

Toastmaster Club Meetings

Every Toastmaster meeting has 5 basic sections. The core skills practiced during each section are in parentheses.

1. Opening (Leadership)
The presiding officer opens the meeting by greeting everyone, especially the guests. The meeting's emcee, the Toastmaster, introduces the meeting's "functionaries" - individuals with various roles and responsibilities tailored to help members improve on specific aspects of communication and leadership.
2. Prepared/Formal Speeches (Prepared Speech Presentation)
Members work out of communication (speech) manuals on projects with specific objectives.
The first communication manual - the *Competent Communication Manual* - walks the new Toastmaster through fundamental speech writing and presentation skills through a series of ten projects. You begin easily by talking about the subject you are most familiar with: yourself. Once you've survived your first speech, you'll focus on basic skills like organizing your speech, focusing the point of your speech, using body language and vocal variety, incorporating research, persuasion, and inspiration/motivation. Upon completion of the *Competent Communication Manual*, you may begin working through two of the eighteen available *Advanced Communication Manuals*, depending on your personal interests and/or career focus.
3. Table Topics (Impromptu Speaking)
The emcee of this exercise is called the Table Topics Master. The Topics Master brings open-ended questions based on a meeting theme or subject and calls on members at random to answer these questions. No preparation time is given to answer these questions. This exercise helps you improve the ability to think on your feet, quickly organize your thoughts, and respond coherently with no preparation. It sounds intimidating, but it is frequently the portion of the meeting members enjoy the most. The exercise is particularly helpful in situations such as job interviews, social settings, and last-minute presentation assignments from the boss. **You may participate if you'd like.**
4. Feedback (Evaluation, Impromptu Speaking, Leadership)
This section is facilitated by the "General Evaluator" of the meeting, who introduces the speech evaluators and calls upon the "functionaries" for their various reports. Preassigned evaluators - one per formal speaker - provide specific feedback on the prepared speeches. Evaluators will comment on such things as how well the speaker met the project objectives, personal opinion on what the speaker did well and issue challenges for improvement. Speech evaluations are valuable not only for the speaker specifically, but generally for the audience as well as ideas and tips are gleaned from these evaluations.
5. Closing (Leadership)
The presiding officer will facilitate the completion of any club business, solicitation of guest feedback, and more before adjourning the meeting.

What are the various "functionary" roles for and what do they do?

- **Toastmaster:** The meeting emcee. Introduce other functionaries and speakers. This role teaches us how to effectively run a meeting and how to communicate effectively in advance.
- **Speaker:** Prepare, rehearse, and present a speech based on Pathways projects. Pathways is a new Toastmasters education program that enables Toastmasters to further personalize their learning experience within our organization. This aspect of Toastmasters is why most people join Toastmasters. Elective Pathways projects helps to further individualize this training process for personal and/or professional development. A skill that is often overlooked but is essential is that of being able to receive feedback - both positive and critical and the role of speaker definitely promotes a healthy development of this skill.
- **Evaluator:** Provide feedback to speakers, including comments on how well they met speech project objectives and offer opinions on how the speech could be improved. To become an excellent speaker, it is wise to strive to become an excellent evaluator. This role combines listening skills, time management skills, critical thinking skills, speech writing skills, presentation skills both prepared and impromptu, and much more.
- **Wordmaster:** Offer a vocabulary word for meeting participants to learn and incorporate into their speeches (whether formal or impromptu) during the meeting. This role helps us to increase our vocabulary.
- **Grammarian:** Comment on excellent uses of the English language and offer suggestions for improvement. This role helps us to improve our English and grammar to make a better impression on our listeners.
- **Ah-Counter:** Track meeting participants' use of pause fillers or verbal crutches (such as ah, um, uh, er, you know, and excessive use of connectors like and, but, and so). This role helps improve our fluency and to help us sound more professional and credible. It is a [sometimes frustrating] process but one that is extremely effective.
- **Timer:** Time speeches, table topics responses, and evaluations and provide visual signals when timing objectives have been met and/or exceeded. This role helps us develop time management skills.
- **Table Topic Master:** Prepare questions based on a meeting theme and ask members at random to help with impromptu speaking skills. Very little of our daily communication is scripted so the impromptu speaking skill is essential to develop for interviews, social situations, every time you answer the phone, and unexpected business meeting reports.
- **General Evaluator:** Facilitate feedback portion of meeting and provide feedback on the meeting overall. This role helps us practice facilitation skills, providing effective feedback, and meeting quality.
- **Jokemaster:** Prepare a joke to share with the club. This role adds levity to our meetings and helps us learn to incorporate humor.
- **Word of Wisdom:** Share a quote or two that imparts wisdom to the club. This role is just what it sounds like - we simply want to impart some wisdom before we adjourn for the night.