4. The Variety of Roles in a Toastmasters Meeting

The different roles in a Toastmasters meeting are designed to create a rich and dynamic experience for you and the other members. Each role has its own focus and offers you the opportunity to develop various skills and competencies.

At the beginning, when you are still relatively new, smaller roles such as “Tip,” “Ah Counter,” “Grammarian,” and “Word of the Day” provide a great way to get familiar with the basic procedures and tasks. These roles help sharpen your observation skills and get you accustomed to the club environment. Once you are comfortable with the beginner roles, you can take on more challenging roles like the Table Topicsmaster or the Evaluator roles. These positions require a certain level of organization, preparation, and the ability to respond spontaneously to speakers or provide constructive feedback.

Finally, there is the Toastmaster, which carries greater responsibility and demands leadership skills. Below, all roles are explained to give you an orientation.

Depending on the club, there may also be additional optional roles besides those mentioned.

Roles of the Meeting



Toastmaster

The Toastmaster guides the club meeting and ensures a smooth flow. In this role, you introduce agenda items and welcome each speaker. Your overall responsibility is to create a professional and enjoyable meeting that promotes participants' speaking skills while maintaining a positive atmosphere. Serving as Toastmaster is one of the most valuable experiences in your club work, requiring careful preparation.



Timekeeper

The Timer helps speakers adhere to allotted time limits. As Timer, you use a stopwatch to accurately track speech durations. You signal speakers with green, yellow, red, and black cards to indicate their progress: green for minimum time reached, yellow for approaching the end, and red for maximum time reached. If the maximum time is exceeded by more than 30 seconds, the black card is shown. Specific time limits vary depending on the speech type and program. Common time frames are: prepared speeches (5–7 minutes, Icebreaker 4–6 minutes), Table Topics (1–2 minutes), and evaluation speeches (2–3 minutes).



Word of the Day – Wordmaster

As Wordmaster, you'll introduce a Word of the Day. When prompted by the Toastmaster at the beginning of the meeting, be ready with a new word for participants to incorporate into their speeches. This helps expand vocabulary and encourage spontaneity. When possible, display the word, part of speech, and a brief definition for members to see. A visual aid and a prepared sentence demonstrating usage will make the word more memorable.



AH-Counter

The Ah-Counter notes any overused words or filler sounds used as a crutch by speakers during the meeting. These might include inappropriate interjections like "and," "well," "but," "so," and "you know," or filler sounds like "ah," "um," or "er." Since filler words are often unconscious, as Ah-Counter you may (or may not, depending on your club's policies) ring a bell when a speaker uses a redundant word to draw their attention to it. The bell is not used for guests and may be rung up to three times per speech for members.



Grammarian

The role of the Grammarian is often combined with that of the Ah-Counter. Their responsibilities may also include introducing the Word of the Day, or this may be assigned to a separate Wordmaster. As Grammarian, you'll listen for the use of stylistic devices and grammar during the speeches and present your observations at the end of the meeting. The Grammarian's role is to help participants improve their language skills.



Table Topicsmaster

The Table Topicsmaster helps members develop their ability to quickly organize and express thoughts in a spontaneous setting. As Table Topicsmaster, you introduce a topic and invite participants to deliver a short, unprepared speech on that topic. You should prioritize selecting participants who haven't yet spoken that day and also consider including guests. This ensures that as many attendees as possible get a chance to speak. Participation in Table Topics can vary: some clubs only call on volunteers, while others call on all members. Guests always participate voluntarily.



Prepared Speeches

The speaker delivers a prepared speech based on a project from their chosen Pathways learning path, addressing various aspects of communication.



Evaluator

The role of the speech evaluator significantly contributes to improving the speaker’s presentation skills. Before the speaker’s presentation, the evaluator receives an evaluation form related to the project to familiarize themselves with the criteria on which the speech will be assessed. The speaker can also indicate in advance any specific areas they would like the evaluator to focus on. After the speech, the evaluator provides feedback during the evaluation segment of the meeting, which includes both positive aspects and constructive criticism. The evaluator should highlight the speaker’s strengths as well as offer suggestions for improvement to help the speaker develop their skills further. Impromptu speakers also receive evaluations from the Table Topics Evaluator.

General Evaluator

The General Evaluator provides final feedback on the entire meeting. This often includes aspects not previously mentioned, such as the evaluations given, the organization, and the overall atmosphere. The General Evaluator's comments aim to help improve future club meetings.
In addition, the General Evaluator can conduct the evaluation portion of the meeting and can be responsible for the evaluation team of Speech Evaluators, AH-Counter, Grammarian, Timer, and Wordmaster.

Tip (optional)

The Tip is a short speech segment at the beginning of the meeting. You give participants a tip on a topic of your choice; there are no content restrictions. However, the tip should not include self-promotion.

Joke (optional)

The speaker tells a joke or a funny anecdote to create a positive and relaxed atmosphere.

Quizmaster (optional)

As a Quizmaster you listen attentively and ask questions at the end of the meeting about the speeches to see what the participants have retained. An important skill of the Quizmaster is to formulate the quiz questions in a way that not only tests the participants' knowledge but is also entertaining and educational.

Ballot Counter (optional)

As the Ballot counter, you collect the ballots for the elections in various categories, such as best prepared speech, best impromptu speech, best evaluation, and possibly other special recognitions, like best supporting role or greatest personal improvement. Each club decides which awards to give. After counting the ballots, you prepare the corresponding certificates or awards.

Introductory Mentor

As an introductory mentor, you support new members informally by answering questions and guiding them based on your own experience.

Specialized Role

This is a role that is specific to your club or a unique situation. This includes, for example, the optional roles (s. above), table topic evaluations, and roles related to online or hybrid meetings.