

Welcome to Eldergate Toastmasters



We hope you will enjoy your visit this evening and that you will find these notes helpful in understanding how our meetings normally work.

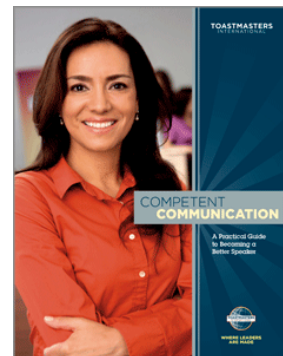
Meeting structure

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 (*pictured right*), they can select further projects from a range of advanced manuals. You may hear a speech from one of the advanced manuals tonight.



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 with speakers having no prior notice of their subject. They should then speak for 1 to 2 minutes. Guests are welcome to take part in the Topics session but it's entirely up to you: if you sit with your arms folded, the Topics Master will know that you would rather not take part this evening.

Evaluation

Nearly everything at Toastmasters is evaluated – it's a key part of a mutually supporting 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 don't worry if you missed it – the purpose of each official should become clearer as the meeting progresses.

Timing is everything !

As you will see from the agenda, everything at Toastmasters is timed. Not only does this help to make the meeting manageable (we aim to finish by 8pm), 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 the 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.

Unexpected benefits

Most people join Toastmasters because they want to improve their public speaking skills. But there are other less obvious benefits including improving your listening skills, giving constructive feedback, and leadership development by taking on the various roles at meetings and, perhaps in time, joining the committee that runs the club.

Your feedback

We would like to know a little more about you and what brought you to Toastmasters this evening. As a guest you will be asked to sign the Visitors' Book and to introduce yourself briefly and say why you have come. At the end of the evening, you may be asked what you thought about the meeting - so we can get some feedback on what you enjoyed and anything we need to improve.

Any questions ?

There will be a 15 minute break for tea and coffee at about 7pm - a good opportunity to chat to members and ask any questions. You can also talk to committee members after the meeting. We will be delighted if you want to join the club but please feel free to attend as many meetings as you like as a guest before deciding whether to sign up.

More info: www.mktoastmasters.co.uk