

TABLE TOPICS January 9, 2013

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Purpose of Table Topics

Table Topics is an important aspect of the Toastmasters education program. It is practice in impromptu speaking. I define this as taking our random thoughts and organizing them into an effective presentation.

The purpose of coming to a Toastmasters meeting is to become a more effective speaker. No member should come to a meeting and not get an opportunity to speak. Table Topics provides speaking opportunities for members without a formal meeting role.

Preparing for Table Topics

Choose questions or subjects that allow speakers to express their thoughts, knowledge and opinions. Pick topics that require no specialized knowledge to understand. Use only questions that are broad, open-ended and general enough for anyone to talk about them without preparation.

Keep your topics short and clear. I use the rule of stating the topic in 16 words or less. If I read the topic and then have to explain it, the question is not clear enough and needs more work.

How to Conduct Table Topics

Present the topic. Call on a speaker. Everyone in the room benefits from the element of surprise and thinking about the best way to answer the question.

Assign Table Topics to participants in this order:

- ✦ Club members not listed on the agenda. Pay attention to who is at the meeting and on the agenda. Be sure you know who does not have a role so you can call on them. Don't call on speakers and evaluators.
- ✦ Guests who wish to participate.
- ✦ Members who have less demanding meeting roles. (Speakers and Evaluators should not be called on for table topics).

Ask the members present to vote for the person who did the best of job of answering the question and made the best presentation. Collect the votes and wait to be asked to announce the winner of the Table Topics ribbon.

End on time! (1:10 to 1:15)