



PARRAMATTA TOASTMASTERS CLUB

A Guide to Meeting Assignments

Preface

This Guide has been produced as an aid for members of Parramatta Toastmasters Club. Not all the listed assignments are programmed each meeting, but all can be used at some time to introduce program variety.

The guidelines given are **guides** not **rules**. Thus they help establish the mechanics of what is accepted and proper practice. In this way they can eliminate worry and strain for new members while ensuring meetings are properly conducted.

However, the essence of a good Toastmasters Club is individuality and variety. Thus as members gain experience they should seek to innovate with many of the assignments, using novel and fresh approaches in order to keep the Club stimulated.

Author's Note

This Guide was originally produced in 1982 when I was Educational Lieutenant Governor of District 70, being based on material produced in our Club and some other Clubs in the District over the previous 15 years.

In preparing the document for distribution via our Club web site, the opportunity has been taken to revise it where necessary. However, the original format and size has been retained.

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President

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This document, together with other educational material, is available for printing from the Parramatta Toastmasters Club web site at <http://www.parramattatm.org.au>. That website also has an expanded online version of this guide.

PARRAMATTA TOASTMASTERS CLUB

A Guide to the Duties of the Different Toastmaster Meeting Assignments

CHAIRMAN 1

- 1) You have the important task of setting the tone of the meeting in the initial phases. This should include an opening highlighting any theme of the meeting or major items that will take place.
- 2) Check the program with the V.P.E. before the meeting and keep the program moving according to the scheduled time and allocations.
- 3) You are the Master of Ceremonies for the first part of the meeting. As such, you should stand to introduce all assignments. Afterwards acknowledge with a thank you. Do not comment on the content or on the performance of an assignment (the latter is the General Evaluator's task).

CHAIRMAN 2

- 1) Chairman 2 must be fully conversant with:
 - a) The Club Constitution and the Standard Bylaws for Clubs of Toastmasters International (Code 210-C).
 - b) Guide for Meetings, by N. E. Renton, Law Book Co.
- 2) Ensure that you possess these publications. No Toastmaster can fulfil the duties of Chairman without a thorough working knowledge of their content. You are to accept the responsibility of being well informed.
- 3) Go to the Club web site and print out a copy of the Chairman's typical agenda for a business meeting (also known as the Chairman's cheat sheet.)
- 4) In the business session, which should be conducted seated, the order of business should be:

Apologies, advance apologies for future meetings, minutes of previous meeting, business arising, correspondence and business arising, reports by Officers on their committee activities as required (check with each Officer before meeting). President, V.P. Education, V.P. Membership, V.P. Public Relations, Secretary, Treasurer, Sergeant-at-Arms.
- 5) Encourage written motions to save time and avoid misinterpretation.
- 6) Organise your meeting so you know what is going to happen and when. Think ahead and remain calm and assured and make rulings without haste.
- 7) As Master of Ceremonies for the remainder of the meeting (outside the business session), you should stand to introduce all assignments. Afterwards acknowledge with a thank you. Do not comment on the content (you should be impartial) or performance of an assignment (the General Evaluator's task).

FRIVOLOUS MOTION

1. A Frivolous Motion is a humorous, exaggerated or peculiar motion designed to test the Chairman. A member can be programmed in advance to present the motion.
2. It should be a subject on which all members can speak, move amendments and procedural motions. The object is to make the General Business section of the meeting a learning and participation activity.
3. Take care that the Frivolous Motion is not confused by members as being serious. It must obviously be a 'fun' motion and it should be lost on the final vote.

INVOCATION

- 1) The Invocation is not a formal grace before the dinner. Rather it is a brief and effective expression of thanks for that which we are to partake - the dinner, the privilege of learning, companionship, motivation, etc.
- 2) Use your own thoughts and express them in natural and effective phrases, avoiding cliches, colloquialisms, etc.
- 3) Develop new approaches, thoughts and delivery
- 4) Limit the Invocation to 45-55 seconds, and as you are usually first up, **be on time**.

LARFMASTER

- 1) The object is to make people LAUGH, with short CLEAN jokes
- 2) It is better to try for 3 quick laughs than to use 1 long story that may fall flat.
- 3) Remember the rule of every TV comic - 'Get your first laugh as quickly as possible', so people will know you will be funny.

WEAK WORD

- 1) Take a word, spelling or displaying it on a sheet of cardboard if necessary, and give its meaning and examples for its correct usage.
- 2) Encourage all members to use the word as often as possible during the meeting,

READ OR RECITE (suggested time 3 minutes)

- 1) You may read or recite prose or verse.
- 2) Keep any introduction short.
- 3) Concentrate on your 'presentation'.
- 4) Choose a dramatic piece to enable you to experiment with more vocal variety and body language than in normal assignments. Children's stories are an example of such material.

TOAST

- 1) You could well be asked to do a toast at a wedding or other occasion and it should be constructed like a mini speech.
- 2) Select an appropriate person or cause for your toast, remembering that it is not usual to toast things. Give a concise proposal as to why the cause deserves to be toasted.
- 3) Ask people to rise, avoiding hackneyed cliches like 'be upstanding'. Rather say something like "please take your glasses and stand with me"
- 4) Once people are standing, give a clear lead by concisely naming the object of the Toast.

PET AVERSION

1. The object of the pet aversion or gripe is to speak about your favourite hate or dislike. Outline what it is that you particularly don't like and explain why.
2. Again, use an introduction, body and conclusion....

POINT OF VIEW/CURRENT AFFAIR

- 1) An opportunity for a short, persuasive/emotional speech. It can be on a subject that concerns you or an up-to-date comment on current affairs.
- 2) It should not be written out and ideally should be presented without notes.
- 3) It should be very topical and more in the nature of a prepared "table topic", rather than a practised speech.

INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME TO VISITORS

- 1) You can help to establish an atmosphere of conviviality by providing introductions 'with a difference'.
- 2) Check the evening's advance program for members who will be present. Re-check this before the meeting when you are to determine the presence of guests and visitors.
- 3) By early at the meeting. Introduce yourself to each visitor and find out names and background. Make all visitors welcome by introducing them to other members.
- 4) Use a form of Introduction which is novel, interesting and provides a glimpse at some facet of the character, achievements, occupation, etc. of the persons being introduced.
- 5) If you make reference to a person's occupation, be certain you have the correct title of his status, position, etc.
- 6) Observe protocol by introducing special guests first, then general visitors. Conclude with a short but **enthusiastic** welcome.
- 7) Sit near the door and be prepared to welcome and introduce latecomers at any stage

TOPICMASTER

- 1) The Table Topics session is aimed at procuring the best of thinking, listening and speaking from the participants, be they members or guests. It represents one of the most valuable, enjoyable and interesting aids to that end, and members always anticipate a stimulating session.
- 1) The session must be featured by enthusiasm, variety, interest and the presentation of an achievable challenge to each speaker - harder topics to the experienced, easier topics to new members and guests (e.g. hobbies, occupation, local affairs). Read the leaflet "Think Fast! Table Topics Handbook", Code 1315 for ideas of different types of topics sessions that can be presented. The Club Officers have a copy available for you.
- 2) Selection and presentation of topics will be a rigorous test of your ingenuity and understanding of the principles governing the exercise. While some of the topics may possess a humorous vein, always have topics that are topical or on which Toastmasters could be expected to voice a considered opinion. Above all, achieve variety and realism, and remember funny topics don't get funny answers. It is important to play down your own involvement and to make the members shine. It is also a good idea to see if you could answer your topics well yourself.
- 3) Have your topics in triplicate, and give a copy to each Topic Evaluator before the session. At the start, explain the procedure and objectives of the session, name the Topic Evaluator(s) and explain the timing system.
- 4) Select topic speakers with care, attempting to match the subject and degree of difficulty with the background and speaking experience of the speaker. Ensure that any member without a programmed responsibility receives a topic, then those members with the less demanding tasks. Only if attendance is very poor should the Chairman, Toastmaster, General Evaluator, Topic Evaluators, Timer and the

prepared Speakers be called on to participate. The Timer and Topic Evaluators should always be warned if given a topic. If visitors are present, explain the procedure and objectives of the session. If additional speakers are required, visitors may be asked before the meeting commences if they wish to participate, preference being given to Toastmaster visitors from other Clubs.

- 5) Announce the name of the person you wish to speak on the topic, then provide a concise and precise enunciation of the topic. The speaker must never be in doubt as to the theme of the topic. If a speaker is to adopt a specific attitude or approach, this must be stated without ambiguity.
- 6) Keep the session within the programmed time limit. At its completion, introduce each of the Topic Evaluators, if this is the Club practice. At the end return the conduct of the meeting back to the Chairman.

TOPIC EVALUATORS

- 2) Table Topics are given in the belief:
 - a) That the participant has something to say - he or she must attempt to present ideas worth listening to and reflect flexible, adaptive thinking.
 - b) That they will help the participant develop presentation skills so as to make the speech effective.
- 3) Make a checklist to act as a reminder of possible aspects to evaluate. For example, speaking pace, stance, voice, gestures, body language, nervous mannerisms, eye contact, enthusiasm, conviction, opening view-point, relevance, directness, clarity and organisation of material.
- 4) Accept the speaker's point of view and evaluate the degree of effectiveness achieved in procuring audience reaction, especially to the acceptance of that point of view.
- 5) Discuss trends amongst the speakers and limit your remarks on individuals to those to whom you can give helpful advice. In order to keep in your time limit, don't discuss the good answers at length. They can be mentioned in passing so that you can devote your remarks to the areas and people where they can do the most good.
- 6) In essence try and give one good point and one point for improvement about each speaker.

FACTMASTER

1. The Factmaster's assignment is to explain an interesting fact or series of facts.
2. It should be a short story. It must be TRUE. It can be humorous, astounding, hard to believe, emotional, etc.

POINT-OF-EMPHASIS

- 1) This is an educational speech presented by an experienced member (usually for 5-7 minutes if also a manual speech).
- 2) It can be on any subject of Toastmastering (speech preparation, evaluation, meeting procedure, officer duties, member obligations, etc.).
- 3) If more time is available, consider presenting a module from either The Successful Club Series or The Better Speaker Series, most of which can be presented in 10 minutes.

TOASTMASTER

- 1) The primary duty of the Toastmaster is to act as a genial host. It is he or she who establishes and maintains the atmosphere for the prepared speech part of the meeting and carries the responsibility of making it a success or failure. Enthusiasm, earnestness and good humour are to be the keynotes of your task.

- 2) Preparation is absolutely essential. Few, if any, members can perform this task in an impromptu manner. You should contact all speakers a few days before the meeting to check on details of their speeches, whether there is any special information they want incorporated in their introduction and whether they have special requirements for props or the lectern. Contact the V.P.E. if there is any doubt on a speaker attending.
- 3) In introducing the speakers, give each a brief and prestigious introduction finishing with the speech title. A poor introduction can be a deflating experience. The introduction must include the name and nature of the manual assignment being attempted so that the listeners know the purpose of the assignment. Never just say a No.5 speech. The evaluator should be named and the timing mentioned, especially when that is unusual.
- 4) DON'T comment on a speech afterwards, merely thank the speaker
- 5) The prepared 5-7 minute speeches should all be nominally 6 minute speeches with a small + or - variation. You must be conscious of TIME if there is a full program of speakers. Introductions should be limited to 1 minute per speaker plus 2 minutes at the beginning of the session. Thus a speaker program of four speakers should take 30 minutes for example.

GENERAL EVALUATOR

- 1) You have the responsibility of reviewing and assessing the evening's proceedings and members' performances from the time the meeting opens to the time of your evaluation speech.
- 2) General Evaluators must be scrupulously fair in their evaluation, giving praise and commendations where deserved, and providing brief comments for corrective measures when warranted.
- 3) Attempt to treat all aspects of evaluation while at the same time keeping the time taken within the scheduled time limit.
- 4) You are expected to introduce
 - a) The Topic Evaluators
 - b) The Parliamentarian
 - c) The Prepared Speech Evaluators
 - d) The Grammarian
 - e) The Ah Counter
 - f) The Timer

followed by your own evaluation of the meeting and those assignments. Your evaluation is normally made in 2 segments.
- 5) Remember to **analyse** the topic and prepared speech evaluators, but DO NOT re-evaluate the topic and main speakers even if they have only received a poor evaluation.
- 6) This is a detailed task and to cover it in the scheduled time you have to be concise and precise in what you report. Too many General Evaluators are guilty of exceeding the time imposed, often by breaking the rule of not commenting on items for which specific evaluators are allocated.

PREPARED SPEECH EVALUATORS

- 1) A Toastmaster is expected to devote time and effort to the preparation of a prepared speech; it is only reasonable to expect corresponding time and effort expenditure from an evaluator.
- 2) Give this time and effort to the study of the evaluator's guide to the speech you are to evaluate. This is to be found in the appropriate Communication and Leadership Manual. Contact the speaker before the meeting to confirm the nature of the speech and whether the speaker wants help in any particular area.

- 3) The speaker is obliged to prepare his speech according to the principles given in the manual. It should be evaluated in the light of its purpose, not according to the degree of agreement or disagreement with the evaluator's own ideas or convictions. You are not there to comment on the content of a speech, only on how that content was structured and delivered.
- 4) Make precise and concise notes during the speech, preferably under headings assembled prior to the meeting. Transfer the most relevant and constructive to the speaker's manual where it says 'What You Should Write'.
- 5) Give your evaluation from separate notes, not from the manual, in 2-3 minutes. It should be a speech, not answers to the Guide questions in the Manual.
- 6) A good evaluation will be firm, fair and friendly. The main purpose should be to encourage improvement. Whenever some weakness or deficiency in the delivery or structure of the speech is apparent, be prepared to offer constructive comments as to its rectification.
- 7) Remember the rule for a good evaluation - 'Commend, Recommend, Commend'
- 8) Do not criticise! Only comment on a weakness, fault or error if you can show HOW it could have been overcome or presented better.
- 9) It is not your task to say what was good or bad, but WHY it was so.

GRAMMARIAN

- 1) This is a task, which demands considerable concentration if all grammatical errors are to be recorded and accurately restated to the offender. No speaker is perfect, and even the best will slip into error or carelessness - so be prepared.
- 2) Maintain a clear and accurate record of each member's offences.
- 3) Don't be backward in suggesting that a member made a certain error. If in doubt, say so, but do not apologise for inadequate knowledge of grammatical forms. In such cases, seek the opinion of other members; it will help everyone.
- 4) Listen for incorrect pronunciations, poorly enunciated words, incorrect grammatical forms, poor/faulty selection and use of words or phrases, (ab)use of clichés.
- 5) The Grammarian should also listen for and comment on interesting turns of phrases, excellent use of words and picturesque or descriptive language.
- 6) Summarise and report only the main points from the meeting, keeping within the allowed time.

TIMER

- 1) Check the operation of the stopwatch and the timing unit.
- 2) Table Topic speakers are given a 5 second warning with the buzzer as a 'wind-up' signal. Thus for 1 minute topics, buzz at 55 seconds.
- 3) For prepared 5-7 minute speakers, operate green light at 5 minutes, amber light at 6 minutes and red light at 7 minutes, each light being left on for 1 minute except the red light which remains on until the speaker has finished.
- 4) Adjust times of lights if the Toastmaster nominates a different length for a speech, such that the red light is given at the end of the allocated time.

- 5) Provide a time warning all other assignments, including drawing the Chairman's attention to the timing of the Business Session.
- 6) Maintain a record of the time taken for all assignments.
- 7) In your report only announce the **chief offenders** as far as under time or over time is concerned. Don't make it a tedious list of the times of all assignments. Rather try and make it an interesting presentation, sticking to your own time limit.

AH COUNTER

- 1) Listen carefully for all ungainly and inappropriate 'noises' and 'sounds' such as 'ahs', 'ers' and 'ums'.
- 2) Record how many for each member during the meeting, limiting your report if necessary to the most and the least. An award may be presented to the worst offender.
- 3) It is also appropriate to report on any words used repeatedly by a speaker which are inappropriate, such as starting sentences too often with 'now', 'so', 'and', 'but', 'perhaps', 'thus', etc., or the use of phrases or words such as 'you know' or 'right'.

PARLIAMENTARIAN

- 1) The performance of this responsibility demands a thorough working knowledge of:
 - a) The Club Constitution and the Standard Bylaws for Clubs of Toastmasters International (Code 210-C).
 - b) Guide for Meetings, by N. E. Renton, Law Book Co.The possession and study of **these** references is imperative
- 2) The basic functions of the Parliamentarian are:
 - a) To act as consultant to Chairman 2 when he or she requests advice or information relative to the procedures to be adopted when difficulty or indecision arises.
 - b) To evaluate and deliver a resume on the conduct of the business session. This evaluation will make reference to the Chairman's manner and the application of the principles of meeting procedure by the Chairman and members, the participation of members, etc.

QUIZMASTER

- 1) Listen carefully to everything that is said during the meeting. The aim is to test everyone's listening skills by preparing some questions to ask them. The questions can be about what someone said or did, the content of any assignment or what was learnt.
- 2) Use your imagination to make the assignment both entertaining and a method of revision of any important things being taught or highlighted by evaluators.

INSPIRATION

- 1) The object is to 'inspire' by leaving everyone with something to think about. Prepare a brief speech aimed at bringing to members the realisation of a truth or to create within each member a deep-seated acceptance of your thoughts and the desire to live out the principle(s) you place before them.
- 2) Devise a 'speech' that develops an introduction to capture interest, a body that establishes and consolidates your message, and a conclusion that reaffirms this.
- 3) Follow the rule: the shorter the speech, the greater preparation it receives.