

# Table Topics™ Master

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 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. Also, a fun and engaging Table Topics session makes a significant contribution to the overall enjoyment of the meeting by members and guests.



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

1. 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.
2. Confirm who the prepared speakers, evaluators and general evaluator will be so you can call on other members at the meeting to respond first. You can call on program participants (speakers last) at the end of the topics session if time allows.
3. 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.
4. There are many resources on your club's web site and the Toastmasters International web site for creating interesting and creative Table Topic sessions.
5. 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:

1. Briefly state the purpose of Table Topics and mention any theme.
2. If your club has a word of the day, encourage speakers to use that word in their response.
3. Be certain everyone understands the maximum time they have for their response and how the timing device works (if the timer hasn't already done so).

Then begin the program:

1. Give each speaker a different topic or question and call on speakers at random.
2. Avoid going around the room in the order in which people are sitting.
3. Don't ask two people the same thing unless you specify that each must give opposing viewpoints.
4. State the question briefly – then call on a respondent.
5. You may wish to invite guests to participate after they have seen one or two members' responses. But let visitors know they are free to decline if they don't feel like participating.

Watch your total time. You may need to adjust the number of questions so that your segment ends on time. Even if your portion started late, try to end on time to avoid the total meeting running overtime.

1. Ask the timer to give a report on the times for each Table Topics speaker.
2. Ask members to vote for best Table Topics speaker and pass their votes to the timer or the vote counter designated by your club.
3. While the members and guests are voting, remind everybody of each speaker's response and/or topic.

Return control of the meeting to the Toastmaster.

Remember to look for new and creative ways to inspire your fellow members to practice extemporaneous speaking skills. Here are a few ideas:

1. Use famous quotes related to your theme (<http://www.quotegarden.com>)
2. Buy a bag of fortune cookies at the dollar store.
3. Create a Powerpoint with various pictures related to the theme.
4. Bring in a box of objects and ask the speaker to explain the purpose or sell the item.
5. Pretend you are an interviewer on the red carpet and members are the celebrities.
6. Ask about favourites e.g. book, movie, hobby, food, drink, etc.
7. Insert your idea here!