it even be done? Eventually, the obvious choice became to hold a virtual convention, despite all the unknowns. What would it look and feel like, what would it cost, and how many people would be willing to attend? The price was announced (attendance would be free), registration was opened, and then the waiting game began. It started off slow ... 1,000 ... then 2,500 ... then a jump to 10,000 ... and in the end, over 60,000 individuals registered for the first-ever virtual convention in our 95-year history.

With so many registrants, and this being our first experience with a large online platform, there were inherent risks of technical difficulties, and while some risks were realized in the first few days, World Headquarters quickly resolved them. In the end, the convention was a success, with thousands of attendees over an exciting six days. For the first time, as far as I can remember, we conducted our Annual Business Meeting with zero invalid votes! Thank you to all the delegates who participated in this historic business meeting.

Congratulations to the newest members of the Board on your election, I know you will serve our members well. Congratulations also to Mike Carr, our 2020 World Champion of Public Speaking, and our newest Accredited Speaker, Mohamed Ali Shukri, DTM. I stand in awe of your accomplishments and wish you all the best on your future endeavors.

For me, the convention is about connecting with old friends while meeting new ones, experiencing the majesty of the Opening Ceremony and the Parade of Flags, and cheering on competitors from around the world as they vie for the World Championship of Public Speaking®. This year, I was still able to experience all these things only in different ways. Regardless of how we connect with one another the importance is that we connect ... and no one had to witness my attempt at dancing!

Past International Director Tracy Thomason, DTM, once stated that what makes Toastmasters special is the sense of community it provides, that feeling of belonging, the feeling that we matter to one another. This year's virtual convention still allowed us to come together as a worldwide community!

I encourage you to continue to reach out to our members and clubs around the world, to meet new friends, and grow your community. Together, we can make a positive, lasting impact on the world.

Richard E. Peck, DTM

International President

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By Silvana Clark

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Members celebrate meeting milestones.



On July 7, 2020, Puttalam Toastmasters of Puttalam, Sri Lanka, hosted its first in-person meeting as COVID-19 restrictions lightened.



Members of Southern Cross Toastmasters of Flagstaff Hill, South Australia, Australia, celebrated their 700th meeting in March 2020, before COVID-19 became more widespread.








KDU Toastmasters Club of Rathmalana, Sri Lanka, enjoyed an outdoor meeting in January 2020.



Send your fun club photos to photos@toastmasters.org. Include a description and your club name, number, and location. Photos must be in jpeg format with a resolution of at least 300 dpi (dots per inch) and size of at least 1 MB (megabyte). Out-of-focus images cannot be accepted. It is not necessary to include the Toastmaster magazine or other branded materials in your photos, but if Toastmasters materials are displayed, they must reflect the current brand.

www.toastmasters.org/Magazine

-  **Watch** informative videos.
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-  **View** collections of fun and interesting photos.
-  **Access** valuable resources through hyperlinks.
-  **Share** articles with prospective members, friends, and colleagues.



WHAT'S ONLINE THIS MONTH:



A Virtual Victor

Meet Mike Carr, the 2020 World Champion of Public Speaking! During the first-ever virtual convention, Carr reached his audience through the screen with his speech “The Librarian & Mrs. Montgomery.” Go online to watch him in action and get to know the second- and third-place winners.



We All Make Mistakes

As it turns out, no one is perfect. But being aware of what doesn't work in your presentation can help you find what does work. Learn the

top 10 mistakes people make from presentation coach Cathey Armillas, DTM, and download a list to see how to fix them.

Present With Purpose



Have you ever listened to a speech and thought, *Where is this going?* In this month's Toastmasters Toolbox by Bill Brown, DTM, find tips on how to prepare and present with a point.

Toastmasters Turns 96!

On October 22, 1924, the first Toastmasters International club meeting was held. Now, nearly 100 years later, there are more than 16,000 clubs spread across 145 countries. To dive deeper into Toastmasters history, visit the [Toastmasters Gallery](#) Magazine Archive to download PDF issues dating back to the 1930s.



This icon at the top of a page means an online extra is included with the article at www.toastmasters.org/Magazine.

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The Numbers Are In!

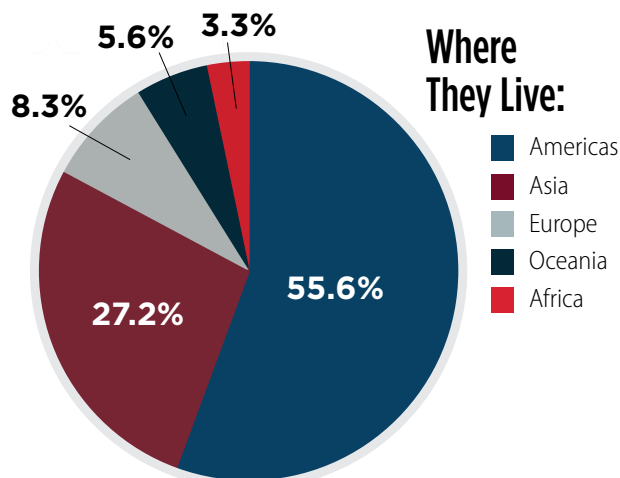
Who are we? We are a vibrant, international organization that has weathered the past year's turbulence. Here's a member snapshot, based on the latest demographic survey, covering July 1, 2019–June 30, 2020.

MEMBERS

>364,000
MEMBERS*

+1.7%
GROWTH

140,700
NEW MEMBERS



90%
of past members
felt Toastmasters
helped them reach
personal goals.

Age:

46.2

Average
Age

Education:

10.4%

are
Students

78.1%

Bachelor's
Degree or
Higher

Language:

56.6%

are
Multilingual

Gender:

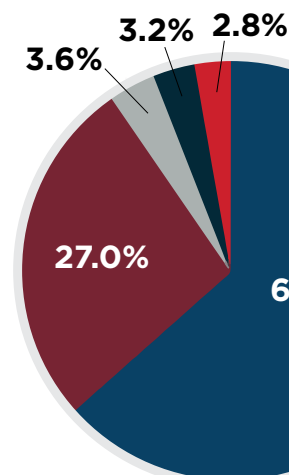
Female
54.0%

Male
46.0%

CLUBS

145
COUNTRIES

>16,200
CLUBS

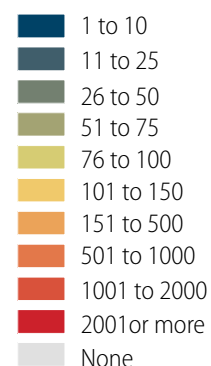


Club Type:

- Community
- Company
- Government
- College
- Other

49.1%
ACHIEVED
DISTINGUISHED

Total Clubs:



Recognition:

President's **>5,800**

Select **>1,100**

Distinguished **>900**

*Total membership for the October 2019 renewal period (includes dual memberships).
Source: World Headquarters Research and Analysis staff

► NEWS FROM TI

90 Years of Transformation

From mimeographed bulletins to digital devices, the *Toastmaster* magazine makes members the heart of its publication.



By the year 1930, nearly 30 Toastmasters clubs had formed, including one in British Columbia, Canada. To reflect expansion outside of the United States, the newly formed association was renamed Toastmasters International on October 4, 1930.

That same year, a small mimeographed bulletin called *The Gavel* emerged. Published monthly with a subscription rate of 5 cents per copy, it encompassed the voices of club members and helped spread information and inspiration as a service to the clubs. Here's an excerpt from the editorial team—including Toastmasters founder Ralph C. Smedley—in its debut issue:

We want every club to feel as though they had part in this paper, and that if they don't do their part, it just won't function right. That a bulletin can be of real service to the various Toastmasters clubs we are sure ... there must be something convincing and worthwhile in each Gavel.

The Gavel started out as just a few pages of notices and a President's Corner. Three years later it evolved into a printed publication with a new name: the *Toastmaster*. The first issue was still a mere 3.5 by 6 inches, but over time the *Toastmaster* grew

in size and content, including the addition of colorful graphics. By 2011, members were able to enjoy a PDF flipbook online, as well as a tablet app two years later. Then, in October 2016, the first [web-based edition](#) was introduced on the Toastmasters website, which continues to be promoted monthly by email, with articles posted weekly on social media.

Do you want to take a step back into time with your *Toastmaster*? Every issue of *The Gavel* and *Toastmaster* is available for download by PDF. Issues from 2012–present are located under the [Archive tab](#), or you can visit the public [Toastmasters Gallery](#) for *The Gavel* and *Toastmaster* issues from 1930–2011.

Shannon Dewey is the digital content editor for the *Toastmaster* magazine.

How well do you know Toastmasters history?

Read this article and then go to the [online edition](#) to take a quiz.

► NEWS FROM TI

“Why Toastmasters?” Digital Guest Packet

Looking for an inviting, interactive, and immediate way to share Toastmasters benefits with your club guests and prospects? Send them to the [“Why Toastmasters?”](#) webpage, our new digital guest packet.

Visitors can click on eight elements to learn about Toastmasters, meeting formats, the club experience, testimonials, Pathways, and much more. There is also a section on how to find a club, fill out a membership application, and ask any additional questions.

While originally designed as a virtual alternative to the hard-copy guest packets used at in-person meetings, the new “Why Toastmasters?” site offers a quick, convenient way to catch



potential members' interest, regardless of the club's meeting format. Additionally, member prospects can easily forward the webpage to coworkers, employers, friends, family, or others they think might like to know more about Toastmasters.

Give it a try in your club and send the link to anyone who may be interested in learning more!

▶ **SNAPSHOT**

Members of Aurora Toastmasters Club of Curepipe, Mauritius, celebrate the beginning of 2020 with a club officer installation ceremony and team-building activities. In this photo, club members stand outside Le Domaine des Aubineaux—a colonial mansion built in the 1870s.

▶ **PATHWAYS**

Districts Pull Together on Pathways Event

Districts around the world are working hard to help their members achieve success in the [Pathways learning experience](#). For example, eight Districts in Region 7 (eastern United States) recently banded together to present a day of informative Pathways-related webinars. The Zoom event drew more than 700 attendees. The 10-hour marathon event in May featured five consecutive webinars—presented as courses taught by members with substantial Pathways experience. The courses included “Basic” (Pathways terminology and Base Camp); “Intermediate” (program concepts and features); and “Advanced” (Pathways mentoring program and how to earn a DTM). The other courses were “Pathways for Base Camp Managers” and “Dispelling Myths About Pathways.” Each webinar included a Q&A session.

The region-wide Pathways training was the brainchild of Iris Taylor, DTM, District 27’s Program Quality Director at the time.



Jeanna Lee, District 27’s Public Relations Manager, says the daylong event produced a positive “ripple effect.”

“Region 7 will now have more informed and effective Toastmasters who will be able to navigate Pathways much more proficiently, and in turn, those members can then share their knowledge and train additional members within their clubs,” says Lee.



GET CREATIVE! Traveling *Toastmaster* wants to highlight creativity in quarantine! Take a picture in your home or socially distancing with your magazine or other Toastmasters memorabilia. Send your fun photos to photos@toastmasters.org.



1 | CRISTINA JUESAS, DTM, (pictured left) and **MARTA KERNSTOCK** of Vitoria-Gasteiz, Basque Country, Spain, stop to show the online edition on Marta's phone as they walk.

2 | DR. SONALI KODANGE of Muscat, Oman, takes a break with the Toastmaster while working in a hospital intensive care unit during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3 | RICHARD WEINDORFER of Chicago, Illinois, poses in Havana, Illinois, while wearing a Paris T-shirt and dreaming of traveling around the world.

4 | GAIL MARSH, DTM (pictured left), of Gambrills, Maryland, and her niece, Jennifer Czapla, DTM, of Amherst, New York, ride in a tuk-tuk in Delhi, India, before the pandemic.



View additional photos in this month's Traveling *Toastmaster* photo gallery at www.toastmasters.org/Magazine.

Leadership Amid the Pandemic

How teamwork allowed our Area to shift a crisis into a legacy.

BY HANAA MOUNZER

Like many Toastmasters around the world, when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, our Area was forced to adapt quickly to figure out what would come next for our four clubs in and near Beirut, Lebanon. As an Area Director, I knew it was vital that we not only stay safe but also continue to help clubs maintain their educational progress and membership renewals, charter a new club, and somehow still conduct the Area Speech Contest.

We had to cancel our Area contest in March, merely 12 hours before the event. While we were disappointed, our biggest challenge was helping members and contestants accept and adapt to the circumstances.

Ultimately, we learned that the secret ingredient to survival during any crisis is teamwork. My team and I agreed that we wanted to move forward with the contest and encourage clubs to pursue their plans. We had to work together to come to terms with the severity of the situation, adjust our approach, and prepare to adapt.

All team members in the Area played a crucial role in finalizing the plan. Listening to different perspectives aided in highlighting any gap and enhancing the process; persistence and follow-up would ensure continuity of the plan; recognition of every single team member would keep morale and motivation high.

Our first step was to create an advisory committee of Lebanon Toastmasters, including a past Area Director, a medical doctor, and a Club President. We needed this diversity of expertise to figure out the most suitable approach for the Area.

We first determined how to best conduct an online Area Contest and then discussed other exciting ideas, such as online joint activities between Toastmasters' clubs across the globe, panel discussions, and online sessions with international role models and trainers. We created opportunities from the crisis, which energized the group.



Hanaa Mounzer

Before sharing the advisory committee opinions with the Area Council, I listened to and addressed their concerns. This collaboration allowed us to collect valuable insights to reach the optimal decision. It also allowed us to combat the initial resistance we encountered when introducing the online option.

Through open communication and collaboration, we explained the vision and benefits of hosting a virtual Area Contest and club meetings. It was our responsibility as leaders to preserve clubs' continuity rather than breaking momentum while waiting for the crisis to end. Once all team members were aligned under the same vision of maintaining our club meetings, we structured the timeline for our plan.

We then reached out to members of the Toastmasters International Facebook group to ask for advice and began connecting with them about online meetings. Everyone was supportive in answering questions, offering advice on how to conduct trainings, and advising on best practices. On March 16, 2020, just 10 days after canceling our in-person contest, we successfully conducted our first online

demonstration meeting. After that, we trained every club officer on how to plan and run online meetings. In just one week, we successfully shifted all our Area's clubs to online meetings.

Getting all clubs to transition to online triggered the momentum. In April, we conducted a successful online Area Speech Contest. After the contest, clubs became more innovative and began hosting joint meetings, panel discussions, and trainings with clubs around the world. Toastmasters from other countries became members of our clubs. We even moved forward with chartering a new club.

Our Area has grown stronger since the pandemic gripped the world. Thanks to my team and our members' willingness to collaborate and adapt, I believe our Area will continue to be innovative when we transition back to in-person meetings. Leaders have learned to stay connected; they've seen the value in inviting speakers from outside our club, and they've begun live-streaming special events to Toastmasters around the world.

Leaders are already thinking creatively about hybrid meetings that involve a mixture of online and offline components. I recommend basing decisions on each club's comfort levels and having regular check-ins. Listening to members and your team is vital to keeping membership and involvement high. Be ready to adapt at any moment in these times of uncertainty.

During any crisis, every leader has the choice to seize new opportunities through challenges. With one vision, exceptional teamwork, a proper support system, and continual persistence, the team can create a legacy. **T**

HANAA MOUNZER is a member of Pro-Toast Club of Beirut, Lebanon. She served as an Area Director in 2019-2020.



What's the Point?

Define the purpose of your speech to avoid losing your audience.

BY BILL BROWN, DTM

Have you ever listened to a speech or presentation and wondered, “Where are they going with this? What is the point?” I suspect the speaker didn’t have a clear understanding of their speech purpose. How do you avoid this in your own speeches?

Let’s look at two key questions to ask as you plan your presentation.

The first question is “What do I want my listeners to think, feel, and/or do differently when I am done?” Do you want them to change their position on an issue? Do you want them to get excited about your cause? Do you want them to take some sort of action? Be specific here.

Next, ask yourself, “What is the purpose of my presentation? Given my answer to the first question, what does that mean I have to do in my speech?”

You might say, “That seems like an unnecessary step. I know what I want to do. I just sit down and write my speech.” This reminds me of the stories we hear about people who are trying to navigate through the woods when there is no trail. All too often they end up walking around in circles and get lost.

It is best to pick a direction, and find a landmark you can keep constantly before you. That way you know you are moving toward your goal. That is analogous to defining the purpose of your speech. Your purpose statement is your landmark.

For many presentations, the purpose is to inform. It is not, however, just to inform, but to inform the listeners of specific information. If a fact or story does not connect with that specific information, it is

pushing you off your trail, away from your landmark, and should not be included.

Another common purpose is to persuade, but you must decide what you want to persuade your audience to do. Perhaps it is to convince a prospective customer that your company is the best one to provide a service. Ask yourself, “Are my reasons persuasive enough to get the job done? Or do I need to keep working on my argument?”

Pick a direction, and find a landmark you can keep constantly before you.

Two more common possibilities are to inspire and to motivate. One might ask, “Aren’t they the same thing?” In my mind, they are not, but that is a topic for another article. To cover it now would not be in line with my article’s purpose. Do you see how that works?

And, as before, the question is to inspire or motivate to do what?

To entertain is another important purpose. An entertaining speech may contain a lot of jokes, or it may contain none at all. Maybe all you need to do is make the audience smile. Entertainment may be the full purpose of the presentation, like an after-dinner feel-good speech, or it may be a part of a larger purpose.

There are minor purposes as well that may apply to your situation, such as to advocate, to honor, to console, or to thank. There is no fixed list. It is for you to decide what you want to accomplish, and then

use your landmark to verify that you stay on your trail.

Can you have more than one purpose in a speech? Absolutely. For example, I am finalizing a presentation on basic speaking skills for a local organization. My purpose statement is as follows:

- ▶ Inform or educate the attendees on effective presentation construction and delivery techniques.
- ▶ Inspire the attendees to want to become better presenters.
- ▶ Make the presentation entertaining enough that the attendees enjoy and remember the material.

As I develop my presentation, I must look at this statement to make sure I am achieving each purpose, and that includes the last one. As an analytical person, it is easy for me to focus on the details and miss the point of making it fun for the audience. I am good at informing, but inspiration and entertainment need to be in the presentation as well. This gives me a landmark to make sure that I cover every purpose.

All too often I hear a speech, presentation, or sermon that seems lost in the woods, meandering around in circles. It is easy to do. A well-thought-out purpose statement can help make sure your focus is on the result rather than on the words. It gives you a landmark to keep you on the path to presentation success. **T**

Bill Brown, DTM, is a speech delivery coach from Las Vegas and a member of *Ahead of the Curve Toastmasters*. Learn more at www.billbrownspeechcoach.com.

The Grammarian's Gift

How the club's guardian of language helps speakers find words that work.

BY KATE MCCLARE, DTM

When you're called to serve as [grammarian](#), do your nightmares from grammar class come back to haunt you? Do you dread everyone finding out you can't tell a subject from a predicate and your knowledge of the pluperfect is as far from perfect as it gets?

Relax. You're not here just to call out grammar gaffes. Pointing out mistakes is important, especially for club members who are speaking their second language, but correcting technical errors—in whichever language your club members use—is just one task toward the larger goal of helping members communicate more effectively. Your job is to listen like any other audience member, not like a linguistics professor. Listen for limp words weakening the message, and with sensitivity to stereotyped or biased language that can alienate some listeners.

The grammarian offers new language tools by presenting the Word of the Day, which members try to incorporate when they speak in the meeting. Choose a word that's uncommon but not obscure—one that speakers will actually be able to use in an everyday sentence. Your goal is not to trip them up with archaic language but to help them strengthen their daily vocabularies.

Serving in this role helps you hone your listening and evaluation skills. The most effective grammarians take a holistic, or comprehensive, approach, looking at the speaker's whole message in addition to the small pieces that comprise it. They focus on how a speaker's words communicate the message, not just whether someone confused “you and I” for “you and me.”

“The grammarian can only listen more effectively if they understand that

grammar goes well beyond the style guides most never read beyond [school],” says Luiz Bravim, a member of Gelfand Good Morning Toastmasters in Hollywood, Florida. Bravim has taught English internationally and has won Area- and District-level evaluation contests. “The greatest challenge is for clubs and Districts to come up with an education plan that teaches grammar holistically for the betterment of all Toastmasters.”

Here's how you can go beyond the basics when it's your turn to perform this role. As with any other feedback, recognizing the positive rather than pointing out the negative is often the best approach.

■ Point out speakers who strengthen their message with powerful language

Weed out weak words that don't add to the message. The worst offenders are empty modifiers like “very,” “nice,” and “fun,” which just take up space. Encourage the speaker to be specific and concrete. Instead of “She was nice,” or “We had fun,” suggest they show what that looks or feels like: “She always had something positive to say.” “We played every game and didn't want to go home.”

■ Call attention to vivid descriptions, on-point metaphors, and appealing rhythms

Celebrate speakers who use language that brings their stories to life. “The roller coaster roared down the tracks” brings the audience right into the action, unlike “The roller coaster went fast.” Point out engaging rhetorical devices like alliteration (“He was a flirt and a friend to all”), hyperbole (“I was so anxious, I didn't sleep a wink for



a week”), and the humorous twist (“We came, we saw, we got bored and left”).

■ Notice gender-neutral language that connects rather than divides the audience

Let speakers know “they” and “their” are acceptable pronouns in place of the exclusionary “he” and “his” or the clumsy “he or she”—and in deference to listeners who don't identify only as one gender or the other. “Inclusive language isn't just ‘politically correct,’” Bravim says. “It is correct.”

■ Log your observations

Use the Toastmasters [grammarian script and log](#) to identify strong verbs and modifiers, unusual and creative phrases, mispronunciations, rhetorical devices, and biased or non-inclusive language—and to note those who used the Word of the Day. If the speaker commits an egregious mistake like saying “he don't” or “they is,” mention it in your verbal grammarian's report but follow it with a positive note.

There's no need to get tense over verb tenses or disagreeable about singular-plural disagreement. Just listen to the words you are hearing and report whether they worked for you. **T**

Kate McClare, DTM, is a copywriter and editor whose professional experience includes many years as a newspaper and magazine journalist. She is Club President of Miami Advanced Toastmasters in Miami, Florida.

Meet the **Winners** of the **2020 World Championship**

How Mike Carr, Linda-Marie Miller, and
Lindy MacLaine wowed a virtual crowd.

BY LAURA MISHKIND

From longtime members to newer speakers, the finalists in this year's [World Championship of Public Speaking](#) had a wide range of experience, but none anticipated speaking to an audience of 23,000 from their homes. The 2020 virtual stage allowed competitors to get creative, take some risks, and share their messages with the largest audience the International Convention has ever seen. Meet the 2020 winners and learn how they wowed their viewers.

Mike Carr

Even after virtually visiting Toastmasters clubs, responding to social media comments, and participating in media interviews for a few weeks, Mike Carr says it still feels surreal to have won the 2020 Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking. "I'm just a regular guy, who has failed for 25 years and kept learning," he says from his home in Austin, Texas.

After joining Toastmasters almost 25 years ago, Carr began competing in speech contests and advanced to the International Speech Contest semifinals in 2015. But with eight children, a wife, and a financial business to run, he couldn't always make speech contests his priority. It became difficult. The speech he gave in 2015 was one of his favorites, but he didn't place.

"I walked away thinking, 'Maybe what I think works really doesn't work,'" says



Mike Carr

Carr, a member of Austin Toastmasters. "The reality was my ego couldn't handle some of the feedback ... I was too in love with results." He stepped away from contests and allowed himself to wallow in the disappointment.

"I'm really glad that's the speech that won, because it's the culmination of a lesson of 25 years."

—2020 WORLD
CHAMPION, MIKE CARR

After some reflection, Carr realized the importance of learning from "failures." For years he had been telling his children to not worry about tangible results and just try. He followed his own advice and began competing again.

His championship-winning speech highlights that theme. In ["The Librarian & Mrs. Montgomery,"](#) Carr shares how, in grade school, he tried but was unable to fix a broken video projector. Though a short-tempered librarian left him terrified of failing, his teacher, Mrs. Montgomery, taught him to learn from it. She told him it was more important to try something and learn from mistakes than to focus on the results.

Reflecting that principle, he experimented with the virtual stage. The speech begins by showing Carr in the corner of his computer screen. The audience can only see his head as he imitates how he would have appeared as a sixth-grade student. Carr uses the camera frame to show how the video projector began to malfunction, waving his hand in front of the camera to imitate the film flickering, and then covering the camera when the projector dies.

Asked how he came up with such a creative idea, Carr says, "Part of it was just beginning to experiment with that frame and looking at different perspectives. ... I thought, why not play with it and do something interesting and maybe I could project a message I want to give to the world."

By experimenting with the new medium, he captured the audience's attention, and now he is thrilled to see members coming up with their own



innovative ideas to incorporate into their virtual speeches. Additionally, mixing humor and drama in his speech, he was able to share and promote one of his personal mottos: “The victory is not in the result. The victory is in the try.” He explains, “I’m really glad that’s the speech that won, because it’s the culmination of a lesson of 25 years.”

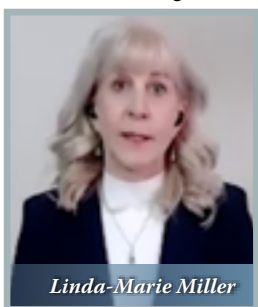
So what comes next for the World Champion? He plans to connect with as many Toastmasters as possible and continue to share his message. Ultimately, Carr believes every person has something great inside them, and it is vital they try their hand at some kind of pursuit, without focusing on the results.

“So many people have magic in them that they’re not going to let out because they’re scared of not getting the result,” he explains. “If I can just convince them that they have more control over the victory—just in the effort of it—then the world gets to be the beneficiary of so much more creativity.”

Linda-Marie Miller

This year’s second-place winner, Linda-Marie Miller, was a first-time competitor in the International Speech Contest. “I was shocked to be on the podium at all,” says the two-year Toastmaster. “I was thrilled that I made it to the finals because that meant that my speech might reach a larger number of people.”

“[Pretending Not to Know](#)” told the story of her experience discovering her own white privilege after the loss of a Black friend’s child. She explained how she had allowed an inherently racist system



Linda-Marie Miller

to benefit her, even though she had never been outwardly racist. As she spoke of

her seemingly socially aware actions, Miller held up signs with steps she had not taken, which ultimately allowed the system to continue. These props highlighted how silence can perpetuate problems.

In conclusion, Miller shared how she now uses her voice as an ally of those wronged by racism and asked the audience to join her. She ends her speech silently, with a final card for the audience to read: “What are you pretending not to know?”

“Within minutes of giving my speech, I began receiving thousands of messages from people who were moved to action by it,” says Miller, a member of Figure of Speech and Duke Toastmasters clubs in Durham, North Carolina. “Every time I speak, it is my intention that people will be different in their lives as a result of hearing me. ... I want people to get that they matter and that how they live their lives matters.”

As a professional speaker and experiential trainer, she encourages Toastmasters everywhere to continue to develop their speaking skills and use those to share their gifts and passions with the world—the same plan she has for herself.

“What started as a speech is on its way to becoming a nonprofit focused on dissolving our differences and elevating and celebrating our shared humanity,” Miller says, noting that she has formed a Facebook group called “One Shared Humanity.”

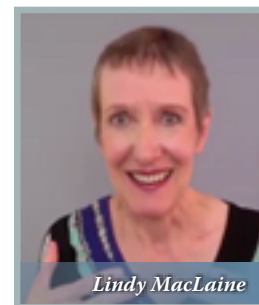
Lindy MacLaine, DTM

When Lindy MacLaine, DTM, first competed on the 2018 stage of the International Speech Contest semifinals, she had been suffering from insomnia for weeks. She was nervous and exhausted. A fellow competitor told her, “You need to come back a second time—so you can enjoy it!” And she did. This year, MacLaine was able to relax, share her story, and enjoy the

competition, which ultimately led her to a third-place finish.

In “[Your Buried Story](#),” the Washington state-based freelance writer described

finding her long-lost Peruvian foreign exchange family as a direct result of her semifinals speech. “When I was reunited with them in



Lindy MacLaine

December of 2019, I knew I wanted to share it with as many Toastmasters as possible,” she says. “For me, it was a miracle—brought about through Toastmasters, and telling my buried story.”

MacLaine, a member of SKWIM Toastmasters in Sequim, Washington, delivered her speech with expert body language, vocal variety, and a knack for performance. She took the audience back in time to show how she lost touch with and then found her “second family” through Toastmasters.

By reuniting with her Peruvian family after 40 years, MacLaine changed the ending to her own story. In the final lines of her speech, she urged the audience to do the same: “What if, when you tell your buried story, a new ending awaits? Tell your buried story.”

MacLaine feels honored to have placed in the top three of the finals this year, but says her main goal was improving her speaking skills. Working on a contest speech over and over allows for more accelerated growth—one reason why she encourages all Toastmasters to try competing. “A side benefit is the way my Toastmasters community grows every time I compete,” MacLaine adds. “Having new friends and fellow Toastmasters around the world delights me.” **T**

Laura Mishkind is assistant editor for the *Toastmaster magazine*.



How to *Rock* Your Presentation

Avoid these top 10 mistakes.

BY CATHEY ARMILLAS, DTM

Funny thing about people. We try to avoid pain more than we strive for gain. Most people tend to focus on the negative rather than the positive. I believe that's the reason why the number one question I get when coaching clients to give a TED Talk is: "What am I doing wrong?" rather than "What am I doing right?"

Let's talk about pain for a minute. A lot of people struggle with the pain of public speaking. Where does that pain come from? It's a fear of feeling vulnerable in front of other people. Would we feel as vulnerable if we knew we could execute a presentation flawlessly? No. We are afraid of making mistakes and looking silly. What if we could avoid that pain by learning from the most common and often simple mistakes that we all make?

As a TED coach and an executive speaker coach, I spend much of my time researching and incorporating the psychology of audience engagement and interaction into my work. I teach clients how to create talks, speeches, and presentations that aren't awful, because no one wants to be awful. The goal isn't to avoid it; it's to rock every speech, presentation, or talk we give.

But, how do we do that?



Mistakes We Make the Most

The quickest way to a boring presentation that lacks creativity is to allow yourself to fall into the common pitfalls you have undoubtedly witnessed firsthand. It's easier to scarcely prepare than to roll up your sleeves and work hard to deliver a unique and polished presentation.

Let's start with the "no-no's." There are many cliché habits we imitate in our presentations because we've seen and heard them before. How many times have you heard one of the following: *"And without further ado..."* *"Let me start by thanking the organizers for having me here today."* *"Thank you for your time, I'm honored to be here with you."*

Not that any of these sayings are bad—they aren't. They're just overused and expected. As a speaker, you can assert your power, and ultimately influence, by working a little harder to be original.

I have coached a wide variety of speakers: from a rap singer to a World War II veteran, from CEOs to TED speakers and Toastmasters World Champions. I've watched, analyzed, and reverse-engineered oh-so-many presentations. I started compiling a list of the most common mistakes that people make. Of course, I won't just leave you with a list of no-no's. I'm a coach. I'll also tell you what you can do to rock it instead.

Here are the top 10 mistakes that can dull down and suck the "wow" out of any presentation, followed by ways to turn the mistakes into wins.

1

Infowhelm

Don't overwhelm your audience with too much information. There's only so much they can process at once. They don't need hordes of data to get behind what you're saying. They need the right amount of information with the right angle.

How to rock it:

Be selective about the information you use and tailor it to your audience needs, not to your own expertise or comfort level.

2

Being audience ignorant

There are many ways we can be audience ignorant, particularly when we present information that doesn't match the interest or maturity level of our audience. Leaders want the 30,000-foot view while analysts love to get into the weeds. Colleagues in your field might want to see your work, while a potential client might want to just hear the conclusions. Don't be oblivious to what your audience cares about.

How to rock it:

Figure out the best way to connect with your audience by focusing on what they care about. Put yourself in their place. There's always an invisible wall between you and the audience. It's your job to recognize it's there and bring it down.

3

The slow start

Have you ever heard a presentation start where it takes a while before the speaker gets to the point? Slow starts are terrible. You should always open strong and grab the interest of your audience immediately.

How to rock it:

A great way to open is to ask an intriguing question or make a shocking statement. Do something that will instantly capture and retain the attention of the audience. One caveat, though: Don't do something just to do it. Make sure that your opening ties strongly to the ideas, points, and call-to-action you will be presenting.

4

Over-explaining

Have you ever heard someone tell a story and they go on and on and on and on? By the time they were done, you asked yourself, “What was the point of that?” Or, they explain an idea or concept and give more information than what was needed.

How to rock it:

Keep your stories and explanations as short as they can be. Do more engaging and less explaining. If you pay close attention to the reaction of your audience, you’ll know when you’re over-explaining.

5

Sameness

Most people can’t handle listening to someone who doesn’t have variety in their delivery of a presentation. In other words, sameness. If you sound the same throughout your speech, the audience will stop paying attention. The same of anything gets boring.

How to rock it:

Be aware of how you sound and your audience’s reaction. Add variety to everything—pace, vocal range, volume, and even the emotions you inject. Take your audience on a captivating journey where nothing stays the same. This will keep them tuned in the entire time.

6

Ending on Q&A

Never end on audience questions. You have no control over what’s being asked, so a question coming out of left field could derail your whole message and change the energy in the room. That’s not how you want to close, so don’t gamble on someone else’s question.

How to rock it:

Do the old radio show trick. When you get close to the end of your presentation, set the audience up with a teaser of something for them to look forward to at the end, then launch into the Q&A, before shifting gears into an impactful and memorable close.

7

Going over time

The cardinal sin in public speaking is going over time. It’s not enough to stay within your allotted time. Pace yourself so you don’t end up on slide seven out of 30 with a few minutes to go. A great way to derail a presentation is to make the audience feel anxious as you race to beat the clock.

How to rock it:

Internalize your presentation. If you know it backward and forward, you can easily cut something out on the spot. Improvise to make an “emergency landing.” Do whatever you have to so the audience feels they got what they needed rather than feeling their time was wasted.

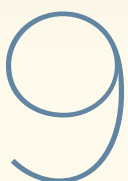


Dreadful visuals

There is no such thing as a neutral visual—it's either adding or taking value away. If a visual is tied to a point or story in a powerful way, it can be extremely effective. If a visual is boring or cliché, then part of your presentation is as well. Avoid clip art (pre-made images for a variety of mediums), stock photography, or slides with too many words.

How to rock it:

Find the visual that will connect your audience emotionally to what you're saying. If you're telling a story about how your grandma used to make homemade ravioli, don't show a stock photo of a plate of ravioli. Show us a picture of your grandma, or even better, one of her making ravioli.



I before you

Many presenters make their stories all about them. Yawn. Do you want your audience to tune out? If so, make your presentation all about you. If not, then don't.

How to rock it:

Here's a useful exercise: Count how many times you say the word "I" and how many times you say the word "you" during your presentation, then flip your wording. For example, change "I went to the store at 2 a.m. because I was craving my favorite ice cream" to "Have you ever gone to the store at 2 a.m. because you were craving your favorite ice cream?" When you use the word "you," it makes your audience put themselves into your story. They would rather think about themselves than hear you ramble on about what you did or what you think. Keep the I/you balance tipped more toward them than you.



The weak finish

The last thing that you say is the most important. At the end of your presentation, what do you want to leave your audience with? Do you want them to do something, change something, or think differently about something? Your biggest opportunity for a strong call to action is at the end. The mistake many people make is ending weak. I've always thought that ending with a "thank you" is just a lazy way to say, "My presentation is over." Find a better way.

How to rock it:

Think of your ending like a closing argument. Whatever you want your audience to do, think, or feel, make that apparent in your closing. Create an ending that will be so compelling and so obvious that the audience doesn't need the cue of "thank you" to know you are finished.

Focus on what works

Will anyone ever be able to completely eradicate mistakes out of their presentations? No. But you can focus on what works. Sometimes what works for one audience won't work for another. Awareness of these mistakes is just the start; ultimately, the audience wants to hear your unique content and feel your confidence. Find the intersection between what you are knowledgeable about and what works for your audience. Remember, every time you speak it's for them, not for you.

Anything is a mistake if it doesn't work. Honing your craft and being aware of what doesn't work can help you find what *does* work.

Cathey Armillas, DTM, is a three-time DTM and a member of TV Toastmasters and Toastmasters for Speaking Professionals, both in Portland, Oregon. She is an international speaker, marketing expert, TED coach, and author of *The Unbreakable Rules of Marketing: 9 ½ Ways to Get People to Love You*. For more information, visit www.CatheyArmillas.com.

Mentorship in Toastmasters and Medicine

How I discovered the “ABCD’s” of successful mentoring in my club and surgical career.

BY DR. STANLEY ARUYARU

See one, do one, teach one.” This adage, credited to Dr. William Stewart Halstead (1852-1922), emanates from the origins of the modern program for surgical training. Halstead, dubbed the father of American surgery, emphasized the importance of mentorship.

The adage means that a trainee must first observe the technique of surgery, then perform and perfect the skill, and, finally, as a surgeon, pass on that skill to a younger colleague through apprenticeship.

Mentorship holds a central place in surgery, because unlike other disciplines of medicine, the trainee surgeon needs to learn practical technical skills that may not be easily acquired by studying the written literature alone. Mentoring in surgery is so important that, according to research, up to three-quarters of surgical trainees have been found to choose the same specializations as their mentors.

I know this issue well, because I, too, benefited from mentors when I was a surgical trainee in Kenya. From these established surgeons, I learned several lessons and “survival tips” that I keep up today.

The first one is to be confident that whatever I do will be supported by my seniors as long as it is backed up by scientific evidence and intended to alleviate a patient’s suffering.

Second, I seek comfort in the face of difficult surgeries by doing my best. There is a comfort that comes with knowing you

did your best, but your best should not be equated to trying to create a brand-new limb for a patient who is horribly injured. It gives you the moral energy to proceed to serve the next patient.

Third, I carry the mantra “be complicated in your thinking but simplistic in your approach.” It helps with reflecting on “what is the worst that can happen?” or “what if your choice of surgery does not work?” It is a memorable line from one of my mentors, a pediatric surgeon.

In the college-without-faculty that is Toastmasters, mentorship and peer feedback are the only “teachers” we have.

Today I am the director of medical services at St. Theresa Mission Hospital in Meru, Kenya. Yet every time I get into a difficult operation, I always ask myself, *How would my mentor have approached this?*

After I joined the Kilele Toastmasters Club in Nyeri, Kenya, and took on a few speaking and meeting roles, I was quick to notice certain parallels between Toastmasters’ education program and surgical training across the world. The Toastmasters program centers on four pillars: experiential learning, self-paced learning, peer feedback, and mentoring. These tenets are

also at the heart of surgical training. As my club’s Vice President Education, I have seen firsthand how a member can rapidly grow in their learning experience when they make use of a mentor. In the college-without-faculty that is Toastmasters, mentorship and peer feedback are the only “teachers” we have.

How Does the Mentor Benefit?

The benefits of being a mentee are obvious for all to see. But how does the mentor grow? How does a mentor benefit after helping the mentee? When you teach others, you learn as well. I have found this true in Toastmasters’ Pathways learning experience. For example, after completing a Pathways project, I found that I benefited more when I mentored a member on the same project.

When I finished my Pathways Level 5 project “Advanced Mentoring,” I delivered a speech to my club in which I highlighted my four main mentoring strategies. I called them the ABCD’s of being a successful mentor:

Agree. As a mentor, it is easy to imagine you know best what your mentee needs. I harbored such thoughts until I sat down with my mentee to set the goals. “Stanley, I am not in Toastmasters to be an orator. I am here to learn as much on leadership as possible.”

This statement by my mentee, a member of my club, was an awakening. It



LEFT: Dr. Stanley Aruyaru speaks at his Kilele Toastmasters Club in Nyeri, Kenya.

BELOW: Dr. Aruyaru, director of medical services, consults with staff members at St. Theresa Mission Hospital in Meru, Kenya.



helped me taper my expectations into the objective ones we agreed on. It is similarly easy for mentors in surgical training to assume they know everything their trainee needs. More and more surgical training programs are itemizing what the trainee needs before the cycle of a formal mentoring engagement.

The first step is to agree on the expectations of the mentee and the objectives that need to be met.

Be a good example for your mentee. As I highlighted before, nearly three-quarters of surgical trainees end up picking the specialization of their mentors. They feel inspired when they see a surgeon who is a master at their craft. In a young club like mine, where there are no seasoned or Distinguished Toastmasters to emulate, a mentor can inspire their mentee through leading by example. I once discussed with my mentee the need for him to use the stage more effectively and minimize the use of notes during speeches. When I took a speaking role the following week, I knew I needed to practice what I preached. I made sure not to carry any notes to the lectern. The pressure was suddenly on me because of my mentee's expectations.

Cede control. The fast-paced mentor might want to push the mentee to complete their projects early or have their draft speeches ready a week before the

meeting. This approach would change the dynamic from mentoring to coaching. As a mentor, I felt this was tempting. Luckily for me, the mentee did not change. He still gave his draft to me four days before the meeting, and he delivered on the areas we had discussed. It was a learning experience for me: I realized that the pace and direction of the mentorship should be dictated by the mentee.

Ceding control of the relationship to the mentee not only empowers them, it makes the mentoring relationship comfortable and enjoyable. We learn best in moments of enjoyment, as Toastmasters founder Dr. Ralph Smedley once observed.

Do not chase after time. Dr. Job Mogire, a former Toastmaster in Wichita, Kansas, and author of the book *Born to Win*, argues that "if you are building something worthy, time is your friend." (Think of the picturesque Great Pyramid of Giza taking 20 years to construct.) As a mentor, I learned patience. I sometimes worked with my mentee on certain areas of improvement for speech delivery. I then sat and watched them deliver the speech and felt that those areas were not executed as rehearsed.

By the third project, however, I started noticing changes and improvement. This is the essence of Toastmasters education—it is self-paced, to give the member time for quality and growth. In surgical training we

do not just confine a trainee to a university hospital for five years and get them out. The competence-based curriculum ensures that this time is filled with continued and repeated exposure to learning and performing surgeries at increasing levels of competence and complexity. It is okay to sacrifice rapid results at the altar of continual general improvement.

There is great similarity between the strategies applied by mentors in Toastmasters and mentors in surgical education. While the mentee is the obvious intended beneficiary in a mentoring relationship, the mentor stands to retain much of what the mentee learns if they apply such education in the form of teaching or peer mentoring.

The ABCD strategies, which include agreeing on the objectives from the start, setting a good example for the mentee, letting the mentee control the speed and direction of the relationship, and being patient, will result in a great experience for both the mentee and the mentor. **T**

Dr. Stanley Aruyaru, a member of the Kilele Toastmasters Club in Nyeri, Kenya, is a consultant general surgeon and the director of medical services at St. Theresa Mission Hospital in Meru, Kenya. He is also the associate editor of the *Annals of African Surgery*—the peer-reviewed official journal of the Surgical Society of Kenya.

Spontaneous SPEAKING

Tips and tricks for becoming a better Table Topics speaker.

BY PEGGY BEACH, DTM

For many Toastmasters, nothing strikes fear into the heart quite like the Table Topics® part of a meeting. You know it's important to learn spontaneous speaking, but it's intimidating, and there's no way to prepare. Or is there?

We all know the fear you feel waiting to be called upon for Table Topics. But challenging as it may be, the best thing you can do is try to relax, says Allan Loudon, professor of communications at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, who understands that impromptu speaking is a challenge for many speakers.

Think of the impromptu speech as a conversation. "You don't need to plan the entire speech," Loudon says. "In a conversation, you effortlessly have things to offer. Begin the conversation, and as you speak, more and more will come to mind."

Relaxing—not panicking—is a key factor in being a successful Table Topics speaker. But can you do something to prepare before the meeting? The answer is yes.

Before and After the Meeting

Keeping up with current events is one way to help with Table Topics questions.

"Know what is happening in the world," says Patricia Hurdle of Charlotte, North Carolina, who won her District Table Topics Contest this past May. Hurdle points out that headlines tend to be a great source of Table Topics questions. "The more you know about what is going on, the more prepared you'll be for questions on those topics," she adds.

Glenn Scales, DTM, of the Bull City Toastmasters in Morrisville, North Carolina, agrees. "You can also diversify your reading interests so that you have more material to draw from," he says.

Scales also recommends practicing Table Topics by creating your own practice sessions. Look for questions from previous meetings and write them down. You can use these questions for practice later. Members looking for more Table Topics ideas can order the [Table Talk card pack \(Item #1318\)](#) and the [Chat Pack \(Items #1319 and #1334\)](#) from the Toastmasters Online Store. Both packs can be used for practice and in the Table Topics-master role.

If there is a theme to the meeting, consider how you might answer questions related to that theme, says Sharon Anita Hill, DTM, Past International Director, region 7. The theme is often included on the meeting agenda. For example, if the theme is transportation, think of a memorable road trip, the first time you rode on a train, or an eventful plane ride. Thinking about the theme before the meeting will keep you from getting too flustered during the Table Topics session.

Hurdle, of Monday Six-0 Toastmasters in Charlotte, suggests speaking to people you've never met before when you're at work events or social functions. "Strangers tend to ask questions that





allow us to tell our story,” she says. “We can be more comfortable speaking off the cuff in that situation that is similar to Table Topics.” She also recommends having three stories ready that apply to several different situations. “When you use one, replace it with a different one or be ready to twist it so it sounds different.”

Jim Kohli, DTM, Past International Director for region 2 (parts of California and Nevada), encourages members to always sign up or raise their hand for Table Topics. “Participate as frequently as possible,” he says. “I also encourage people to seek feedback and practice with another person.” Hill agrees with Kohli that signing up for Table Topics is critical. “Even if you are not called on, give the response in your head. Do this for all Table Topics questions,” she says.

Kohli also recommends using breathing exercises to help with nervousness, but says nothing takes the place of practice.

During the Meeting

When the Table Topicsmaster calls on you, what do you do?

Hurdle suggests that speakers be kind to themselves and have fun. “No one is expecting a perfect speech,” she says. “That

piece of advice really took the pressure off of me ... I can focus on delivering something genuine.”

Hill encourages speakers to avoid speaking right away. “Speak slowly,” she says. “Take a few seconds to plan your response. If you freeze, pivot to another topic. Mention the question and smoothly change the topic.”

Christopher Pritchard, DTM, of Naples, Florida, recommends that members use as many of the tools for prepared speeches as possible. “Remember the opening, body, and closing, as well as a call to action,” he says. Pritchard also says that members should not use tired statements such as “That’s a hard one,” “Okay, that’s a minute,” and “Glad that’s over.”

If you get stuck, don’t worry.

“Sometimes you just get stumped by an off-the-wall question,” says Scales. “Don’t panic and shut down. Pause (it’s okay) and collect yourself. If you can’t respond directly, take a contrary point of view. You also can pick one significant word from the question and expound on that.”

Serena Gilbert, a member of the Kent Speakers Club in Maidstone, England, says you can draw on a variety of strategies to

answer a question. For example, if you're not eager to answer the question directly, you can use it as a jumping-off point to move in a different direction with your response. Gilbert calls this the "politician and pivot" technique. Imagine you're asked a question about ... making your bed. You could gracefully do a pivot: "Thanks for that thoughtful question about bed making. I was in bed dreaming the other night, and let me tell you what happened in the dream. ..."


Presentation and Purpose

Hurdle says that speakers can use their presentation skills for Table Topics. "The idea and the purpose are given to us," she says. "Start with a story and tie it to the idea and purpose, essentially working backward from how I prepare a speech. The story doesn't even have to be factual. It does need to be engaging."

Some clubs even include the role of Table Topics Evaluator. "We see this as a crucial role in listening and giving short, quick evaluations," says Mish Barad, DTM, member of Birmingham New Street Speakers in Birmingham, England, and Heart of England Club in Solihull, England. "We have found that

members—and even guests—really appreciate the feedback and are more likely to see the value in Table Topics."

Seeing the audience as friendly, not adversarial, is important, says Loudon, the communications professor. "The main challenge of public speaking is to realize that the sea of faces in front of you, ready to judge, aware of every mistake, anticipating your embarrassment, is in your head." He says that the audience members are "likely friends cheering your achievement. They almost will you to succeed."

Members and experts all agree that your impromptu speaking skills will not improve if you don't participate in Table Topics. "Your skills improve with every experience," Kohli says. "I also have it on good authority that the Table Topics participants' survival rate is quite high." 

Peggy Beach, DTM, is a Past District 37 Governor. She is a freelance writer, editor, and instructor in Raleigh, North Carolina. She is Vice President Education for both Hi Rise Toastmasters in Raleigh and Top Triangle Toastmasters in Morrisville, North Carolina.

Creative Tips FOR THE Topicsmaster

Use imagination and humor to make Table Topics come alive.

BY SILVANA CLARK

It happens to all of us. We sign up to lead Table Topics® thinking, *This meeting I'm going to put some thought and effort into coming up with clever topics.* Then the night before the meeting, you quickly Google "Questions for Table Topics" and pick the first 10 to 12 suitable ideas.

Which means club members answer questions such as, "What was your best birthday present?" or "What superpower would you like to have?"

There's nothing intrinsically wrong with those topics, but wouldn't it be nice to have some new ideas and liven up your meetings?

The Topicsmaster—the member who leads the meeting's Table Topics session—plays a key role in making the activity engaging and worthwhile. Here are four ideas to give your topics a creative twist.

1 If your club is meeting online, take advantage of people being in their homes. Simply say, "Everyone has 30 seconds to find something in your house that has a special meaning to you. GO!" People usually laugh as they race around, looking for that one-of-a-kind item. When everyone comes back, select members to display their item and explain its significance. You'll discover things about your club members you never knew. You might see a club member display his first bowling trophy or a parent hold up their toddler!

2 It's easy to come up with Table Topics for holidays such as Valentine's Day and Mother's Day. But did you know there are hundreds of quirky "holidays" throughout the year that make excellent topics? Simply go online and look up "Untraditional Holidays" or some variation of that phrase, and you'll discover Polar Bear Plunge Day (January 1) and International Tweed Day (April 3). For this Table Topic, give the participant the name of a holiday and have them describe how they will celebrate. Here are a few to get you started:

- March 1, World Compliment Day
- March 20, Big Bird's Birthday



- ▶ August 6, International Cat Day
- ▶ September 27, World Tourism Day

3 Wouldn't it be great to write a bestselling book? You'd travel the world giving speeches and doing TV interviews. Here's a chance for members to at least pretend they are being queried by Oprah about their literary accomplishments. Ahead of the club meeting, cover 10-12 books with fake covers. Nothing fancy. Just come up with unique book titles.

Each person participating in Table Topics gets a book and then proceeds to act as if they were being interviewed on a major TV show, explaining what the book is about. (For online meetings, share your screen to show your book cover.) Possible titles could include *How to Train Your Hamster to Star in Movies and Commercials*, *Lose Weight Eating Only Fudge and Pasta*, and *Why You Only Need Two Hours of Sleep A Night*.

4 Some laws make perfect sense. People should stop at a stop sign. But what about laws that you think might be outdated or unimportant? Table Topics participants will be told about a law, and then share their reasons why this one should be enforced. Don't worry, you don't need a legal degree to participate. Thanks to the internet, it is easy to find these unusual laws online.

- ▶ In France, it is illegal to carry live snails on a high-speed train unless they have a ticket.
- ▶ In Mexico, bicyclists are not allowed to lift their feet from the pedals.
- ▶ In the state of Vermont (U.S.), a wife must get her husband's permission to get false teeth.
- ▶ In Petrolia, Ontario, Canada, a law limits excessive noise, including yelling, shouting, whistling, and singing.

Table Topics play a vital role in developing public speaking skills. It takes creativity to develop coherent thoughts about topics you often know little about. Using some of these unusual

AND A FEW MORE IDEAS ...

Here are a few more ideas to help the Topics-master lead a creative, fun Table Topics session.

The Time Machine: Ask participants any—or all—of the following questions: If you had a time machine with room for one more, who would you take and to what time period would you go? If you travel two years into the future, will you find anything good that has come of this pandemic? Is there anything you'd like to go backward in time to "un-invent"? (Thanks to Tim Barden, a member of Lift Every Voice Toastmasters in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, for the Time Machine suggestion.)

Critters: At the beginning of the session, ask everyone to submit the name of an animal with which they identify. Then have speakers select a submission and state which member they think identified with that animal, and why. If you have time, you can also let submitters explain what that particular animal means to them.

Fractured Fables: Tell a well-known fable or fairy tale and ask speakers to give it a surprise ending.

Lightning Round: Try this quick activity if you have extra time. The Topicsmaster (or Toastmaster) calls on each member to say what's on their mind in one or two sentences. It's remarkable how much bonding will happen when we have this precious opportunity to share ourselves.

The Topicsmaster's role is to ask questions that everyone will want to answer. And don't forget: The spotlight is on the members. A brief set-up and an even briefer segue to the next question is the Topicsmaster's task, not a lengthy rebuttal to the member's response. Keep the energy flowing!

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themes will go a long way in helping members have fun while learning to think on their feet. **T**

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The Benefits of Networking Online

How to build valuable relationships through social media.

BY VICTORIA SALEM

Building key relationships online will help you succeed professionally. It surely helped me. Indeed, thanks to my network of social-media contacts, I found three internships, my first job in London and, since starting my events agency and training business in 2014, more than 75% of my clients.

Building relationships offline is essential, but social networking is important too. Use it to build a strong professional network.

Social networking allows us to easily interact with other users and find people with similar interests, thanks to the use of websites and applications such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and more.

Through social media and the internet, you can build an online identity, connect and build relationships, acquire knowledge, and share ideas and information without the limitation of time or space.

Here are some tips for maximizing your social networking tools.

Keep Relationships Alive

Set your social accounts to send and receive automatic notifications so that you and your contacts will be aware of each other's activities. However, your most important communications are one-to-one, and they should be done often. Be in touch with your contacts regularly.

Something I do, for example, is when I find an interesting article, I share it with my contacts who I know will enjoy reading it. I usually send it via a friendly email or LinkedIn message. I use this

communication as an occasion to catch up on their news and, at the same time, add value for them.

The more connections you have, the more visible you become—but quality is key.

I recommend listing contacts in an Excel document. Rate your connections with numbers to prioritize the importance of the relationship. Let's say you want to change career paths and get into the hospitality industry: List the companies in that industry that you'd like to work for. Extend this list to include key contacts within those companies—those are your A-listers (Number 1's) with whom you want to build relationships. A person you meet on an airplane with whom you exchange contact details but who is not relevant to your current career objectives would be classified lower down the list (maybe a 3). Contact them again at a later stage if an opportunity of mutual interest arises.

Use this document to store useful information about your contacts, including where, when, and how you connected; where they work; details on their interests; and your next steps in developing a relationship with them.

Share Content

The content you share on social media should be relevant to what you do and the areas you specialize in. Share stories,

articles, graphs, news about the company you work for or own, and anything else pertinent or interesting for your network of contacts. You can share your content on all your social media feeds so your connections will see it when they next log in.

Where to Share

Choose your social networks depending on the goals you want to achieve. Think of which networks are most relevant to the industry you work in. My thoughts are that LinkedIn and Twitter are more for information sharing and have a more "professional" look than Instagram and Facebook, where you can be more creative and playful with your content. For example, if you work in finance, then LinkedIn and Twitter would probably be the main tools you would use. If you are a freelance designer, then maybe Instagram and Facebook would be best. Depending on your line of work and the nature of the content, the choice of social media to use will differ.

LinkedIn

For years, I accepted mostly all LinkedIn connection invites I received, congratulating myself as the contacts stacked up. But because of all those strangers in there, I found myself in the tongue-tied situation of having one person I didn't know asking me to introduce them to another person I didn't know.

Yes, the more connections you have, the more visible you become—but quality is key. Connect to people you have met,



whom you know well enough to feel confident introducing to others in your network, and whom you are interested in learning from.

Facebook

If you haven't already, create a page for your business or your Toastmasters club. (New Zealand Toastmaster Lauren Parsons has created [three videos](#) on public relations tips for Facebook, including how to create a club Facebook page.) This should be separate from your personal page, but you should invite your existing friends list to follow your business page to get it going.

On my Facebook professional page, I advertise the services I offer—including posting photos and videos. I also “like” and share the Facebook posts of others I’m connected with.

Your business page reflects your company. If you are going to use Facebook, be active by sharing content regularly.

Twitter

Twitter is mainly used to share content and to make your professional presence more visible. On this platform, you share information in the form of tweets. You can write your own tweets (limited to 280 characters with spaces), reply to tweets, or retweet others’ tweets. When retweeting, add a comment to explain why you feel this information is interesting or important.

On Twitter, you can search for a person, company, or hashtag (a word or phrase introduced by the number symbol) that you are interested in. Follow relevant accounts and interact with them.

Connect and Communicate

Once you choose the social networking platforms you’d like to use, try to inspire people and build successful relationships. Here are five tips to help you



become a better online connector and communicator.

1 Stand out. Develop an interesting branding message and package your “professional brand.” For example, on LinkedIn stand out with an eye-catching introduction. On Facebook and especially on your business page, consider adding an interesting cover image.

2 Show vulnerability. If it’s authentic, go public with failure. Share what you learned from those failures and don’t hesitate to add pictures or videos. Posts with photos are the ones that catch our eye and create an emotional punch. You could share reflections about a business you tried to launch but weren’t able to, a presentation that didn’t go so well, or anything else you feel comfortable sharing. Don’t be afraid to show the real you!

3 Show your passion. Passion creates engagement. If you are passionate about your business, let that shine through. If you are truly excited about the work you do, other people will feel that excitement and get caught up in it. Use your content to tell stories that move people. For example, share something that happened to you or someone you know. People like anecdotes.

4 Do your research. If you are thinking about connecting with someone, search their name on Google, LinkedIn, Twitter, and their company’s website. By

learning more about them, you can find things you have in common.

5 Emphasize diversity. Audit your news feed (the system where you see the content in your network): Are you finding a diversity of backgrounds, professions, locations, ages, etc.? A diverse network is key to broaden your awareness of different perspectives and to access varied content. You can make dedicated lists on Twitter and Facebook, which allow you to view posts only from the people on that list. Follow them, interact with them, and follow what they follow.

Spending time every day on social networks makes a difference. Think about your overall strategy and how you can use online tools to support your goals.

Most importantly, be professional and authentic. This will help you build relationships with people who are interested in you. **T**

Editor’s Note: “Building a Social Media Presence” is a Level 4 elective project in all 11 paths in the Pathways learning experience.

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Supercharging Your Storytelling and Sales

BY STEVEN D. COHEN, PH.D.
AND DANNY RUBIN

Stories add power and persuasion to virtual presentations.

Storytelling is a powerful way to influence and engage your audience—whether at a Toastmasters meeting or a virtual business presentation.

One study published in an international communication journal found that starting a presentation with a short story significantly increased the audience's interest and comprehension—even if the story was not entirely relevant. A well-constructed story can change people's behaviors and beliefs, and enables listeners to remember the speaker's main points weeks after the presentation.

The key is to establish a gap between what is (the current situation) and what could be (a better vision of the future).

This approach creates conflict in listeners' minds and pushes them to consider new possibilities.

Starting with a story will hook your listeners and help you connect with them on an emotional level.

It's no surprise, then, that stories are especially useful in virtual sales presentations. They “wake up” the audience on the other side of the screen and add a human

layer to the presentation. The best place to grab the audience's attention is at the beginning. Here's how to structure the story effectively:

First section: Lay out a problem you've faced.

Every fall, I would feel the chill in the air and see the leaves begin to sway in the trees. I would think, oh no, here they come.

Do you think the audience is paying attention now? You better believe it.

Second section: Expand on the intrigue you created in the first couple of sentences.

As a native New Englander, I know raking leaves is a fact of life. But year after year, the task became tougher and tougher on my back. It seems like we've done the work the same way for generations—rake the leaves into piles and move them into yard bags. There had to be a better way.

You've identified the pain point (literally, too, with the back discomfort). Now it's time to reveal how you resolved the issue.

Third section: Explain the solution to the problem.

Last fall, I decided to try a different approach. I purchased thin netting material and measured the width and length of my yard.

I laid the netting across the lawn—it was so lightweight and see-through that you could barely notice it. Then, I watched the leaves start to fall.

The audience thinks, *So what happened in the end?* Suspense is a wonderful sales tool.

Fourth section: What was the outcome?

Once the leaves blanketed the yard, my son and I grabbed the corners of the netting and voilà—we “raked up” all the leaves in a matter of minutes.

This is the “aha” moment for the audience, the big payoff. To amplify the impact, you could use photos or videos of the product at work.

Fifth section: End with a clincher, or memorable closing line.

That day, the “net raker” was born.

Then, launch into the typical introduction.

Good morning, my name is Ron Derry, and I am the founder of Net Raker LLC. My team manufactures and distributes our product to 700 stores across the United States and Canada ... (He continues with product information and sales figures.)

TOASTMASTERS TIPS FOR A PERSUASIVE SPEECH

The ability to persuade others is a key skill for strong leaders and communicators. In a persuasive speech, your aim is to influence the thinking or behavior of listeners. You can do this in several ways.

Inspire: You want to inspire excitement in your audience about your topic or reinforce their existing ideas and beliefs.

Convince: You want to change audience members' opinions or persuade them to develop the same opinion you have.

Call to action: You want listeners to take some type of action after hearing your speech, such as buy a product, try an activity, or volunteer with an organization.

Often, these different types of persuasion are combined in a speech, which brings even more depth to your presentation.

One important aspect to making a powerful argument is knowing your topic well. Keep these suggestions in mind:

- ▶ Research the issue thoroughly.
- ▶ Be prepared to support your position with evidence from credible sources.
- ▶ Look at different perspectives surrounding the issue.
- ▶ Know your goal.
- ▶ Language is important too. Include strong, descriptive phrasing whenever possible. The words you use have an impact on your audience.

We all can relate to the frustration in the story. No one likes raking leaves! The story pulls us in and conveys the product's value proposition. Only then do we learn more about the product and the company's sales.

Could you flip the two parts and start with the typical introduction? Sure, you could. But starting with a story will hook your listeners and help you connect with them on an emotional level.

Now, think about the products or services that you provide. What kind of story could you share to kick off a virtual sales presentation?

A couple possibilities:

- ▶ Tell the origin story of how your company was founded.
- ▶ Share memorable success stories about clients. For example, talk about someone who, at first, didn't believe your

product or service would work but is now a true believer.

Draw upon the success of the stories you “own.” There's no better place than a virtual sales presentation to put your stories front and center. **T**

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Watch What You're Saying

Make sure your words and your body are giving the same speech.

BY JOHN CADLEY



You're going to nail this. You've organized your speech into a concise, logical flow, opening with a spell-binding anecdote that will grab your audience by the throat. You've meticulously chosen every word for maximum effect, crafted every sentence to sing like music, and come up with a wham-bang closer that will have them throwing roses on the stage and shouting, *Encore! Encore!*

Now think—have you forgotten anything that could possibly derail your coronation as a Distinguished Toastmaster? Ah! Body language. Better take a quick look at that. Not critical but victory is in the details. So you consult the research of a pioneering expert on nonverbal communication, Professor Albert Mehrabian ... and drop to your knees in despair. *What? No! Impossible!* Professor Mehrabian's research tells you that a mere 7% of human communication is verbal while 93% is nonverbal. This can't be true. You consult other sources and they all cite the same famously controversial Mehrabian 7-38-55 Rule: 55% of communication is visual, 38% is tone of voice, and 7% is verbal. Now what are you going to do—cut your speech by 93% and pantomime the rest? You're ruined, destroyed. You'll be lucky if you can get a job announcing baseball games—*Batting in fourth position, number 23 ...* Oh, the horror, the shame, the humanity!

Professor Mehrabian's findings may have wide currency but, like your mother telling you not to cross your eyes or they'll get stuck that way, it's just not true. By Professor Mehrabian's own admission, his study involved only a small sample of individual words and did not consider context or how people converse in

normal life as opposed to a communication experiment. This is not to say body language is trivial. It is critical. But being a writer, I must give words their due before moving on. Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, for instance, is remembered strictly for its words. Nobody remembers if Abe was playing with his beard or looking at his pocket watch. Winston Churchill gave his inspiring "We will fight them on the beaches" speech via radio, so nobody saw him either. Considering the man walked around with a perpetual scowl, it's probably just as well, but that would not have diminished the impact of his words. I mean, England did end up in the winner's circle.

What are you going to do—cut your speech by 93% and pantomime the rest?

Now that that's off my chest, we can move to the nonverbal. When an anthropologist like Ray Birdwhistell reveals that humans have a repertoire of some 250,000 facial expressions alone, we know that body language isn't just some guy flicking lint off his pants. Why else would the class of people who live or die by how sincere and honest they appear—i.e., politicians—hire personal body language consultants? *Now remember, Senator, when you call a Town Hall meeting to hear your constituents' concerns, try not wave your hand for them to speed it up.*

So let's get back to that speech of yours. What should you do and not do? Don't fidget. It makes you look nervous. Instead,

grip the sides of the lectern tightly enough to rupture the tendons in your forearms, thus rendering you physically incapable of any awkward hand motions. Don't assume a defensive pose, like crossing your arms over your chest. It looks like you're hiding something. You should only do this if you are, in fact, hiding something. Do not make aggressive eye contact. You know the type: They fix you with a stare that burns holes in your forehead. Remember, your audience has come to hear you speak, not to be vaporized with the Xenomorph Death Ray.

Don't slouch. It makes you look depressed and when you get to the Q&A, people will be giving you the names of their therapists. Instead, stand up straight and throw your shoulders back like a drill sergeant, creating the impression that your audience can either pay attention or crawl through mud under a barbed wire obstacle course. Don't shuffle when you walk onstage. It makes you look weak, and, according to a British Broadcasting Corporation report, more likely to get mugged. Admittedly, your chances of being mugged during a TED Talk are low—unless they really, really hate your speech.

Given all this, you know what to do: Stride confidently to the podium, look at your audience firmly but warmly, stand up straight, and when you shred the tendons in your forearms gripping the lectern, smile. It shows character. **T**

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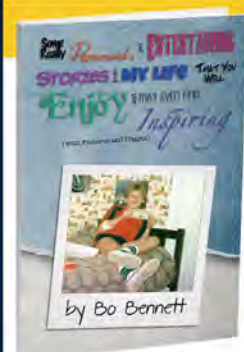
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CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - BO BENNETT, DTM

You might know Bo as the creator of FreeToastHost, the host of the Toastmasters Podcast, or the Founder of eBookIt.com. Or perhaps you never heard of the guy. Either way, you will enjoy his latest book, *Some Really Personal, Yet Entertaining Stories From My Life That You Will Enjoy and May Even Find Inspiring*.

What is a "normal childhood?" Does it include almost being murdered by your sister with an ax? Speeding around town in the back of a station wagon because your mom is chasing an "alien spaceship"? Being busted by the police for intent to light a pond on fire? Tackling your mom to the ground and wrestling a knife out of her hand because she was trying to kill your dad? While my stories may be unique, readers will be able to relate to the broader themes that are part of a normal childhood such as sibling rivalry, eccentric parents, doing stupid things, and frequently preventing one's parents from literally murdering each other.

Although some of the subject matter is not something one would generally laugh at, you have my permission to laugh. Social rules don't apply here; my rules do. It works for me, and who knows, after reading the stories from my past, you might be inspired to see your own screwed up past in a more humorous light.

Some Really Personal, Yet Entertaining Stories From My Life That You Will Enjoy and May Even Find Inspiring by Bo Bennett is available in ebook, paperback, and audio, at



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