

**TOASTMASTERS**  
INTERNATIONAL

# COMPETENT COMMUNICATION

A Practical Guide  
to Becoming a  
Better Speaker



**WHERE LEADERS  
ARE MADE**





## COMPETENT COMMUNICATION

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**WHERE LEADERS  
ARE MADE**

## **TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL MISSION**

We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.

## **CLUB MISSION**

We provide a supportive and positive learning experience in which members are empowered to develop communication and leadership skills, resulting in greater self-confidence and personal growth.

## **TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL VALUES**

- ▶ Integrity
- ▶ Respect
- ▶ Service
- ▶ Excellence

## **A TOASTMASTER'S PROMISE**

Being a Toastmaster means more than simply making a commitment to self-development. Everyone who joins a Toastmasters club is making a commitment to the club, to its members and to the organization as a whole.

### **A Toastmaster's Promise**

As a member of Toastmasters International and my club, I promise...

- ▶ To attend club meetings regularly;
- ▶ To prepare all of my speech and leadership projects to the best of my ability, basing them on projects in the Competent Communication manual, Advanced Communication manuals or Competent Leadership manual;
- ▶ To prepare for and fulfill meeting assignments;
- ▶ To provide fellow members with helpful, constructive evaluations;
- ▶ To help the club maintain the positive, friendly environment necessary for all members to learn and grow;
- ▶ To serve my club as an officer when called upon to do so;
- ▶ To treat my fellow club members and our guests with respect and courtesy;
- ▶ To bring guests to club meetings so they can see the benefits Toastmasters membership offers;
- ▶ To adhere to the guidelines and rules for all Toastmasters educational and recognition programs;
- ▶ To maintain honest and highly ethical standards during the conduct of all Toastmasters activities.



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# THE TOASTMASTERS EXPERIENCE

You may be more comfortable communicating by electronic mail or telephone than in person. Speaking to large or small groups, or even one-to-one, may intimidate or frighten you. Yet good communication skills are vital if you want to be successful. Corporate leaders say that the ability to communicate well orally is one of the most important skills their recruiters look for in job candidates. Businesses want people who express themselves clearly and confidently, and are persuasive and comfortable communicating with a wide range of people, from top executives to assembly-line workers.

Most schools and universities don't offer this type of training. Toastmasters does. In Toastmasters you'll learn how to formulate, express, and sell your ideas and yourself with poise and confidence. You'll improve your ability to listen and evaluate others' ideas, and you'll learn leadership skills along the way.

By joining your Toastmasters club, you've embarked on a journey that will greatly improve your life.

## HOW IT WORKS

The Toastmasters program is not a college, trade school, or other formal course in public speaking. You'll find no instructors, professors, or classrooms. No one's work is graded and no tests are administered. In Toastmasters, members learn by studying the manuals, practicing, and helping one another. Learning takes place in the club environment. Club meetings are workshops where you study and practice communication and leadership skills with others who are there for the same reasons you are. You learn by doing and by watching fellow club members.

During club meetings you'll build "quick thinking" skills as you give one- to two-minute speeches on general subjects during Table Topics.<sup>®</sup> You'll introduce speakers, conduct meetings, and perform other roles that will give you plenty of practice in a variety of communication experiences. But your greatest learning will come from preparing and presenting speeches based on the projects in this manual.

This manual has 10 speech projects, each designed to develop your speaking skills one step at a time. Every project builds upon what you've learned in the preceding project, so you should present the speeches in numerical order. You'll begin with "The Ice Breaker" speech. Since it will be your first speech before the club, it will be based on an easy subject—yourself. In subsequent speeches you'll learn the importance of organization, speech purpose, proper word usage, body language, and vocal variety. You'll also learn how to do research, use visual aids, speak persuasively, and inspire others. Read each project and Evaluation Guide carefully before you prepare your speech. This is your workbook, so you may write in it.



Most of your talks will be only five to seven minutes long. This gives you enough time to develop your topic while still keeping club meetings to a reasonable length, but the principles you learn in a five- to seven-minute speech apply to a 40-minute formal address or a two-minute impromptu speech. You'll learn to speak with confidence, clarity, persuasiveness, and enthusiasm.

An evaluator will give you verbal and written feedback on every speech you present. The evaluator provides a personal opinion of your talk, pointing out its strengths and offering suggestions for improving your next speech. Evaluations have one purpose: to help you become a more effective speaker. Eventually, as you gain more experience, you will evaluate the speeches of others.

This manual teaches you the basics of public speaking. After you finish it, you can begin refining and enhancing your basic speaking skills with the *Advanced Communication Series*. This series consists of 15 manuals with five speech projects each. Some manuals focus on career-related presentations, such as public relations and technical speeches, while others address topics such as interpersonal communication, humor, and storytelling. You choose the manuals to complete and the skills you want to learn.

## **LEADERSHIP TRAINING**

You'll learn more than just communication skills in your club. You'll build leadership skills when you complete the 10 projects in the *Competent Leadership* manual. You can develop additional skills by serving as a club officer, formulating and implementing plans to help the club meet members' needs. You may also complete the *High Performance Leadership* program, working on a leadership project related to your personal or professional life. Serving in leadership positions at other levels of the organization also will help improve your leadership skills.

## **THE REWARDS ARE MANY**

Not only will you learn speaking and leadership skills, you will be recognized for your efforts. At any club meeting, you may present one speech for award credit. Once you've completed all 10 projects in this manual, you will receive the Competent Communicator award, a certificate you can display at home or in the office. If you wish, Toastmasters International World Headquarters will also send a letter to your employer about this accomplishment.

But that's only the beginning. Toastmasters provides two educational tracks: a communication track, in which you develop your speaking skills, and a leadership track, in which you develop leadership skills. When you participate in the communication track, you can be recognized as an Advanced Communicator Bronze, Advanced Communicator Silver, and Advanced Communicator Gold. When you participate in the leadership track, you can be recognized as a Competent Leader, Advanced Leader Bronze, and Advanced Leader Silver. The tracks are not mutually exclusive. You may work in both tracks at the same time, and you are encouraged to do so. The ultimate recognition is the Distinguished Toastmaster award, given to those who have worked in both tracks and have received the Advanced Communicator Gold and Advanced Leader Silver awards.

## THERE'S MORE!

Toastmasters offers other communication and leadership opportunities as well, from speech contests to speakers bureaus.

Throughout this manual you'll find references to manuals, books, and other programs that may help you further develop your speaking and leadership skills. You may purchase these items online at [www.toastmasters.org/shop](http://www.toastmasters.org/shop).

## HOW DO I GET STARTED?

By now you realize just how much you can do and learn in Toastmasters, and you're eager to begin. You will get a great start if you do the following:

1. **Ask your vice president education for a mentor.** A mentor is a friendly, experienced fellow member who will help you with your first few speeches and answer any questions you may have as you begin working in the Toastmasters educational program. The mentor was once a new member like you and knows how important help can be to someone just starting the program.
2. **Ask the vice president education to schedule you to give your first speech, "The Ice Breaker," which is Project 1 in this manual.** If the schedule permits, most likely you will give your first speech at the next meeting or at least be assigned to another meeting role that requires speaking up in front of fellow club members. The sooner you begin speaking in the club, the faster you will learn. Also ask the vice president education to orient you to the club. During this orientation, the vice president education explains how the club operates, the learning opportunities the club provides, and your responsibilities as a member. Both of you will discuss your goals and how the club can help you achieve them.
3. **Read the section "About Your Club."** This section explains what happens at a club meeting, as well as the meeting roles you will be asked to fill and how to fill them. You will also learn about the club's leaders and their responsibilities.
4. **Study *Effective Evaluation* (Item 202) online at [www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org).** Every speech you give in the club will be evaluated by another member, and you also will be asked to evaluate others' speeches and leadership roles. Evaluations provide the feedback all members need to improve their skills, so it is important that you know how to evaluate. *Effective Evaluation* (Item 202) reviews how to evaluate and what to do with the evaluations you receive. Read *Your Speaking Voice* (Item 199) and *Gestures: Your Body Speaks* (Item 201) after you have completed two or three speech projects. Both will help you develop some key speaking skills.
5. **Finally, begin preparing your first speech.** Carefully read Project 1, including the Evaluation Guide, and work with your mentor to develop a speech about yourself. Prepare thoroughly and practice your speech repeatedly. Preparation and practice, not only for this first speech but for every speech you give, will help you overcome any nervousness you may have and make you a better speaker.

## ONE LAST THOUGHT

More than four million people will confirm that the Toastmasters program works, but it works only when you prepare carefully, actively participate, and speak as often as possible.

Apply yourself, and you will experience the benefits you want in all aspects of your life.



**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

For your first speech project, you will introduce yourself to your fellow club members and give them some information about your background, interests and ambitions. Practice giving your speech to friends or family members, and strive to make eye contact with some of your audience. You may use notes during your speech if you wish. Read the entire project before preparing your talk.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- ▶ To begin speaking before an audience.
- ▶ To discover speaking skills you already have and skills that need some attention.

**Time:** Four to six minutes

# THE ICE BREAKER

By now you've heard speeches by club members and have probably participated in Table Topics. This is your opportunity to give your first prepared talk and "break the ice."

The best way to begin your speaking experience is to talk about a familiar subject—yourself. Of course, this subject is too broad for a short four- to six-minute presentation. You must narrow it by selecting three or four interesting aspects of your life that will give your fellow club members insight and understanding of you as an individual. These might include your birthplace, education, or family. You could explain how you came to be in your present occupation and tell the audience something about your ambitions. Or you could explain the effect an incident from your youth has had on your life. One speaker donned hats as she talked about her life. She wore a chauffeur's hat as she talked about driving her children to their activities, a fireman's hat as she discussed the crises or "fires" she encountered daily at her work, and a chef's hat as she told of her love of cooking.

Once you have the highlights of your talk in mind, weave them into a story, just as if you were telling it to a group of friends. Share significant personal experiences. The more personal your talk, the warmer the relationship will be between you and the audience.

## OPENING, BODY, AND CONCLUSION

Like any good story, your talk needs a clear beginning and ending. Create an interesting opening sentence that captures the audience's attention. Memorize it, if necessary, and use it even if a better idea occurs to you just before you speak. Then devise a good closing and memorize it, too.

A memorized beginning and ending enable you to start and finish your talk with confidence and ease. In any speech, it's best to select a few main points (three or four at the most) and emphasize them by using examples, stories, or anecdotes. If you merely state a fact and then continue, most of your audience will miss the point. You should make a point, say it again in different words, illustrate the point, and then state it once more in order to be clearly understood. This is a good skill to learn. Choose your points and illustrations carefully. Too much information may overwhelm the audience.

If you think you will need notes, write a brief speech outline on note cards, which you can place on the lectern. Refer to them only when you need them. Remember, you're speaking, not reading. Many speakers begin

A memorized beginning and ending enable you to start and finish your talk with confidence and ease.



by writing out an entire speech, then breaking it into parts, with a key word for each part, and finally writing just the key words on one note card.

### **PREPARING YOURSELF**

Now the talk is ready, but are you ready to present it? Practice the talk until you are comfortable with it. You won't need to memorize the body of the talk, since you already know all about the subject. As mentioned earlier, you should memorize the opening and conclusion.

Present the talk to a family member, a friend, or your Toastmasters mentor. Ask for comments. They may give you some helpful suggestions. If you have an audio recorder, record the talk and listen to it carefully, making any necessary improvements. Using a recording is one of the best ways to improving your speaking ability.

Instead of thinking of this presentation as making a speech, think of it as a talk before a group of friends, sharing information of interest. Don't be afraid of the audience. They have already experienced the same feelings you're having. They want you to succeed and they're eager to help you!

Appearance is important. Be well-groomed and appropriately dressed for your presentation. When you look right, you feel good about yourself. You'll then forget about your appearance and concentrate on your talk. You will have increased confidence because you know you've made a good first impression with the audience.

### **PRESENTING YOUR TALK**

Once you've prepared and practiced your talk, relax. Nervousness is common to every speaker, no matter how experienced. In fact, you can put this nervous energy to work for you by using it to add excitement to your delivery. No one is going to notice a little quavering in your voice, and it will soon disappear anyway as you become involved with what you're saying. (More information about controlling nervousness appears on page 79.)

While being introduced, take a deep breath and slowly exhale. This will help your voice sound resonant and natural. Begin by facing the Toastmaster and saying, "Mr. (or Madam) Toastmaster," then face the audience and say, "Ladies and gentlemen..." or "Fellow members and guests..." Pause, then begin with your memorized opening.

While speaking, make eye contact with various members of the audience, first looking directly at one person for a few seconds, then looking at another, so people feel included in your talk. As you do this, glance periodically at the timer. If the red light comes on

while you're talking, move smoothly to your conclusion and finish quickly. Observe time limits whenever you speak.

Don't worry about what to do with your hands. Leave them at your sides if this makes you more comfortable. You'll have opportunities to practice gestures later.

Finish with your memorized conclusion. Some speakers say "thank you" at the very end to signal to the audience that they are finished, but this is not necessary. Instead, after you say your concluding words, nod at the Toastmaster of the meeting and say, "Mr. (or Madam) Toastmaster" and enjoy the applause.

Don't be afraid of the audience. Think of them as friends who want you to succeed and are eager to help you.

## YOUR EVALUATION

After you finish, you'll probably begin evaluating yourself even before you return to your seat. You may think you left out some of the best parts. Every speaker thinks that. Just congratulate yourself on having delivered your first speech, then write down the things you did well and the things you want to improve to make your next speech even better.

To supplement your self-evaluation, an experienced club member has been assigned to evaluate your efforts. Before the meeting begins, give this manual to your evaluator so he or she may make notes on the evaluation page of this project. This gives you a permanent record of your progress. If you want the evaluator to observe something in particular, be sure to inform the evaluator in advance.

Ask other members for additional comments after the meeting (some may give you their own brief written comments during the meeting). All of these comments may not be useful to you, but you should consider them carefully. Remember, each evaluation is an opinion of how that person perceived you and your presentation. These opinions usually (but not always) will be helpful to your self-development.

## SPEAKER'S CHECKLIST

- ▶ Bring this manual to the meeting whenever you are scheduled to speak.
- ▶ Review your presentation with your mentor.
- ▶ Discuss any special points with your evaluator before giving the speech.
- ▶ Give the evaluator your manual before you speak, so he or she can make written comments on your performance.
- ▶ Have the vice president education initial the Project Completion Record after you complete each project. This will give you credit toward your Competent Communicator award.
- ▶ Don't be discouraged if your evaluator misunderstood your point. Evaluators have varying degrees of experience in speaking, and evaluation is a learn-by-doing skill, just as speaking is.
- ▶ If you have not already done so, read *Effective Evaluation* (Item 202). It will help you understand how to get the most out of the Toastmasters program.



## EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **THE ICE BREAKER**

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Note to the Evaluator:** In this speech the new member is to introduce himself/herself to the club and begin speaking before an audience. The speech should have a clear beginning, body, and ending. The speaker has been advised to use notes if necessary and not to be concerned with gestures. Be encouraging and point out the speaker's strong points while gently and kindly mentioning areas that could be improved. Strive to have the speaker look forward to giving another speech. Your evaluation should help the speaker feel glad about joining Toastmasters and presenting this speech. In addition to your verbal evaluation, please write answers to the questions below.

- ▶ What strong points does the speaker already have?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ▶ How well did the audience get to know the speaker?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ▶ Did the speech reflect adequate preparation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ▶ Did the speaker talk clearly and audibly?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ▶ Did the speech have a definite opening, body, and conclusion?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ▶ Please comment on the speaker's use of notes.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ▶ What could the speaker have done differently that would have improved the speech?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ▶ What did you like about the presentation?

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Good speech organization is essential if your audience is to follow and understand your presentation. You must take the time to put your ideas together in an orderly manner. You can organize your speech in several different ways; choose the outline that best suits your topic.

The opening should catch the audience's attention, the body must support the idea you want to convey, and the conclusion should reinforce your ideas and be memorable. Transitions between thoughts should be smooth.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- ▶ Select an appropriate outline which allows listeners to easily follow and understand your speech.
- ▶ Make your message clear, with supporting material directly contributing to that message.
- ▶ Use appropriate transitions when moving from one idea to another.
- ▶ Create a strong opening and conclusion.

**Time:** Five to seven minutes

## ORGANIZE YOUR SPEECH

You have delivered your first prepared speech and participated in Table Topics and other meeting roles. Now you're ready to concentrate on structuring an effective speech.

As a speaker, your role is to tell others about your ideas and occasionally persuade them to take some action. Your audience will be more receptive to your efforts if you take the time to assemble your thoughts in a logical manner. Well-organized speeches have several benefits for the audience. They are:

- ▶ **Easier to understand.** Your audience wants to know what your speech is about and the point you are trying to make. A well-organized speech helps them do so.
- ▶ **Easier to remember.** A well-organized speech enables the audience to better identify and remember the points you made.
- ▶ **More credible.** Speakers who take the time to carefully organize their presentations are perceived as more knowledgeable and believable than those who give rambling, disjointed speeches.
- ▶ **More enjoyable.** Audiences appreciate presentations that are thoughtfully crafted and lead them step by step from the beginning to the end.

Organizing your speech helps you, too. When you plan the points you want to make and the order in which you want to present them, you will be less likely to forget anything and your presentation will be more effective.

### SELECT YOUR TOPIC

Your first step in creating your speech is to decide what to talk about. Novice speakers sometimes find this difficult. The world is full of possible speech topics. Your challenge is to select the best one for you and your audience. Finding a topic doesn't require special ability or long hours of research or thought. Consider, for example,

- ▶ Discussions you've had recently with friends or coworkers
- ▶ Magazine or newspaper articles that attracted your interest
- ▶ Your expertise on certain topics—real estate, writing, personal computers, etc.
- ▶ Everyday experiences—shopping, commuting, family relationships.

Any of these can generate speech ideas.



Eventually, as you become a more experienced speaker, you will encounter situations that will cause you to think, "That would make a good speech topic." Write down these ideas and file them. You can refer to them later.

You'll find more tips on selecting speech topics in the Appendix and in *The Better Speaker Series* presentation *Selecting Your Topic* (Item 274).

Be sure the topic is not too broad. For example, instead of talking about sports—a general topic—narrow the subject to children's sports or, more specific still, children's gymnastics. Remember, you will be speaking for only a few minutes, and you will need all of that time to fully develop a single facet of the larger subject. Be sure your topic is timely and relevant for your audience.

Once you know your topic, determine the point you want to make. If the topic is children's sports, for example, do you want to convince listeners that adults are making children's sports too competitive? Do you want to entertain your audience with funny stories about your child's soccer team?

### MAKE AN OUTLINE

The next step in preparing your speech is to logically assemble your ideas into a sequence that will help you achieve your objective. There is no "best" way to organize your speech. There are several different ways to organize, and the method you choose often depends on the topic you select and your objective.

**Chronological.** The topic is arranged by time. For example, in a speech about your town's upcoming centennial celebration, you would begin with details about its founding, followed by information about its growth over the years, then its current status. Or your speech could describe steps in a process, such as a speech about the five steps in making a career change.

**Spatial.** This type of speech follows a direction. For example, in a speech about planning a flower garden, you could first discuss low-growing flowers appropriate for the front of a garden, followed by slightly taller flowers suitable for the center of the garden, then taller flowers appropriate for the rear of the garden.

**Causal.** This type of speech shows cause/effect relationships. Often the effect is discussed first, then the cause. A speech about hurricanes that describes how a hurricane is formed and its destructiveness fits this organizational pattern.

**Comparative.** You compare and contrast different proposals or plans, usually to persuade the audience that one plan or proposal is better. For example, in a presentation to your company's executives, you could compare and contrast two different proposals concerning a new product to convince the executives that one proposal is better than the other.

**Topical.** This speech splits the main topic into subtopics. For example, a speech about changing radio programming could address three different types of programming: music, news, and talk shows.

**Problem-solution.** You present a problem that needs to be solved and a solution to that problem. This type of organization is effective if you are trying to motivate your audience to take some kind of action. For example, a speech describing the effect of water pollution on people and the environment fits this organizational pattern, provided it lists sources of water pollution in your town and describes what can be done to stop it.

Select the three best or most important facts or ideas that most effectively express your message as the foundation for the body of your speech.



## DEVELOP THE OPENING

In Project 1 you learned that every speech has an opening, body, and conclusion.

The opening should immediately catch the audience's attention and tell the audience what you will be talking about. Examples of a good opening are:

- ▶ A startling question or a challenging statement
- ▶ An appropriate quotation, illustration, or story
- ▶ A display of some object or picture
- ▶ An attention-getting generalization that ties in with your subject

Avoid these weak openings:

- ▶ An apologetic statement
- ▶ A story or joke that does not relate to your topic
- ▶ A commonplace observation delivered in a commonplace manner
- ▶ A long or slow-moving statement or story
- ▶ A trite question, such as "Did you ever stop to think...?"

## DRAFT THE BODY

The body is the main part of your speech and consists of the facts or ideas you want to present. The amount of information you include in the body will be limited by the amount of time available to you and how much the audience can remember. Most listeners will remember only three to five main facts or ideas. For a five- to seven-minute talk, three facts or ideas are plenty.

What facts or ideas do you want to convey? You may find it helpful to write down all of those related to your topic on small note cards, using one card per idea or fact and one sentence per idea or fact. Then select the three best or most important facts or ideas. These will be the main facts or ideas you will present. Arrange them in the order that will most effectively present your message.

For example, if you are writing a speech about the benefits of eating fruits and vegetables, the three main points you could select are:

1. Eating fruits and vegetables provides nutrients your body needs to function.
2. Eating fruits and vegetables protects against the effects of aging.
3. Eating fruits and vegetables reduces the risk of cancer and heart disease.

The next step in developing the body of your speech is to elaborate on each main point with subpoints. A subpoint clarifies, emphasizes, or proves the idea or fact it supports. Subpoints make the speech more interesting and help listeners remember the main point or idea. For example, a subpoint for point number one above could be: "They contain carbohydrates, proteins, and fats the body uses to generate energy or build cells."

Supporting material then follows each subpoint. Supporting material can include:

- ▶ **Statistics.** These are numerical ways of conveying information about incidents, data, and events.
- ▶ **Testimony.** These are quotes or opinions from people with expertise on the matter.

Subpoints clarify or prove a speech's main ideas. Support material further reinforces the subpoints.



- ▶ **Examples, stories, or anecdotes.** These usually relate an event that happened to you or someone you know, or someone you've read about.
- ▶ **Visual aids.** These could be diagrams, charts, pictures, models, or other objects. (More information about using visual aids appears in Project 8.)
- ▶ **Facts.** Facts are verifiable information.

Whichever support method you choose, make sure it is relevant to the point you are making.

### **THE CONCLUSION**

The conclusion is your final opportunity to convey your message and main points in a manner that will help the audience remember them. It should reinforce your ideas and leave listeners with a lasting impression. If you were informing the listeners, you could conclude with a summary of the ideas presented in the body of the speech. If you were persuading or motivating the audience to take some action, you could suggest a course of action listeners could take. You could then conclude with a final remark, such as a challenge, question, anecdote, or quotation.

Occasionally, as you deliver the conclusion, you may remember something you forgot to say earlier. Resist the temptation to talk about it now. Introducing new material in the closing may confuse the audience. Also, don't apologize for anything you may or may not have done or said during your talk. Finish forcefully and confidently.

### **SAMPLE SPEECH OUTLINE**

Following is an outline for a speech containing three main points:

- A. Opening
  - 1. Captures audience attention
  - 2. Leads into speech topic
- B. Body
  - 1. Main point
    - a. Subpoint
    - b. Support material
  - 2. Main point
    - a. Subpoint
    - b. Support material
  - 3. Main point
    - a. Subpoint
    - b. Support material
- C. Conclusion
  - 1. Review or summary
  - 2. Call to action or memorable statement

## PAY ATTENTION TO TRANSITIONS

Audiences need help in moving smoothly from one topic to another. Transitions provide these valuable bridges, helping the audience to follow the ideas being presented and to see the relationship of those ideas. Transitions usually are used as you move:

- ▶ from the speech introduction to the body
- ▶ from a main point to a subpoint
- ▶ from a subpoint to support material
- ▶ from support material to another main point
- ▶ from the last support material to the conclusion.

Transitions can be words, phrases, statements, or questions. Some transitional words are *afterward, also, but, consequently, consider, finally, instead, later, meanwhile, moreover, next, then, yet*. Some transitional phrases are: *according to, as a result, for example, for instance, in addition, let's begin with, more importantly, this means, to illustrate*. Some transitional statements or questions are: "If this program is so valuable, why is everyone resisting it?" "We must consider three things in developing this new product. First is...Second is...Third is..."

## YOUR ASSIGNMENT

In this project, the focus is on effective speech organization.

- ▶ Select an outline that's appropriate for your topic and allows your listeners to easily follow and understand your presentation.
- ▶ Make your message clear to the audience; the main points, subpoints, and support materials should contribute to that message.
- ▶ Use appropriate transitional words, phrases, statements, or questions as you move from one idea to another.
- ▶ Create a strong opening and conclusion. You may find it helpful to memorize them as you did in Project 1.
- ▶ Incorporate suggestions from your evaluation for Project 1 as you prepare and rehearse this speech.

For more information on speech organization, refer to *The Better Speaker Series* presentation *Organizing Your Speech* (Item 276). Review the Speaker's Checklist in Project 1 as you prepare your speech.



# EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **ORGANIZE YOUR SPEECH**

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Note to the Evaluator:** The speaker is to present a talk that is organized in a manner that leads the audience to a clearly defined goal. The speech includes a beginning, a body, and a conclusion; major facts or ideas; and appropriate support material, with smooth transitions between the facts and ideas. In addition to your verbal evaluation, please complete this evaluation form by rating the speech in each category and offering comments or specific recommended action where warranted.

- 5 = Excellent
- 4 = Above average for the speaker's experience level
- 3 = Satisfactory
- 2 = Could improve
- 1 = Needs attention

CATEGORY	RATING	COMMENTS / SUGGESTIONS
▶ <b>Speech Value</b> (Interesting, meaningful to audience)	5 4 3 2 1	
▶ <b>Preparation</b> (Research, rehearsal)	5 4 3 2 1	
▶ <b>Organization</b> (Logical, clear)	5 4 3 2 1	
▶ <b>Opening</b> (Captivating, led into topic)	5 4 3 2 1	
▶ <b>Body</b> (Flowed smoothly, appropriate support material)	5 4 3 2 1	
▶ <b>Conclusion</b> (Effective)	5 4 3 2 1	
▶ <b>Transitions</b> (Appropriate, helpful)	5 4 3 2 1	

▶ What could the speaker have done differently to make the speech more effective?

▶ What did you like about the presentation?

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Every speech must have a general and a specific purpose. A general purpose is to inform, to persuade, to entertain, or to inspire. A specific purpose is what you want the audience to do after listening to your speech. Once you have established your general and specific purposes, you'll find it easy to organize your speech. You'll also have more confidence, which makes you more convincing, enthusiastic, and sincere. Of course, the better organized the speech is, the more likely it is to achieve your purpose.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- ▶ Select a speech topic and determine its general and specific purposes.
- ▶ Organize the speech in a manner that best achieves those purposes.
- ▶ Ensure the beginning, body, and conclusion reinforce the purposes.
- ▶ Project sincerity and conviction and control any nervousness you may feel.
- ▶ Strive not to use notes.

**Time:** Five to seven minutes

## GET TO THE POINT

As you plan a speech, you must be absolutely clear about what you want the audience to do or know at the end of your talk. Your speech must have a purpose. Once you know your purpose, all other decisions relating to the speech—what information to include, organization, and delivery—are easy to make, since you will measure them against their helpfulness in achieving your purpose.

There are two types of purposes: general and specific.

### GENERAL PURPOSE

A general purpose is the broad intent of your speech. Most speeches fall into one of four general purposes:

**To inform.** You present a speech to inform when you want your audience to learn about a new subject, develop a new skill, or learn more about a subject they already know something about. Lectures, briefings, and demonstrations are all informative talks.

**To persuade.** A persuasive speech strives to change the audience's attitudes or behaviors, or to convince the audience to accept or approve your point of view. Sales presentations and campaign speeches are examples of persuasive speeches.

**To entertain.** An entertaining speech strives to amuse or provide enjoyment for the audience. Humorous speeches are the most obvious kind of entertaining speech. However, any speech may be entertaining without being laugh-out-loud funny simply by including anecdotes, such as a speech about some unusual experiences you had while on a business trip.

**To inspire.** Inspirational speeches ask people to achieve noble goals or ideals or reach their highest potential. They draw on emotions and sentiment. A commencement speech is a typical example of a speech intended to inspire.

Perhaps you've heard a speech that seemed to have two purposes—for example, an informative speech that also was entertaining because the speaker told some funny stories. Using humor doesn't mean the speech had two general purposes. The speech's purpose was to inform, but the speaker used humor to help convey his message. Although it's possible for a speech to have two general purposes, it's not recommended. Your speaking time is limited, making it difficult to effectively achieve two purposes. Also, your audience can be overwhelmed and confused when presented with too much information.

### SPECIFIC PURPOSE

Suppose you are planning to give an informative speech about remodeling a home. This is a very broad purpose, and you would have difficulty adequately addressing the subject in a five- to seven-minute speech or even a 30-minute



speech. Narrowing the general purpose into a more clearly defined specific purpose will make the presentation more practical and manageable for you, as well as more beneficial for the audience.

The specific purpose is a one-sentence statement about what you hope to accomplish in your speech. It should meet three criteria. The statement should be:

1. **Worded from the audience's viewpoint.** What do you want the audience to be able to do after listening to your speech?
2. **Specific.** The wording is precise.
3. **Attainable.** The specific purpose should be realistic and possible to achieve.

Write the statement from the audience's viewpoint. Instead of saying your purpose is "to inform the audience about remodeling a home," you could say, "After hearing my presentation, the audience will be able to identify the five steps in hiring a competent contractor." In a persuasive speech, your specific purpose could be, "After hearing my speech, the town council will approve the proposal to build an art center."

Be sure to keep the specific purpose reasonable. "After hearing my speech, the audience will be able to repair a bicycle" is not a realistic statement. This is better: "After hearing my speech, the audience will be able to do two simple maintenance tasks that will keep their bicycles safe."

Keep the specific purpose clear and concise. Write it down, paying careful attention to the verbs you use. If you are giving an informative speech, the specific purpose statement could include verbs such as *compare*, *identify*, *name*, *prepare*, *analyze*, and *list*, while a statement for a persuasive speech could include verbs such as *buy*, *contribute*, *join*, *offer*, and *vote*. Avoid using words like *know*, *understand*, *recognize*, and *be aware*—they're vague and not readily measurable. The statement should be worded so that, after your speech, you could actually test the audience to see if you achieved your specific purpose.

Once you have written your specific speech purpose, you can decide the main points you want to make, the facts and ideas that best support the main points, and the most appropriate speech outline to follow. Occasionally you maybe tempted to digress. Be careful to include only the main points and supporting facts and ideas that directly contribute to your specific speech purpose.

As you write the speech, make its purpose clear to the audience. The audience wants to know what you are going to talk about, so the beginning of your speech should tell them this succinctly. The body of your speech should provide the information you promised; the conclusion should reiterate what you've told them. By the time you conclude the speech, the audience should be able to state in one simple sentence the specific purpose of your talk.

### **SPEAK WITH CONFIDENCE**

In Project 2 you learned the importance of speech organization. Knowing your specific purpose and being able to effectively organize your speech to achieve that purpose provide a big benefit for you as a speaker: increased confidence. When you are clear about what you want to accomplish with the speech and the method by which you will accomplish it, you feel better and more confident about yourself and your speech.

You may have discovered, too, that when you are interested in your topic and have strong feelings about it, it is easier to prepare and present the speech. Why? Because you are

A general purpose is the broad intent of your speech—to inform, persuade, entertain, or inspire.



enthusiastic about the subject, believe in what you have to say and believe your audience will be interested in it, too. This makes you more convincing and sincere. When you are confident, enthusiastic, sincere, and convincing, you have more credibility. As a result, the audience pays attention to you and is willing to consider your viewpoint.

When you speak on a subject that interests you and/or evokes strong feelings, you'll experience yet another benefit: You'll become so involved with your talk that you will forget your nervousness. In Project 1 you learned that some nervousness is normal for any speaker. However, if you have been feeling very nervous when speaking, now is the time to confront it.

First, you should realize that your Toastmasters club members are a receptive, friendly, and pleasant audience. They want to help you in your efforts to become a better speaker; you have no reason to be afraid of them. Take advantage of your nervous energy to add excitement to your talk—this will help the audience catch your enthusiasm. Also, use the nervous energy toward thoroughly preparing and rehearsing your speech. When you have a subject that excites you, a clear purpose and well-organized material, and you have rehearsed the speech so much that you are comfortable with it, you no longer have reason to be nervous. You'll find more tips about controlling nervousness on page 79.

The specific purpose is a one-sentence statement about what you hope to accomplish in your speech.

### TRY IT WITHOUT NOTES

For this speech, try not to use notes. You'll want to convey confidence, enthusiasm, and sincerity; by relying on notes you might convey the opposite impression. By maintaining eye contact with the audience and speaking from your heart rather than from a script, you'll be more effective.

If you're not ready to abandon notes entirely, try this method: Write each main point of your speech in large letters on a single card in a simple phrase. You can then read each card with a quick glance, which will allow you to keep eye contact with the audience.

### YOUR ASSIGNMENT

This project focuses on knowing your speech's purpose.

- ▶ Select a speech topic and determine its general and specific purposes.
- ▶ Organize the speech in a manner that best achieves those purposes.
- ▶ Ensure that the beginning, body, and conclusion all tie into and reinforce the purposes.
- ▶ Project sincerity and conviction, and control any nervousness you may feel.
- ▶ Strive not to use notes.
- ▶ Incorporate suggestions from previous evaluations as you prepare and rehearse this speech.

Review the Speaker's Checklist in Project 1 as you prepare your speech.



# EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **GET TO THE POINT**

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Note to the Evaluator:** The speaker is to prepare a speech that has a clear general purpose (to inform, persuade, entertain, or inspire) and a specific purpose. The speech is to be organized in a manner that best achieves these purposes. The beginning, body, and conclusion should all tie into and reinforce the purposes. The speaker is to project sincerity and conviction and strive not to use notes. Any nervousness displayed should be minimal. In addition to your verbal evaluation, please complete the evaluation form below by rating the speech in each category.

- 5 = Excellent
- 4 = Above average for the speaker's experience level
- 3 = Satisfactory
- 2 = Could improve
- 1 = Needs attention

CATEGORY	RATING	COMMENTS / SUGGESTIONS
▶ The general purpose of the speech was clear.	5 4 3 2 1	
▶ The specific purpose of the speech was clear.	5 4 3 2 1	
▶ The speech organization supported the speech's specific purpose.	5 4 3 2 1	
▶ The main points and supporting material contributed to the speech's specific purpose.	5 4 3 2 1	
▶ The beginning, body, and conclusion reinforced the specific purpose.	5 4 3 2 1	
▶ The speaker achieved the specific purpose.	5 4 3 2 1	
▶ The speaker appeared confident and sincere, with minimal nervousness.	5 4 3 2 1	
▶ The speaker did not rely on notes throughout the speech.	5 4 3 2 1	

▶ What could the speaker have done differently to make the speech more effective?