

The 15 minute guide to running a speech contest

"I love the winning, I can take the losing, but most of all I love to play." Boris Becker

Note: This guide does NOT replace reading the rulebook. Your most important task: READ THE RULEBOOK

Benefits of Contests

Contests are a great way to have people visit your club, an opportunity to hold a joint meeting with the clubs in your area, and in general, to get members out of their shells by getting them to speak to people not in their club. Your club can also work on two of its Distinguished Club Program (DCP) goals: contest speeches can count towards educational goals and well-run contests often bring in new members.

Who's Responsible?

At the **club level, the VP Education**. The **area level, the area director, division level, division director** and **district level, program quality director**. This does NOT mean that these people run the whole contests themselves, however!

Roles:

- Contest Chair: Overall coordinator of the Contest
- Contest Master: Toastmaster for the Event
- Chief Judge: Briefs the judges, counters, timers
- Voting Judges: Club: at least 5 judges and a tiebreaking judge
Area: equal number of voting judges from each club in the area or a minimum of 5 voting judges plus tiebreaking judge
Division: equal number of voting judges from each area in the division or a minimum of 7 voting judges and a tiebreaking judge
No chief judge, voting judge, or tiebreaking judge shall be a member of **any club in which a contestant is a member**
- Tiebreaking Judge: Does not participate in judges' briefing, receives separate ballot; ranks ALL contestants in order, not only top 3 as voting judges do; hands ballot directly to chief judge; ballot only used to break a tie
- Counters: Three to count ballots
- Timers: Two: one to show cards or signal, the other to operate the timing device. If a technical failure happens with signal or timing device, the speaker is allowed 30 seconds overtime before disqualification
- Sergeant at Arms: Greets guests, becomes a door guard during contest; for Table Topics and Evaluation contests, escorts contestants to another room

Eligibility- Every Toastmaster in good standing may compete in Humorous, Evaluation, and Table Topics Contests. For International Speech contest, contestant must have completed six speeches from the CC manual. Newly chartered clubs are exempt. District officers are not eligible to compete at any level.

Originality- Speech must be original; must cite material incorporated from other sources.

Timing- Begins when contestant engages in definite verbal or nonverbal communication with the audience.

Protests- Only the voting judges or contestants may protest based on originality; contest chair can disqualify a contestant based on eligibility.

Before the Contest:

Contest kits are available for purchase; all the materials you need are available for free online. Having the contest kits is very important for a smoothly run contest, with CURRENT RULES and CURRENT FORMS – [buy or download](#) *the right contest type!*

Credit for Contest Planning:

Organizing or helping to organize a club level contest is a great way to complete **Competent Leadership (CL) projects #6 or #10.** You could consider contest planning for a **High Performance Leadership (HPL) Project.**

General Contest Tips:

- Have someone proof the agenda to ensure all contestant and other names are correctly spelled.
- Don't put judges' names on the agenda or identify them – they are to remain as anonymous as possible!
- Make sure judges are familiar with BOTH sides of the ballot and that they're using the correct one for the appropriate contest.
- Don't put any educational credentials like CC, CL, ACB, ALB in the agenda, or announce these, only the contestant's name. Check, and double check that the contestant's name IS right.
- Have the contest master PRACTICE saying contestants' names. And if in doubt, ASK the contestant to say their name.

During the Contest

Don't introduce the contestants! Just name, title, title, name.

After the Contest

First announce if there were any time qualifications; don't include names of contestant(s). Then announce winners at the very end. (People will leave once winners are announced.)

Resources

[Tutorials](#)

[FAQ](#)

[Conduct Quality Speech Contests module](#)

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