

# How to Have the Best Speech Contest Ever!

*This guide will help you develop your plan for your Toastmasters speech contest.*

## **CONTEST PLAN**

**Developed by Heather Parsons, Palm Harbor Toastmasters**

### **STEP #1: SET THE DATE!**

- ✓ Pick a date for your humorous and table topics contest by Aug. 31, 2020.
- ✓ Confirm and reserve the venue.
- ✓ Confirm and reserve two additional meetings rooms for briefings, or identify nooks, corners, or outdoor areas to serve as briefing locations.
- ✓ Notify your club of the contest date as early as possible, preferably two months out.
- ✓ Share contest date, time, and location with your Area Director and invite them to attend.

### **STEP #2: READ THE CONTEST RULEBOOK**

- ✓ Read the Toastmasters Speech Contest Rulebook!
- ✓ And read it again!
- ✓ Talk to mentors or more senior members in your club for advice and suggestions on hosting a successful competition.

### **STEP #3: RECRUIT YOUR TEAM**

- ✓ Recruit the Contest Master.
- ✓ Recruit the Chief Judge.
- ✓ Recruit contestants; get more than you need. Speak with people individually.
- ✓ Allow the Chief Judge to recruit the remaining functionaries.
- ✓ Meet weekly with the Contest Master and Chief Judge to touch base and anticipate needs.
- ✓ If you're hosting an evaluation contest, recruit a test speaker preferably from a different club or outside organization that the speakers do not know.

### **STEP #4: MAKE YOUR CHECKLIST AND GET TO WORK!**

**At least a month before contest, begin the heavy lifting, and focus on what needs done.**

- ✓ Communicate weekly with the Contest Master and Chief Judge.
- ✓ The Contest Chair should confirm all contestants and functionary roles have agreed and committed.
- ✓ Discuss and plan if there will be drinks or snacks. If so, delegate this responsibility to someone.
- ✓ Line up any audio-visual needs, such as lights, power points, video cameras, extension cords, etc.
- ✓ Invite a photographer or designate the club's Vice President of Public Relations to fulfill this role.

### **STEP #5: FINALIZE THE AGENDA/PREPARE THE EVENT PROGRAM**

- ✓ Keep it neat and official.
- ✓ Download the template from the District 48 website in PDF, Word, & PPT format.
- ✓ The program should be reviewed and proofread by the Contest Chair, Contest Master, and Chief Judge before it is printed.
- ✓ Print the final file, and bring more than is needed. Everyone should have a program.

### **STEP #6: WRAP UP THE SMALL DETAILS A WEEK BEFORE, AND BRING IT ALL TOGETHER!**

**About one week out from the speech contest, you'll want to be bringing everything together.**

**This is when the sweating starts!**

- ✓ Make sure you have written and finalized the script.
  - You can delegate this to Contest Master.
  - Scripts are available from the District 48 website for every contest.
  - The script, like the agenda, also should be reviewed and proofread by the Contest Chair, Contest Master, and Chief Judge before it is printed.
- ✓ Decide if you will present certificates or trophies. It's not uncommon at the club level to print off certificates. Certificates for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place are 100% acceptable.
- ✓ Prepare the certificates for contestants and functionary roles. Certificates are available from the TM World Headquarter website.
- ✓ The Chief Judge should prepare certificates for the judges, and they can be distributed by email to the judges after the contest to keep their identities secret.
- ✓ Make two spare blank copies of each role for any last-minute role changes.
- ✓ Prepare required paperwork
  - Gather the "Speaker's Certification Of Eligibility & Originality" and the "Speech Contestant Profile" forms from each contestant.
  - Provide forms to contestants at least a week prior to the contest.
  - The Chief Judge should provide the required forms for ballot counters, timers, and judges.
- ✓ Be sure to have extra forms on hand for those who forget.

### **STEP #7: IT'S CONTEST DAY! ARRIVE EARLY & CHECK LOGISTICS**

- ✓ Arrive at your venue early.
- ✓ Make sure your reserved rooms for the meeting space and briefing areas are available, clean, and available.
- ✓ If you're using a microphone or other AV equipment, check out acoustics and sound system and make sure everything is working properly.

### **STEP #8: CONDUCT CONTESTANT & JUDGES BRIEFINGS**

- ✓ Conduct briefings on Zoom the day before the contest or in-person on contest day:
  - **Contestant Briefing:** this involves all contestants and the Sergeants at Arms. Inform all speakers of the rules, draw for speaking order, answer questions, and complete required forms.
  - **Functionaries Briefing:** this is led by the Chief Judge and involves the Timers, Ballot counters, and judges.
- ✓ Make sure the briefings are held far apart from each other. You don't want your contestants knowing who the judges are; they must be in separate locations.

### **STEP #9: HOLD YOUR CONTEST!**

- ✓ Reserve front row for contestants to keep them from seeing who the judges are.
- ✓ The Contest Master leads the meeting, inviting each speaker up in the order drawn in the contestant briefing.
- ✓ Follow the rulebook regarding introductions and speech titles.
- ✓ After all speakers in one contest have presented, the Contest Master will call up all speakers and spend a relatively equal amount of time interviewing them, based on information provided on their contestant profile forms that they submitted.
- ✓ During the contestant interviews, the judges and ballot counters will fulfill their roles.
- ✓ After contest interviews are done, the Contest Master will distribute the certificates of participation.
- ✓ After the scoring portion of the contest is done, the Chief Judge gives the results to the Contest Master, who will announce the winners!

### **STEP #10: AFTER THE CONTEST**

#### **So the contest is done, but your work is not!**

- ✓ Finalize the list of winners and runners-up.
- ✓ Inform the winners of the next competition level. Let them know the date, time, location, and get a commitment from the winner.
- ✓ If the winner isn't available to compete at the next level, the second place winner moves on.
- ✓ The Chief Judge notifies the Area Director of club contest results.
- ✓ Recruit your Vice President of Public Relations to send a press release and photographs to community newspapers, local news media, club Facebook page, and club website to promote the winners.
- ✓ Consider submitting an article in the District 48 newsletter.
- ✓ Ask for feedback from mentors or other respected members of your club on what went right at the contest and ways to improve future contests.