

Table Topics Master Role (Topicsmaster Role)

The extemporaneous educator

With TABLE TOPICS™, the Topicsmaster gives members who aren't assigned a speaking role the opportunity to speak during the meeting. The Topicsmaster challenges each member with a subject, and the speaker responds with a one- to two-minute impromptu or extemporaneous talk.

Some people underestimate the Topicsmaster role's importance. Not only does it provide you with an opportunity to practice planning, preparation, organization, time management and facilitation skills; your preparation and topic selection help train members to quickly organize and express their thoughts in an impromptu setting.

Preparation is the key to leading a successful Table Topics session:

- Several days before the meeting, check with the Toastmaster to find out if a theme meeting is scheduled. If so, prepare topics reflecting that theme.
- Confirm who the prepared speakers, evaluators and general evaluator will be so you can call on other members at the meeting to respond first.
- Select subjects and questions that allow speakers to offer opinions. Don't make the questions too long or complicated and make sure they don't require specialized knowledge.
- Phrase questions so the speakers clearly understand what you want them to talk about.

Remember, too, that your job is to give others a chance to speak, so keep your own comments short.

When the Toastmaster introduces you, walk to the lectern and assume control of the meeting:

- Briefly state the purpose of Table Topics. For instance: "The purpose of Table Topics is to help train members to quickly organize and express their thoughts in an impromptu setting."
- Mention any theme and state the instructions. For instance: "The volunteer will be asked to pick a number from one to ten to determine their question." Be sure to include the one- to two-minute time rule.
- Encourage speakers to give responses that have a beginning and an end.

Then begin the program:

- Ask for Volunteers.
- Let visitors and guests know they are free to volunteer after they have seen one or two members' responses.
- Watch your total time. You may need to adjust the number of questions so your segment ends on time. Even if your portion started late, try to end on time to avoid the total meeting running overtime. If you are not sure ask the Toastmaster of the Day.

Thank everyone and return control of the meeting to the Toastmaster.