

GENERAL TIPS –

Think about your goals for your involvement with Toastmasters. Just like anything, it will be helpful if you set a goal or goals. It isn't a race to see who can give the most amount of speeches. Don't pressure yourself. Your involvement should be fun and something you look forward to each week. Like everything in life, you will get out of it, what you put in. You will get more out of Toastmasters the more you can attend, the more speeches you give, the more involved you get in the meeting, the more involved you are with leadership.

Let me know how you'd like me to help you. I can be as hands on, or hands off as you like. I can do a mini-evaluation of your table topics speeches if you like. I can give you pointers as you prepare for each speech. I don't want to come on too strong, so you let me know what I can do for you.

In your goals, if you want to really work on your extemporaneous speaking, only sign up for "minor" functions. The functions that will not be called upon for table topics include: Toastmaster, General evaluator, evaluators.

Table Topics – your table topics is a mini-speech. As such, it should have an opening, a body, and a conclusion.

Opening – Do your best to have an attention getting opening. Make a thought provoking statement, ask a question, use humor if you can. Get the audience involved, spark their interest, get them interested in what you are about to say.

A few do's and don'ts.

Don't lean on the lectern.

Don't leave the lectern unattended.

Don't use your hands when you don't need them. It is hard, but leave them at your side until you need them. Then get them back to your side.

Do smile when you can. You relate to the audience better, and it makes you feel better.

For your formal speeches, do bring value to the audience. As much as you want to practice your public speaking, everyone in the audience is a volunteer that evening. A volunteer to hear you speak. Bring something of value, interest, and excitement to them.

Focus on making eye contact with everyone in the audience. Look long enough at someone that they feel a connection, but not too long that you are staring. Looking quickly at someone, or quickly around the room, makes you look shifty-eyed.

Someone told our group to practice speaking every chance you can. That's the way to improve your skills.

When you use notes at the lectern, leave the paper or note cards on the lectern, out of view of the audience. If the audience can see your notes, it could be distracting, and direct their attention away from you. If you have three pieces of

paper, when you are finished with one, slide it over to the side, and reference the second paper. When finished, slide it over, and reference the last sheet.

That way, you aren't picking up a piece of paper and flipping it over.

Acknowledge your audience at some point during your speech. It doesn't have to be the first words out of your mouth. You can have an opening sentence, ask a question, and then say: Mr. Toastmaster, fellow Toastmasters, and welcomed guests, that is the question I'll be answering this evening.

Almost all speeches should have structure to them, with an opening, body, and conclusion. Tell us what you are going to say, tell us, and then tell us what you told us. You are going to be most familiar with your material, and that repetition is helpful for your audience.

For your icebreaker, it's ok to use notes. Most people do, but don't use them too often. I have found it helpful to memorize my opening and closing, and then use an outline for my body. After writing and practicing your speech, you'll know how the body should be presented. If you work from an outline, there is less to memorize, and it comes across more natural if you aren't straining for the exact wording that you just spent time writing and practicing.

Then while you practice, use a watch to see how your time is going. You'd ideally want to be in your closing before the red light comes on, so you aren't rushed. You'll also get a feeling for your pace when you speak at the meeting, and your pace when you speak when you practice. You'll then need to make changes accordingly. It is quite common that I have to cut material out of my speech, because I am just trying to add too much material. Try to keep your ideas or subjects to 3-5. If you give more than 5, it is hard for the audience to process it all, and hard to get all the information presented in a comfortable manner.