

Welcome to Eldergate Toastmasters



A quick guide to what to expect at an Eldergate meeting

Dates, time and venue

We meet on the 2nd and 4th Mondays each month at the National Badminton Centre, Bradwell Road, Loughton, Milton Keynes, MK8 9LA. Meetings start at 6 pm.

Meeting structure

The meeting is divided into 3 main sections, topped and tailed by short sections on club business at the beginning and any other business at the end.

- Prepared speeches
- A 'topics' session – short, off-the cuff speeches
- Evaluation

Prepared speeches

There are normally 3 or 4 prepared speeches. Members work through a manual of 10 speech projects, each one with specific objectives – e.g. vocal variety, body language, using visual aids – but the speaker chooses the subject of their speech.

Once a member has completed the 'Competent Communicator' manual (*right*), they can choose from a range of advanced manuals to further develop their skills.

Topics session

The Topics session is intended to improve our ability to speak off-the-cuff using the skills developed in delivering prepared speeches. A *Topics Master* chooses the subjects and selects 4 or 5 speakers who will have no prior notice of their subject. They should then aim to speak for 1 to 2 minutes. Guests are welcome to take part in the Topics session.



Evaluation

Nearly everything at Toastmasters is evaluated – it's a key part of a mutually supportive learning environment. Each speaker will be evaluated by another member, verbally in the meeting plus a more detailed written evaluation in their manual.

Everyone present can also give their views on the prepared speeches using the comments slips provided. The aim of evaluation is to give positive feedback to the speaker about what went well and constructive suggestions for how aspects of the speech might be improved or things to work on in future speeches.

In turn, the evaluators are also evaluated (how well did they introduce their speaker and give feedback on their speech?) and so too is the meeting as a whole: this is the role of the *General Evaluators*.

Meeting officials

We take it in turns to fill all the different roles that you will see on the agenda – so, for example, you might deliver a speech at one meeting, chair the next one (the *Toastmaster of the Evening*) and perhaps be the *Grammarian* at the one after. Officials explain their roles at the beginning of the meeting but the purpose of each official should become clearer as the meeting progresses.

Timing is everything!

You will see from the meeting agenda that everything at Toastmasters is timed. Not only does this help to make the meeting manageable (we aim to finish by 8 pm), but being able to make your point concisely is an essential skill for effective public speaking. The *Timekeeper* uses lights to warn the speaker how much time they have left.

Voting

Using voting slips provided, everyone (including guests) can vote for the best speaker, the best topics speaker, the best evaluator and the most humorous speaker of the evening.

Wider benefits

Most people join Toastmasters because they want to improve their public speaking skills. But other benefits include improving listening skills, learning how to give constructive feedback, and leadership development by taking on the various roles at meetings and, perhaps in time, joining the committee that runs the club.

Attending as a guest

Guests will be asked to sign the Visitors' Book, to introduce themselves briefly and to say why they have come. At the end of the evening, guests may be asked what they thought about the meeting. There will be a 15 minute break for tea and coffee at about 7pm - a good chance for guests to chat to members and ask any questions. Committee members will also be available after the meeting. Guests are welcome to attend as many meetings as they like before deciding whether to join.

More information

www.mktoastmasters.co.uk The website for all 3 clubs in the MK area: see the *Eldergate Members Blog*, *Notes of Meetings* and *Eldergate Calendar* pages for more information about our club.



For the latest info and posts about our meetings, press Ctrl + Click on the *Meetup* icon or go to <http://www.meetup.com/MK-Toastmasters-promoting-excellence-in-public-speaking>

Contacts

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