



Conducting Quality Speech Contests

Created by

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District 96 Chief Judge (2014 – 2016)

(District 96 is on the west coast of Canada)



Before the Contest - Chair

- Obtain a copy of the current Speech Contest Rule Book and read it thoroughly.
- Find a Mentor - someone who has chaired a few successful contests. They can help identify potential problems and share solutions.
- Select a Chief Judge - preferably someone with previous experience as a judge or counter. Check the rule book for Chief Judge and judges' eligibility requirements.
- Work with the Chief Judge to select judges, timers and ballot counters.



Before the Contest - Chair

- Find a willing host club(s) to set up the facility, supply equipment, fill auxiliary roles and collect entrance fees.
- The venue should be of sufficient size for your expected audience. Plan for food, rent and set the entry fee to cover your costs.
- Ensure there is a separate space sufficiently removed from the contest room for use by the judges, counters and Evaluation contestants.



Before the Contest – Chair

- Stress the value and benefits of competition to clubs and beyond and promote it to clubs, Areas and beyond.
- Download the appropriate contest kits for the contest you are chairing. Each contest kit contains all the forms and certificates needed for that contest.
- I highly recommend the web site of Rodney Denno, DTM. It has useful scripts and checklists as well as the contest kits for each contest.
- Rodney's website <http://www.ewoliving.com/toastmastersTIC.php>

Before the Contest – Chair

- Select a Calligrapher to write the certificates. The Calligrapher accompanies the Chief Judge and counters into the counting area and prepares the certificates after the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners are determined.
- For the Evaluation Contest - arrange for a test speaker to deliver a 5-7 minute speech. The test speaker is generally interviewed during the 5 minutes or so when the contestants are out of the room preparing their notes. You may wish to offer the test speaker an inexpensive gift as thanks for serving in the contest.



Before the Contest – Chair

- Select a Contestant Interviewer, who will use the contestant profile forms to interview each contestant.
- An additional Sergeant at Arms will be needed for the Evaluation contest.
- Ensure all contestants have completed the Contest Eligibility and Contestant Profile forms. Give the profile forms to the Contestant Interviewer. Contestants must be members in good standing of a club in good standing.



Before the Contest – Chief Judge

- Print out sufficient forms and certificates for each contest. For the contest chair, this includes contestant eligibility forms, participation certificates and 1st, 2nd and 3rd place certificates
- All these are included in the downloadable contest kits from Toastmasters.
- Print sufficient contest agendas.

Before the Contest – Chief Judge

- Select at least 5 judges for a Club or Area contest, and at least 7 judges for a Division or District contest. Select one secret tie-breaker judge and an alternate Chief Judge.
- Selecting judges for Area, Division or District level contests - seek members who have completed at least 6 speeches. At least an AC Silver to DTM would be preferred at District level contests.
- Select 2 timers and at least 3 ballot counters.



Before the Contest – Chief Judge

- For Division contests and above, no Chief Judge, voting judge or tie-breaking judge may be a member of ANY club in which a contestant is a member.
- Print out sufficient forms for each contest. This will include all the judges forms (eligibility, ballots and tie-breaker ballot), all forms for use by ballot counters and timers.
- Include the ‘Notification of Contest Winner’ forms if the contest proceeds to a higher level.



Pre-contest Briefing

- Brief contestants on the rules, timing, speaking area, position of lights, disqualifications, protests and draw for speaking order.
- For Evaluation contestants, brief them on where they will be taken by the Sergeant at arms, that they will have 5 minutes to take notes, then have their notes taken and returned prior to taking the stage.
- Ask them to print their names on their notes.



Pre-contest Briefing

- The Chief Judge briefs the judges, timers and counters.
- Ensure all judges sign the Judges' Eligibility form before the contest.
- Ensure the timing lights and stopwatch are working and visible, and that backups are available.



During the Contest - Chair

- After the audience and dignitaries are welcomed, announce the purpose of the contest.
- Clarify the timing, rules for disqualification and the rules for protests.
- Announce the speaking order for the judges.
- Ask the Chief Judge if all judges, timers and counters have been briefed.



During the Contest - Chair

- Allow 1 minute of silence between the speakers for the judges, and at least 2 minutes after the contest for the judges. Ask the timer to signal when 1 minute is up.
- Ensure all Evaluation contestants are escorted out by the sergeant at arms when the test speaker is finished.
- Receive the results and certificates from the Chief Judge. You have discretion to announce if there were any disqualifications, but their names are not announced.



During the Contest – Chief Judge

- After the speakers are finished, collect the timers' report and circle any over or under time speakers.
- Collect the tie-breaking judges' form and hold it unless needed. It is not counted by the ballot counters, and only used to break ties. Hold it and the ballot forms until the 'Notification of Contest Winners' form is completed.



During the Contest – Chief Judge

- Supervise the counting process. Determine ballots are valid, then use the ballot form to list judges down the left and contestants across the top. Tally the votes each judge has assigned to each contestant, then use the timer's report to cross off any contestant over or under time. Return the results and completed certificates to the contest chair, stating if there are any time disqualifications.
- Deal with any protests – Only by judges or contestants, and only for content or eligibility.

After the Contest

- Thank the contest officials, counters, timers, calligrapher, sergeant(s) at arms, interviewer, and host club. Acknowledge the judges anonymously.
- Ensure the Chief judge completes the 'Notification of Contest winners' form. This includes ALL the names of contestants ranked according to the ballot counters form, with ties broken by the Tie-breaking judge. This form is then submitted to the contest chair of the next higher level contest, unless the contest does not proceed higher.
- Pay any outstanding bills for food, rent, etc.