

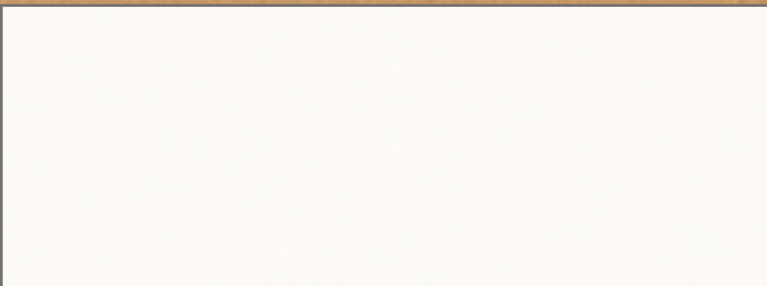
THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | JUNE 2014

# TOASTMASTER®



## Debate Matters

Discover the classic art of persuasion. PAGE 16



### Managing Table Topics

Heed the advice of the pros.

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# Education and Youth



*“Education is our business. It has been so from the beginning.”*

— Toastmasters founder Ralph Smedley

When Dr. Smedley graduated from Illinois Wesleyan University in 1903, he started his career as education director for the local YMCA. Education and youth became his life’s work. In the century since, general knowledge has accelerated at a rate so dramatic that the term “knowledge explosion” is now an understatement. Jim Carroll, the noted futurist, has written, “The baby boomer generation (of which I am one) are the last in

the history of mankind to not have been exposed to computers since birth.” That statement must make baby boomers feel like *The Last of the Mohicans*.

In our age of discontinuity, what does education mean to our younger members? Twenty-five percent of our current members are between the ages of 18 and 34. On his 80th birthday, on February 22, 1958, Dr. Smedley relied on the 19th-century English philosopher Herbert Spencer for the answer. Spencer held that “... education is a process of drawing out and putting into use the talents and abilities which are present in the person to be educated, rather than of pouring into his mind information from the exterior.”

Toastmasters will roll out its largest and most important update to our education program since 1942, when our first basic training manual was developed. The revitalized education program stems from the 2010 Strategic Plan and will focus on developing five core competencies:

- Public speaking
- Interpersonal communication
- Leading and managing
- Leading strategically
- Building confidence

These competencies will be learned through experiential education based on Dr. Smedley’s principle of “learning by doing and improving through practice and criticism.” From the confidence we gain through public speaking and interpersonal communication, we develop the habit of lifelong learning as well as the art of leadership.

By conscientiously performing our club and district leadership roles, we have the opportunity to practice and internalize Toastmasters’ four core values: integrity, respect for the individual, service to the member and dedication to excellence. These are also the four cornerstones of character and personality.

In this age where practically all knowledge is only a Google search away, our challenge is to train our young new members to reflect on this readily available information and practice the art of face-to-face communication to gain experience. This will empower them to achieve their full potential. More than ever, our youth need the services of Toastmasters as they venture into uncharted futures. ■

**GEORGE YEN, DTM**  
International President

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We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.



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“In my clubs, we encourage members to take turns serving as grammarian. Making a mistake is encouraged.”

—Bruce Yang, DTM

### Valuable Viewpoint

I would like International President George Yen to know how much I learn from the Viewpoint column he writes each month in the *Toastmaster* magazine. In the February issue, he equates *greatness* with an appropriate *attitude*. How true! It is in how we perceive ourselves in whatever situation we encounter that will determine our final outcome—either success or failure. I look forward to learning something new and valuable from him each month.

#### TINA FRIESEN

To the Point club  
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

### Heart to Heart

Tammy Miller’s article “Showing the *Heart of a Toastmaster*” (February) was outstanding. Since I joined in 2006, Toastmasters has provided many opportunities for me that I never imagined possible. I met Sheryl Roush at BookExpo America in 2008 and she invited me to submit my story for her *Heart of a Woman in Business* book. I was so excited to learn it had been accepted. *The Heart of a Toastmaster* spotlights so many life-changing experiences for dozens of Toastmasters.

#### ELDONNA LEWIS FERNANDEZ, ACS, ALB

Air LA club  
El Segundo, California

### Analogy Offends

John Spait’s article “The Art of Bragging” (March) was another example of the many helpful insights the *Toastmaster* provides. However, as a woman and mother of a young woman, I was offended by his miniskirt analogy to explain the length of time one should spend bragging: “short enough to be interesting, but long enough to cover the essentials.”

I could hardly see myself giving that advice to my daughter as she prepared for a speech. Nor would I want my young son to view a woman in an objectifying manner.

Maybe more pieces on gender and audience would be helpful in an upcoming edition? Thank you for your attention to my concern and for all that your magazine offers.

#### JAYME LONG

Gem City Toastmasters  
Quincy, Illinois

### Be a Grammarian

I agree with what Lynn MacKaben Brown wrote in her article “Becoming the Grammarian” (March): “Rome was not built in a day, and neither was the exceptional grammarian. The goal is improvement, not perfection.” In my clubs, we encourage members to take turns serving as grammarian. Making a mistake is encouraged. Since English is not our mother tongue, to make a grammatical error is natural—even for grammarians. When this happens, the meeting’s General Evaluator corrects the mistake with an encouraging tone.

Besides correcting pronunciation, word choice, tense or Chinese English, a grammarian also points out good and inspiring sentences from the meeting. Even though many members “would rather swim with piranhas or jump from a plane,” we encourage them to try the grammarian role to examine their grammar performance after learning English for so many years.

#### BRUCE YANG, DTM

Taichung Toastmasters  
Taichung City, Taiwan

### Business Sense

I joined Toastmasters several years ago after being promoted to president of the Gotcha Covered franchise system. I wanted to improve my communication and leadership skills, especially during our annual conference for all our franchisees. During the conference, I am front and center with our group for several days, and it’s important for me to communicate effectively and motivate our group during our short time together.

Toastmasters has done so much for me in the last few years that at the Gotcha Covered award ceremony this past year, I offered to pay the annual Toastmasters membership for any franchisee who joins a club! Knowing how much I have benefited from Toastmasters, I firmly believe that this standing offer to our franchisee will offer a great return on my investment, and help all franchisees be more successful.

#### PAUL LINENBERG

Castle Rock Toastmasters  
Castle Rock, Colorado

### DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

Write it in 200 words or less. State your name, member number and home club, and send it to [letters@toastmasters.org](mailto:letters@toastmasters.org). Please note: Letters are subject to editing for length and clarity, and may be published in both the print and electronic editions.



Have you checked out the digital *Toastmaster* magazine yet?

If so, please send your feedback to [letters@toastmasters.org](mailto:letters@toastmasters.org). Your opinion matters!

To find the *Toastmaster* magazine app, visit the Apple App Store, Amazon Appstore or Google Play store.

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*By Patrick Mott*

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Don't overanalyze the topic.

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*By Craig Harrison, DTM, PDG*

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By Mary Nesfield



Conn Jackson, pictured holding the American flag, belongs to three clubs in Atlanta, Georgia, including *Beyond Sight Communicators*, a club with visually impaired members.

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## 3 Ways to Enjoy the *Toastmaster* on the go!

The September through June issues\* are available for viewing on these tablets:

- iPad (second-generation iPad and newer)
- Android (4.03 or newer)
- Kindle Fire HD

Simply download the *Toastmaster* magazine app for your tablet from the Apple, Google Play or Amazon app stores.

For more information, go to [www.toastmasters.org/magazine](http://www.toastmasters.org/magazine).

\*The June issue will be available soon.



### June Digital Content Highlights

- Watch linguistics professor Ganchimeg Zagdaa promote Toastmasters on a Mongolian TV program.
- Watch examples of improv games for Table Topics ideas.
- Listen to TV host Conn Jackson talk to Toastmasters International CEO Daniel Rex about connecting with an audience.

# AROUND THE GLOBE

## MEMBER MOMENT



## Expatriate Explores Leadership in Norway



Amanda Chacon, ACB, ALB

Amanda Chacon, ACB, ALB, is the proud club president of Oslo Toastmasters in Oslo, Norway—the only Toastmasters club in Norway. A former member of the Gettin’ Toasty club in Sherman Oaks, California, Chacon worked for the Los Angeles Public Library before moving to Oslo with her Norwegian husband in 2012. She is currently taking classes to learn the Norwegian language.

### What are your goals?

While I’m in Oslo, I want to learn to speak Norwegian fluently. My Toastmasters goals are to attain an ACS and complete a High Performance Leadership project by the year’s end. My long-term goal is to earn a bachelor’s degree in business or economics.

### Do you see yourself as a leader?

I was raised by a father who was a midlevel manager for a major car company, and he instilled in me the importance of being willing to lead when no one else is. Even with his good example, I didn’t enjoy being a leader until I learned how in Toastmasters. Three years ago, I could not have imagined being a club president.

### What is the best advice you have ever received?

It was to choose speech topics I am passionate about, and not shy away from talking about personal experiences. My best speeches have been deeply personal in nature. Had I been restricted to professional topics, such as sales pitches and meeting presentations, my public speaking progress would not have taken off like it did.

### How does culture differ between the Oslo Toastmasters and Gettin’ Toasty clubs?

In the Gettin’ Toasty club, dual membership was very common, and we shared a meeting space with two other clubs. Our frequent contact with other clubs had many positive benefits, and we lack such contact in Oslo since it’s the only club in the country.

Last October we hosted a division conference, and many Toastmasters from Sweden, Denmark and Finland visited Oslo. Our members really benefited from meeting other Toastmasters, and we all had a great time.

### What makes your club unique?

We have mostly European members, and at least one member from each continent. Their professions include banking, finance and engineering, and many of them work for large Norwegian or multinational companies.

At meetings, we start with a quick “round robin” where everyone speaks for 20–30 seconds on a topic selected by the Toastmaster. Additionally, Oslo Toastmasters consistently has the most creative Table Topics I have seen.

### Is there a certain Norwegian food you would recommend to visitors?

Norway is famous for its fish, and I recommend trying as much of it as possible. For the brave, try a traditional Christmas dish called lutefisk. Lutefisk is cod preserved in lye, and I recommend eating it with heaping amounts of bacon.

## In Brief

### SPEECHWRITING RESOURCE

The Vital Speeches of the Day website (<http://vsotd.com>) offers free tools: a speech archive, links to speechwriting resources, and an optional “speech of the week” email.

### FOR YOUR READING PLEASURE

Ryan Avery, the 2012 World Champion of Public Speaking, has co-authored a new book with Jeremy Donovan, DTM, titled

*Speaker, Leader, Champion: Succeed at Work Through the Power of Public Speaking.*

The authors examine winning speeches from the annual World Championship of Public Speaking contest and provide tips for public speaking success.

### MEMBERSHIP-BUILDING CONTEST

Encourage members to participate in the “Beat the Clock” membership-building

contest that ends June 30. For details, visit [www.toastmasters.org/membershipcontests](http://www.toastmasters.org/membershipcontests).

### FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM

Check out the Official Instagram account for Toastmasters International. Be inspired by *Traveling Toastmaster* and historical photos and quotes. Convention updates will be posted in August. [instagram.com/toastmastersinternational#](https://www.instagram.com/toastmastersinternational/)



## SNAPSHOT



*Team Building: In August 2013, the Voces Latinas Toastmasters hosted a summer social event at Elysian Park in Los Angeles, California, where visitors were invited to participate in Table Topics, watch a prepared speech and also enjoy food and activities including a water-balloon toss.*

### FACTS WORTH KNOWING

## New Titles for District Leaders Starting in 2015

On July 1, 2015, as incoming district leaders take on their new leadership roles, they will also be the first to carry the new contemporary district leader titles. The Board of Directors recently approved the official renaming of district leader roles, a decision that stemmed from a committee studying the competencies needed for district leaders to successfully fulfill their roles. The new titles are more modern, reflect the focus and responsibility of each role, are identifiable to potential members, create a parallel between district leadership and leadership in the corporate and volunteer sectors, and recognize the experience gained by holding these roles. This change is a positive step for Toastmasters International and is in alignment with the organization's strategic plan objective to modernize the programs with a renewed focus on leadership.

The updated titles will apply to the 2015-2016 newly-elected and/or appointed district leaders as seen in the chart below. District leaders serving during the 2014-2015 program year will retain their current titles.

| CURRENT TITLE                              | NEW TITLE                                   |
|--|---|
| District Governor                          | <b>District Director, District #</b>        |
| Lieutenant Governor Education and Training | <b>Program Quality Director, District #</b> |
| Lieutenant Governor Marketing              | <b>Club Growth Director, District #</b>     |
| Secretary                                  | <b>Administration Manager</b>               |
| Treasurer                                  | <b>Finance Manager</b>                      |
| Public Relations Officer                   | <b>Public Relations Manager</b>             |
| Sergeant at Arms                           | <b>Logistics Manager</b>                    |
| Division Governor                          | <b>Division Director</b>                    |
| Area Governor                              | <b>Area Director</b>                        |



WHAT'S THE BUZZ?

Does clothing make the speaker?

"Yes. When you look good, you feel better and deliver your best speech. Anything less is a disappointment to both you and to the audience."

**Barbara Spause, ACS, CL**  
Aetna Articulators club  
Blue Bell, Pennsylvania

"Clothing can make you assume a persona. While you would probably feel more professional in a suit or a smart dress, formal attire may put you in the wrong frame of mind for a wacky, humorous speech."

**Julie Kenny, ACB**  
Ipswich Electrifiers Speakers' club  
Ipswich, England

"Consider a swimming analogy. To swim well, we need to think about breathing, kicking and stroke technique all at the same time. If we give just one technique less thought than needed, we will not be as good of a swimmer. If our gestures are great and our voice is well-suited to the room, but our outfit is mismatched to the situation, we might still give a reasonable speech, but it will not be as good as it could be."

**Alexander Yashin**  
Jimboomba Toastmasters club  
Jimboomba, Queensland, Australia

"Dress the part. Public speaking is all about presentation, and presentation is visual as well as auditory, so the key is to be aware that the audience is attuned to the nonverbal as well as the verbal message."

**Yael Eylat-Tanaka, ACS, CL**  
Brandon Toastmasters club @ HCC  
Tampa, Florida

Members contributed to the discussion on the LinkedIn Official Toastmasters International Members Group.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"It usually takes me two or three days to prepare an IMPROMPTU SPEECH."

— MARK TWAIN

INTERNATIONAL INTERPRETATIONS

A World of Hurt

We've all done it—stubbed a toe, slammed a finger or suffered from the annoying paper cut. Pain, it seems, is universal. Yet how people express their pain in various regions of the world is a bit more unique.

Consider someone who just got a small jolt of electric shock. An English-speaking person would most likely flinch, then say something like "Ow!" or "Ouch!" (and in some cases, a bout of swearing might follow).

In other cultures, brief, yet sharp pain will be expressed through different words, but with similarly strong vowel sounds. The most common reaction involves some kind of "ee" sound, although many around the world react with an "ai" or "oi" sound. Typically, the jaw closes, the tongue presses up and forward, and the corners of the mouth pull back.

For example, expressing pain might sound like "Au!" in Dutch, "Aua!" in German, "¡Ay!" in Spanish, "Ahi!" in Italian, "Okh!" in Greek, and "Oi!" in Russian. Some languages add a bit more emphasis, like the guy speaking Mandarin who may respond to distress with a loud "Āiyā!"

It's not surprising that people everywhere make some exclamation after injury. After all, we're all human—and no one is immune to pain. Yet how we express our hurting through language—many times in very similar ways—remains a good reminder of the common bonds we all share, regardless of where we live or what language we speak.

Source: *The Week*, "Why Pain Is Expressed Differently in Different Languages"



Pain is expressed differently around the globe—but we all feel it.

LEARNING FROM OUR PAST INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENTS



**GARY SCHMIDT, DTM**  
Past International President  
2009–2010  
Clackamas, Oregon

A Memorable Moment

"One of the most memorable moments in my life took place in Chicago in 1999, when attending my first Toastmasters International Convention. It was filled with excitement! The parade of flags at the opening ceremonies was emotional. Meeting articulate and intelligent Board of Directors candidates was inspiring. Attending education sessions with world-class speakers was motivating. Watching Zig Ziglar receive the Golden Gavel award was thrilling. Celebrating my district earning the Distinguished designation was humbling. Witnessing the World Championship of Public Speaking was amazing. Making new friends from around the world was rewarding.

That is why I have not missed a convention in the past 15 years. Where else can you be excited, emotional, inspired, motivated, thrilled, humbled, amazed and rewarded at the same time? I hope to see you in Malaysia in August!"



## MEET MY MENTOR



# Andrew Pearson, ACG, ALB

No one has the potential to influence a member's experience like a mentor. Shankar Mahadevan, CC, ALB, is an IT supply chain architect for a multinational company. He is a member of the North Metro Toastmasters club in Kennesaw, Georgia. Shankar shares how his mentor, Andrew Pearson, ACG, ALB, has helped him.

### Why did you join Toastmasters?

I joined last April to meet other speakers. Although I had given several presentations and addressed audiences in the past, I needed to refine my speeches.

### What challenges did you want to overcome?

I wanted to learn to express my thoughts concisely and clearly. I also wanted to explore leadership.

### Please tell us more about Andrew.

Andrew Pearson is a software programmer, and is my club's vice president public relations. He is fair and tactful, and he consistently mentors club members while also overseeing the functioning of the club. He communicates the club's needs in achieving and maintaining recognition.

Not only does Andrew give me feedback on my speeches, he also encourages me to serve in leadership roles and enter speech contests. I participated in the Humorous Speech and International Speech contests, and he helped me identify opportunities and alternate manners of presenting.

### What goals has Andrew helped you accomplish?

As a mentor, he has:

- M**otivated me to successfully complete my CC and CL in nine months.
- E**ncouraged me to pursue three educational awards in one program year.
- N**avigated me toward successfully organizing a Toastmasters Youth Leadership program.
- T**rained me in my role as club treasurer.
- O**rganized club contests whereby giving me an opportunity to participate in Humorous Speech and International Speech contests.
- R**ecognized me for being co-chair of the information committee for District 44's fall conference last year.

### What is your favorite thing about Andrew?

It's his selfless support and dedication to the club and to members. He is always available to help club officers and members with their roles and speeches.

### NOMINATE YOUR MARVELOUS MENTOR!

Do you know an exceptional mentor who has positively influenced you or other Toastmasters? Send a 200-word description and photo (1 MB or larger) to [MentorMoment@toastmasters.org](mailto:MentorMoment@toastmasters.org).



FROM LEFT: Shankar Mahadevan and Andrew Pearson

## REHEARSAL TIP

# Be Prepared



Vocal variety and gestures entertain audience members and add value to your speech. Read further for tips on how to prepare your voice and rehearse your gestures before delivering your next speech.

### Know the size of your audience.

The larger your audience, the more exaggerated and animated your gestures and expressions should be. If you want to be seen by the people in the back row of an audience of 100 or more, your gestures and facial expressions must stand out, just like a stage actor's makeup must be exaggerated for all audience members to see.

**Warm up your vocal cords.** Singers and performance artists often gently exercise their vocal chords by completing simple warm-up exercises before taking the stage. You can do the same by completing quick voice exercises in the days leading up to your speech to help relax your voice, control your breathing, project your voice and improve articulation. Find exercises at [www.toastmasters.org/199-YourSpeakingVoice](http://www.toastmasters.org/199-YourSpeakingVoice).

**Record your rehearsals.** Fine-tune all aspects of your performance by recording your practice speeches so you can analyze your body language and voice volume. Do your facial expressions match your message? Is the intensity and frequency of your gestures appropriate for your message? Can you hear every word clearly? Evaluate your recorded performance and make alterations as needed until you are confident with your body language.

# TRAVELING TOASTMASTER



**1 | JONAS KEHRBAUM FROM SAINT CHARLES, MISSOURI,** visits Cape Town, South Africa, during his Semester at Sea program.

**2 | EDGAR D. HERNANDEZ FROM JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA, AND SON, YOUTH LEADER STEPHEN C. HERNANDEZ,** vacation in Baguio City, Philippines.

**3 | ROGER AND SUE FARR FROM MOUNT PLEASANT, TEXAS,** chill with penguins on the Antarctic Peninsula in Antarctica.

**4 | MARSHA ARMSTRONG FROM SAINT PETER, BARBADOS,** explores the Castillo San Felipe de Barajas in Cartagena, Colombia.



View more photos on your tablet or on our Facebook page: [Toastmasters International Official Fan Page](#).



**PICTURE YOURSELF HERE!** Pose with the *Toastmaster* magazine in your exciting surroundings. Email your high-resolution image (at least one megabyte) to [photos@toastmasters.org](mailto:photos@toastmasters.org). Bon voyage!

# Drum Roll, Please!

How a lone speech contestant motivated me to compete.

BY KHUSHI PASQUALE, CC, ALB

**A**nd the winner of the Toastmasters 2012 district Humorous Speech Contest is ... not me. Not this time. Even so, I am a winner, and you can be too. Here's how: IGP, SGP and TeaM. (More on those acronyms later.)

When my club, Mercury Toastmasters in Berlin, Germany, announced its Humorous Speech Contest a while back, I instantly decided *not* to enter. My reasons? I am not funny, I have nothing to say and I have no experience. I believed that if I tried to write a humorous speech, it would be a total flop.

Then I attended a meeting of the First Berlin Toastmasters in Berlin, which was hosting its Table Topics and Humorous Speech contests. Only one contestant participated in the Humorous Speech Contest. She was funny. She talked about teaching her daughter to drive. I thought I might be able to speak like that too, since her story sounded like one I'd tell my friends.

**You may think you're not funny or that you have nothing to say, but life itself is funny and full of stories waiting to be told.**

Realizing how the contest would have been more fun with additional contestants, I decided I'd enter our club's contest if I could come up with a story in the next few days.

It was a random conversation that gave me my opening lines. I started writing. I entered the contest and things snowballed from there. I ended up a district-level finalist.

This never would have happened if I hadn't watched that single contestant, if my club contest chair hadn't set a tone of fun, if my mentor hadn't pushed me and if others hadn't encouraged me. Several "ifs" come to mind, and each "if" connects to a person.

You may think you're not funny or that you have nothing to say, but life itself is funny and full of stories waiting to be told. You may not be an experienced speaker, but you can rely on the experience of others. Each time you give a speech at a club or a contest, your confidence and technique improves, and you add to your future ability to flourish. I call this "**Individual Growth Potential**"—IGP.



*Khushi Pasquale of Berlin, Germany, didn't think she was funny but discovered otherwise.*

That's not all. IGP is fueled by evaluation and reflection. Overwhelmingly, feedback in Toastmasters is precise and constructive; each evaluation I receive influences my writing and my delivery. But sometimes the feedback we receive from different members can seem contradictory. I learned to take all the comments in—without judgment—and reflect on what rings true for me.

Once, when a heated debate arose over a prop I used for a speech, I realized my fellow members were identifying with my speech. That felt good. When my evaluators urged me to pause and allow more reaction time, I realized I had a fear of letting the audience in, and I paid more attention to pauses.

Feedback improved my speeches. If I hadn't been preparing for a contest, I would not have reworked a speech over the course of eight weeks. Imagine exploring structure, purpose, wording, gestures, vocal variety and visual

aids—all in one presentation. That's six out of 10 *Competent Communication* projects. What a benefit! That's IGP at the speech contest level. That's also maximizing what I call "**Speech Growth Potential**"—SGP.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of entering a contest can be summed up with another acronym. At District 59's 2012 Fall Conference, one workshop presenter drew a "T" and then an "M" on a board—indicating Toastmasters—and then inserted the letters "e" and "a" in between, spelling "**TeaM.**" This stands for "Together each achieves More." *TeaM is Toastmasters.* It happens every time members meet. TeaM becomes tangible and undeniable as you participate in speech contests.

Entering a speech contest puts you in the center of an ever-widening circle of benefits. It's as if you're a pebble thrown into a lake, creating a chain reaction of ever-widening ripples. What if you jumped into the next contest? You could be that pebble, triggering ripples of benefits.

Can I have a drum roll please? And the winner is ... you! **T**

**KHUSHI PASQUALE, CC, ALB**, is a member of Mercury Toastmasters in Berlin, Germany. She teaches English and business communication skills.



Ganchimeg Zagdaa, ACB, CL:

# Making History in Mongolia

Linguistics professor brings passion for English language to Toastmasters in Ulaanbaatar.

BY CAREN NEILE, PH.D., ATMS

In the 13th century, Genghis Khan made history by founding the Mongol Empire. In the 21st century, Ganchimeg Zagdaa made history by founding the first Mongolian Toastmasters club in 2010.

Zagdaa, Ph.D., is a linguistics professor and director of the Academy of English in Ulaanbaatar, her nation's capital. Known as Dr. Ganaa, she is not only a founding member of Toastmasters Mongolia, she also served as the club's first president.

**“When we established the club, it was truly challenging because no one had attended a meeting before.”**

— Ganchimeg Zagdaa, a founding member of Toastmasters Mongolia

Zagdaa says a key to the success in forming a club was the national focus in 2010 on learning the English language. She found out about Toastmasters a few years earlier from one of her students at the Academy of English. In spite of the high demand for a club, she tried to locate one, but found that no official club existed in the country.

“The government had announced English as a second official language, so the number of people who were studying English increased dramatically,” she notes. “There were also a lot of foreign companies here, and English-language proficiency became one of the main requirements for getting a well-paid job.”

People not only needed to practice English; they wanted to be part of an international community, Zagdaa says. Toastmasters Mongolia was launched with 21 members but now has more than twice that number. Since the debut of Toastmasters Mongolia, two more clubs have formed in the country.



### Club Meetings

Toastmasters Mongolia meets weekly for two-and-a-half hours at the University of Humanities in Ulaanbaatar. The official language is English—but two meetings per year are held in Mongolian. The club sticks to the meeting agenda, with the standard three parts: prepared speeches, Table Topics and evaluations.

Speech topics cover a wide range of fields because of the club's diverse membership. Members include lawyers, university lecturers, students, doctors, journalists and engineers. The members have varying levels of English language proficiency, ranging from beginning to advanced.

All of this is particularly impressive because not a single founding member had previous Toastmasters experience.

“When we established the club,” Zagdaa says, “It was truly challenging, because there was no one who had attended a meeting before. We watched a video about Toastmasters in Hawaii, but we still had a number of questions concerning procedural and organizational issues on running a club effectively. I am so thankful for the members who answered our questions on the Facebook Official Toastmasters International Members Group.”

“After four years, we feel like one family,” she says. “We support each other, we laugh at mistakes together, and we improve our communication skills together.”

Zagdaa continues to progress in Toastmasters. Last year, she completed two manuals to obtain her ACB, and she is currently working toward ACS. The future looks bright for other Mongolian Toastmasters, as well, as they practice their English communication skills and develop leadership skills while serving as club officers.

### Studying English

Zagdaa says learning and teaching English has been a priority for her since she was a child. She was taught English in fifth grade by a Russian teacher at a Russian-Mongolian secondary school. In



1. Ganchimeg Zagdaa at the Grand Chinggis Khaan Square in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.  
 2. Zagdaa is pictured, front/center, with members of Toastmasters Mongolia and MCS-APB Toastmasters (the first corporate club in Mongolia).

1990, she says all the Russian teachers left Mongolia and her school began specializing in foreign languages. It was then that she was taught by an American teacher.

“When people ask me where I learned English, I say with great pride I am a Mongolian product,” she says. “My English is Mongolian English. I never went to a native-speaking country to study English.”

Zagdaa entered what is now called University of the Humanities, majoring in Russian and English language instruction. She was curious to learn what made two such unrelated languages—English and Mongolian—so different. Her curiosity, along with her desire to make learning English easier and more enjoyable, led to her work in linguistics. She did her Ph.D. research in Durham University in the United Kingdom, and uses her language skills on business trips to South Korea and Canada. But, she says, her Ph.D. doesn’t mean she will ever be satisfied that she knows enough.

“You never stop learning, so I am struggling hard to explore global communication,” she says. “The more you find out, the more you realize you need to work on it.”

She is also preparing the next generation of Mongolian English speakers. Her 6-year-old son is a great fan of the English-language Cartoon Network.

“Although he goes to Russian primary school,” she says, “he loves English and asks me to teach it to him. He has learned some phrases from cartoons, such as, ‘Let’s go, honey!’ ‘Mommy, ice cream, please!’ and ‘Oh, man!’” He has inspired me to develop an English language course for six-year-olds together with my colleagues at the Academy of English.”

### Talking It Up on TV

“Now that we have grown up as local Toastmasters,” Zagdaa says, “it is time to experience what it means to be a part of an international community. First and foremost, we would like to be part of a district. Last year, Prasad Sovani, DTM, visited Mongolia


and trained us on how to hold an effective Table Topics session, which was wonderful. But we would also like to send our officers to District Leader Training sessions.

“I also want every organization or business entity to establish a club to improve their staff communication and leadership skills,” Zagdaa says.

To help promote Toastmasters, Zagdaa recently appeared on *Face2Face*, a popular TV program on the Mongolian National Broadcasting network. *Face2Face* helps develop the English-language skills of its audience and expands viewers’ outlooks by featuring well-known Mongolians and foreigners. Zagdaa’s interview, which was arranged in part by her club’s first vice president public relations, led to publicity for the club and more guests at Toastmasters Mongolia meetings. Such public appearances are common for Zagdaa.

“As a professional, I believe it is my responsibility to give lectures outside of my own school or university focusing on strategies for learning English, and the possibility of improving language ability in general,” she says.

Zagdaa is regularly invited to give speeches at other universities, non-governmental organizations and the Mongolian Bar Association. She accepts these invitations because she believes they will lead to expanding English fluency in her country.

Thanks to Toastmasters, Zagdaa says she has the experience and self-confidence to speak in front of an audience. “Every time I am on stage or at the lectern, I say to myself, ‘Thank you, Toastmasters!’” And she says it, incidentally, in English. 

**CAREN NEILE, PH.D., ATMS**, is an affiliate professor in the School of Communication & Multimedia Studies at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Florida. She has presented at two Toastmasters International conventions.

# Don't Rely on the Web

Visit a library for sophisticated research tools.

BY MARGARET MONTET

It is said that professional speechwriters agree on one thing: A speech is only as good as the quality of the research and reflection that is put into it.

The successful researcher sifts through reliable information to find nuggets of knowledge. The efficient researcher streamlines his or her investigation by thoroughly understanding the resources available. As a college librarian who specializes in information literacy, I teach students how to find, evaluate and use relevant information for many purposes. The tips and techniques I teach are helpful for Toastmasters too, especially as they prepare for Project 7: Research Your Topic in the *Competent Communication* manual.

Before the Internet revolutionized how we keep and find information, I assumed, as a student, that all research conducted at a library, no matter the topic, was approached in the same way. I soon learned that different sources were required for different disciplines. For example, researchers in science, medicine and technology required the most recent information available, while researchers in the humanities and social sciences were interested in the long-term big picture and preferred conversational articles.

Here's how to develop a deeper, more sophisticated understanding of the research process.

### Subscription Databases

As a high school student, I once went to my local public library to research a heavily forested area in New Jersey called the Pine Barrens. I asked the librarian for help, and learned how to look up topics in big red books called *The New York Times Index* and use the citations in those books to locate



microfilm reels full of original articles. (I also learned how to use the microfilm reader/printer to view those articles.) Magazines were organized this way, too. Fat green books called the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* featured article citations, by topic. If the articles I needed were not on microfilm, the librarian could go to the "closed stacks" and emerge with a vintage magazine issue containing the desired article.

This is still the procedure for retrieving non-digitized information, like old or local publications, but more recent articles can be accessed electronically. Libraries subscribe to databases that do the same job as those older print indexes. Librarians carefully select the proprietary or subscription databases they subscribe to, based on the needs of the library's customers, and they restrict usage to those people. For example, at the college library where I work, use of databases such as *Academic Search Elite*, *LexisNexis* and *Opposing Viewpoints*

*in Context* is limited to students, faculty and staff. At my public library, different databases are available to the general public.

Librarians recognize novice researchers by the words they type into database search boxes. While database search interfaces may resemble popular web search engines, they require a bit more thought to use effectively. For example, a search for "Educational reform" might seem straightforward, but the term is actually too general for a database search. You can narrow your search by adding a school level and location by searching *Educational Reform AND Higher Education AND United States*.

Notice the word *AND* linking the search terms. A database typically recognizes linking words called Boolean operators. The word *AND* is most commonly used. It narrows a search and provides results that contain each search term in its descriptions. To broaden a search, use the Boolean operator

OR. This is especially helpful when encountering synonyms or alternate spellings, for example, *Middle Ages OR Medieval*.

The Boolean operator *NOT* will eliminate a certain part of expected results. If I wanted to research pirates on the high seas, for example, I would use *NOT*, as in *Pirates NOT Baseball* [the Pirates is an American baseball team].

After a search strategy is deployed, the database should return a list of “hits.” If it doesn’t, choose different Boolean operators or use a different database. Librarians are especially helpful at this stage. Depending on the database, the hits might list citations, and the next step is to locate them, but more and more databases provide the “full-text” version of articles.

Research clues may also be found in articles, since they may steer you toward more information. Has the author written anything else on the topic? Does it reveal additional search terms? Are sources listed in the article’s “works cited” helpful? If your library doesn’t have the materials you need, ask a librarian about the interlibrary loan policy.

### The World Wide Web

Many researchers have high expectations for web searches; however, this method seldom yields enough of the appropriate kind of information. My approach is to check relevant databases first; I then attempt to fill in gaps with information gleaned from the web. College students quickly realize information obtained from a subscription database is of a higher quality than what they find on the web. They learn to visit databases first.

Nevertheless, useful information can also be found on the web, and the above tips for searching databases may also help narrow a web search. However, all results must be carefully evaluated.

Dr. Kurt Hackemer, history professor at the University of South Dakota, writes on his website, “As a general rule, I retain a healthy skepticism of research conducted on the web, especially because anyone can post anything they want. However, there are exceptions.”

Answer the following questions to determine the authority and accuracy of a website:

- How current is the information?
- Is an author’s name provided? What are his/her credentials? Has he/she been published on the subject elsewhere?
- Who is the intended audience, and is that audience compatible with your audience? When evaluating sources, Dr. Hackemer writes, “Knowing the audience allows you to begin to ask important questions, such as, ‘Should I believe what I am being told?’”
- Are citations or links to the author’s original sources provided?
- Does the material contain blatant errors or typos that show carelessness?

Research is not as simple as choosing between databases and websites. The 21st century has brought new phenomena to the web, such as news aggregators, crowdsourcing and blogs. Data gleaned from these resources should be carefully evaluated.


- Aggregators compile stories from other sources and classify them by broad topics or popularity. Examples include *Reddit*, *Daily Beast* and *Jezebel*.
- In crowdsourcing, multiple authors collaborate to share knowledge. It is an effective way of gathering information informally. For instance, I used Twitter and Facebook to crowdsource variations on the grilled cheese sandwich for an article. But it is risky to use crowdsourcing, such as *Wikipedia*, as a source because at any time anyone can change the information. Useful, however, are the leads in the links and resources provided at the end of the article.
- Blogs have grown in sophistication since their first appearance, and some are written by credentialed experts.

### Citations

No matter where information comes from, it must be cited. The speaker must let the audience know where any quotes or original ideas came from.

Dr. Kurt Hackemer writes, “Until you know who created the document you have read, you cannot know why it was created or what meanings its author intended to impart by creating it. Nor is it enough to simply learn the name of the author; it is equally important to learn about authors as people ...”

While researching, remember to record the publication in which you found your information so you can mention it in your speech. If you use an exact quote, write it on a notecard and practice your delivery. Members won’t mind that you are reading from your notes—they’ll appreciate that you’ve done your research and are providing an accurate quote.

The best way to gain credibility and confidence when speaking is to immerse yourself in a topic. Find, evaluate and use appropriate information to create remarkable speeches. And don’t forget to make friends with a librarian! 

**MARGARET MONTET** *is a college librarian based in Trenton, New Jersey. She writes for peer-reviewed journals and magazines, and speaks at academic conferences.*



## A CLOSER LOOK INTO THE WEB

The Internet is huge, so large that a single search engine cannot cover all web pages in existence. Different search engines cover different parts of the web; therefore, local versions of a global search engine can take different forms. For example, Google has a Canadian version ([www.google.ca](http://www.google.ca)) but this is just a Canadian interface for the global Google ([www.google.com](http://www.google.com)). The two have the same underlying databases, so the search results are the same.

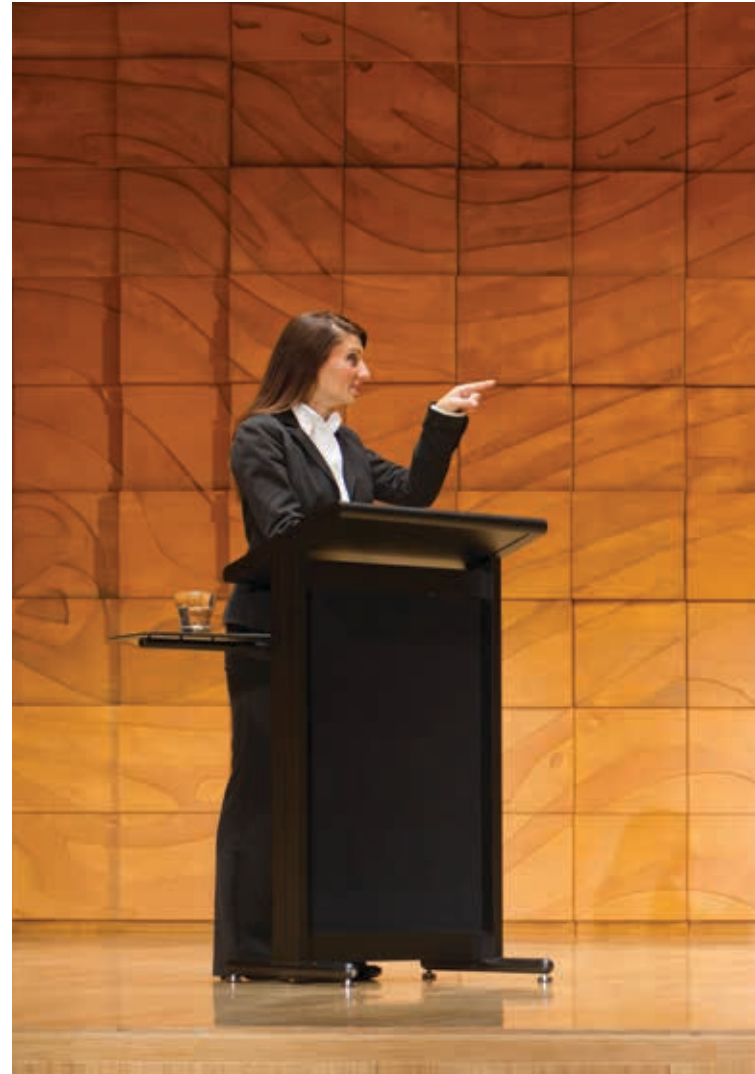
However, not all local versions of a global search engine work this way. A search on Google China will retrieve very different pages from those of global Google.

# Debate Matters

How classic debate helps you develop confidence and a personal speaking style.

BY PATRICK MOTT

People most often associate debate with politics, such as the verbal commotion on the floor of the British House of Commons or the miasma of cross-talk, denials and interruptions that define televised debates between American presidential candidates.



But consider the classic debate style, as when a high school student—sometimes in a nearly empty classroom—presents a brief but strongly referenced argument in favor of a topic like rehabilitation rather than retribution in the criminal justice system. Minutes later, without fanfare, another student refutes that argument and methodically lays the foundation for an opposite point of view.

All three of these scenarios are recognized as debates. We're likely more familiar with the first two, which are more public, more histrionic and less focused; this is speech designed not just to persuade, but to produce visceral reactions, even inflame passions.

However, it is only in the third scenario—the classic academic debate—in which arguments rise or fall solely on the weight of evidence and the logic and organization of a presentation rather than on rhetorical flair or showmanship. And, because scores are kept, there are always identifiable winners and losers.

For anyone more accustomed to the heated rhetoric of talking heads on panel shows, or to the hammer-blow bombast of sound bites or the whizzed up back-and-forth of campaign talk, classic debate can be rarified air, indeed.





“The debates you see on TV are more showmanship,” says Roberta Hyland, second vice president of the National Catholic Forensics League, an organization that runs local and national debate tournaments for high school students throughout the United States. “The structure of an academic debate normally has a single topic, and involves more back-and-forth. There’s going to be more point-counterpoint extension of a particular thought. The way we refer to [academic debate] is that there’s going to be more clash, and it’s going to be substantive clash.”

If that sounds unusually belligerent for an academic contest, the participants don’t look at it that way, Hyland says. “Clash doesn’t have the emotional ramifications you might associate with the word,” she says. “It’s more of the fact that the ideas

being expressed *should* conflict. It’s the clash of ideas, not emotions. And, of course, the debate is very structured.”

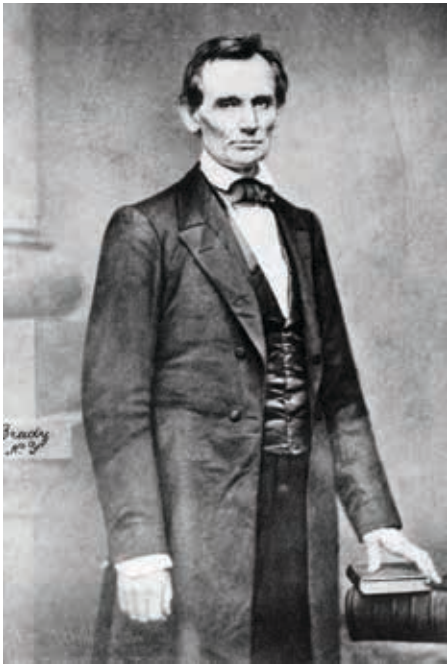
While debate students learn how to develop a convincing argument, they also develop and improve their speaking styles.

Debate styles are developed through the mastery of the tone and volume of the speaker’s voice, and the rate of his or her speech. You can develop your own speaking style by practicing debate formally in your club (consult the *Toastmasters Debate Handbook: A Guide to Competitive Speaking* (item 104) for more information). Have members take turns debating both sides of an argument. They will learn that whichever side of the topic they argue, the point is not as much about which side they take, but how they are able to support their arguments logically. Master delivery through

debate and you too can speak confidently, logically and persuasively about any topic.

**Public policy debate:** This is the oldest and likely best-known form of debate practiced at both the high school and college levels. A single topic is debated all year. For example, the U.S. public policy debate topic for 2013-2014 is “Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its economic engagement toward Cuba, Mexico or Venezuela.”

Two students form each team. One team (the affirmative side) argues in favor of a previously selected proposition, while the other team (the negative side) argues against it. The debate features four constructive speeches and four rebuttal speeches. The team with the strongest evidence and most organized presentation wins.



*Lincoln-Douglas debate is a one-on-one competition format modeled after the historic debates between U.S. senatorial candidates Abraham Lincoln (left) and Stephen Douglas (right).*

**Lincoln-Douglas debate:** The inspiration for this format was provided by the famous debates between American senatorial candidates Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas in the 1850s. In the Lincoln-Douglas format, one person takes the affirmative side of the argument and one person takes the negative

informal and persuasive speech, as well as the ability of debaters to think quickly on their feet.

### Preparing a Case

Each debate format “involves its own type of preparation, stylistically,” says Hyland. “You don’t only prepare the affir-

“Debate is one of those things that definitely has rewards no matter what you want to do with the rest of your life.”

side. The debate consists of five speeches with periods of cross-examination, and propositions that are usually value-related. Topics change every two months.

“In this type of debate you see lots of ‘ought’ terminology,” says Hyland. “That implies some sort of question about morality or correctness, either in the affirmative or the negative.”

Other formats, such as public forum and parliamentary debate, allow for more

— debate expert Roberta Hyland

mative; you still have to prepare a case for the negative position, to understand and argue both sides of the argument. It makes you more knowledgeable but also gives you a better understanding of the counter opinion, because you can’t be so firmly entrenched in your own world view. You can’t be a successful debater unless you can debate both sides of a topic.”

Additional vital characteristics are common to all forms of competitive academic

debate: structure, research, reliance on hard and persuasive evidence, and calm courtesy. Paint outside those lines and you lose points.

“In a formal debate, both sides are expected to be courteous, professional and calm,” says Dr. Susan Ohmer, director of debate at the University of Notre Dame. “They win through persuasive arguments—through reasoning, through credibility—not through any power move. In fact, if someone were to raise his voice or sound shrill or make a personal attack or say, ‘You’re lying’ or ‘That’s just not true,’ that would not be appropriate in a formal debate because that’s not refuting an opponent’s argument with reasoning. They may not get called on it by the moderator, but they would lose significant points for that. You win and lose points on the strength of your argument.”

In public political debates, such strictures and niceties have become increasingly rare. That’s not to say that political-debate opponents may not have experience in academic debate. Members of the British House of Commons, for example “may come from a long debating tradition, such as the Oxford Union,” says Ohmer. And if legislators have been trained as lawyers, academic debate may also have been a part of that training.

Gordon Stables, director of debate and forensics at the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California (USC), says academic debaters are in it for the long haul. “The first difference I point out [to students],” he says, “is the number of debates [a student must do]. It doesn’t seem like a really important distinction, but part of being a high school or college student in debate is that you agree to debate a number of competitors a number of times. In a gubernatorial debate, typically there are two, in a presidential debate three. But in a single weekend, the average high school or college student will debate six to 14 times. That’s a huge difference right off the bat.

“You’re going to explore multiple sides of an issue and you’ll debate folks with different perspectives. When you compare public policy to electoral debates, the goal is to make it as precise

as possible, to debate a very narrow range of issues that you've agreed on in advance. So the difference between one debate and a number of debates has a lot of implications."

For students new to academic debate, the lack of the kind of fireworks that might be seen in the House of Commons—indeed, possibly the lack of even an audience—can be surprising, says Stables. And there is one quality they must learn to embrace quickly: empathy.

"There's no other place in our lives where we have the space to think outside of ourselves and be creative in that way," says Stables. "Debate is a great way to reduce polarization because it allows us to understand where other people are coming from."

A common exercise in Stables' classes at USC involves debaters making an instant switch to the diametrically opposite point of view. "That may be the first times in their lives they've been forced to think about something that is the

opposite of what they believe, the opposite of what they've been exposed to, and it's a really powerful moment," he says.

Argumentation may be natural to some people, but debate can be taught. What's needed of beginners, says Stables, is "a willingness to have their voices heard. A degree of courage and a willingness to start is the first thing. If students are willing to engage their voices and share that with others, there's a lot that teachers and coaches can do to help that student become more comfortable."

"Debate," says Hyland, "is one of those things that definitely has rewards no matter what you want to do with the rest of your life. You learn how to take a question and learn more about it—educate yourself about it. You're obviously learning how to write and make compelling arguments and understand what it means to be persuasive. You are also gaining that comfort level in communicating with others and speaking in public."

And the path from rookie to confident advocate need not be a long one, says Ohmer, whose voice rises a bit with enthusiasm when she recalls summer debate classes she taught for high school students. "They went from never having debated to full-fledged competitive debaters in two weeks," she says. "I am a passionate believer in debate for high school students. It develops the very skills they'll need for college." ■

**PATRICK MOTT** is a Southern California-based writer and regular contributor to the *Toastmaster magazine*.



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# Speaking Off the Cuff

Take some tips from improv to shine at Table Topics.

BY THOMAS PICCIN, PH.D., ACB

*“Start talking before you know what you’re going to say.”*

— Michael Burns, artistic director of the Mop & Bucket Company

To those in Toastmasters who work hard to deliver thoughtful, well-prepared speeches, Michael Burns’ advice may sound crazy—or at the very least, a recipe for disaster and embarrassment. But in the world of improvisation—or improv, spontaneity is crucial to success. With no script, no scenery and no props to guide them, improvisers must find inspiration in their scene partners, their audience and themselves. A word, a movement, a giggle, a frown—these are all rich sources of information an improviser can draw on to build a scene. Capturing the value of these sources or “offers” requires paying close attention and responding immediately, and that means spontaneity.

As an improv actor and a former Toastmaster, I see the parallels in the two worlds. An improviser must respond to offers on the spur of the moment and speak before an audience in an engaging and entertaining way. He or she has no time to prepare and no foreknowledge of the topic. Toastmasters do that all the time in Table Topics, where they are asked a question and must respond by delivering an impromptu speech.



*Practicing spontaneity can help you boost your Table Topics speeches. Members of ImprovMasters in Culver City, California, are pictured playing an improv game. From left: Andrew Chiu, ACG, ALB, and Paul Tavenner.*

Even if you’re not an actor, you can benefit from the following five improv techniques to improve your confidence and skill with Table Topics.

### Celebrate Failure

Burns tells a story of a circus performer who does a triple flip off a trapeze high above the crowd and soars gracefully toward her partner’s waiting arms ... and then misses the mark and falls to the net below. Does the story end with her slinking away in shame as the audience hisses and boos? Of course not! She leaps to her feet and executes a sweeping bow to thunderous applause.

Improvisers routinely practice the “circus bow” in classes and performances as a reminder that taking a chance and risking failure is the only way to tap into the rich reservoir of creative ideas that lie within us. If we monitor and filter our ideas, and suppress the bad ones while

waiting for the good ones, we stifle the entire process.

Before your next Table Topics speech, make a commitment to yourself to celebrate failure. Focus less on delivering a flawless speech and more on nurturing your creative expression. What’s the worst that can happen? No one is going to heckle you. On the contrary, they will envy your daring. You will appear more genuine and relaxed, and your audience will identify with you better and enjoy your speech more.

### Be Spontaneous

In one of my favorite improv warm-up exercises, performers stand in a circle and collaboratively create a story, one sentence at a time. Someone begins with an opening sentence, such as “Yesterday, I went for a walk.” Each person adds a sentence in turn, and the story takes on a life of its own.

The key to creating an entertaining story is to make each sentence a direct

consequence of the sentence that came before it. You can't prepare your sentence in advance; you have to wait to hear what the person speaking before you says. Overanxious newbies who think of clever plot twists ahead of time and save them until it's their turn invariably derail the story.

As in an improvised story, the key to a successful Table Topics response is to embrace the spontaneity. Let your ideas

## The key to a successful Table Topics speech is to embrace the spontaneity.

flow and let each sentence follow naturally from the one before. Your reward will be an honest and entertaining speech.

### State the Obvious

In one of my earliest improv performances, I joined my scene partner onstage as he began the scene without a word by shivering, stomping his feet and hugging himself vigorously. Novice that I was, I watched for several seconds, unable to think of an opening line. Finally, I simply said, "You look really cold." The audience exploded in laughter.

What I said wasn't funny or clever, but it was true, and it brought an honesty to the scene that the audience loved. In an improv scene, virtually everything exists in the imagination of the performers and the audience. Everyone has his own view of what's happening, and stating the obvious helps to bring all those disparate views into alignment. Furthermore, what's "obvious" to one person might be a delightful twist to another.

The same is true about a Table Topics speech. Each audience member develops an interpretation of your message. By clearly articulating key points you may think are obvious, you help guide each listener's interpretation along the path you intend, while simultaneously ensuring the consistency and logical progression of your own thoughts.

### Everything Is an Offer

An *offer* is improv parlance for any piece of information that an improviser can use to develop or embellish a scene. Burns says, "everything is an offer," meaning that any observation, thought or emotion can be the seed from which an entire scene grows. Be open to the possibilities and accept all offers.

In Table Topics, when you are asked a question, you must answer it. The question itself is an offer, and the person asking the

question, the manner in which it is asked, the room you're in and the mood of the audience also are offers. Everything you observe or experience in that moment can inform your speech.

Suppose the question is, "What is your view on capital punishment?" If you have a view you can articulate on the spot, then do so. Otherwise, find some offer that resonates and follow through on it. You might say, "It's funny that you mention the word 'punishment' because my kids did something the other day..." and tell a story about them. Or how about, "Walking up here, I felt like I was walking to the gallows..." and discuss your fear of public speaking. Anything can serve as inspiration for your speech, and if you speak with fluency, confidence and enthusiasm, no one will care that you didn't actually answer the question.

### Collaborative Exchange

In improv, the tenet that encompasses all others is *Yes And*, which means accepting whatever your partner offers, adding something to it, and giving it back. Your partner then does the same, and through this ongoing collaborative exchange, a scene flourishes. Finding offers like these is easy if you are looking and listening for them.

In Table Topics, you don't have a scene partner, but you're not alone. Offers can come from many places, including your

audience, your environment and yourself. You can *Yes And* any external offers. You can also *Yes And* yourself by embracing your ideas and inspirations, building on them and following them wherever they lead. *Yes And* is the guiding principle for an improviser; it will serve you well in your public speaking career.

Practicing these techniques to reach the maximum effect is only possible if you are willing to celebrate failure, be spontaneous, state the obvious and remain receptive to the myriad offers around you. The rewards are waiting, and the tools needed to realize them are within you. **T**

**THOMAS PICCIN, PH.D., ACB, ALB**, is a project leader at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, and a former cast member of the *Mop & Bucket Company*.

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## IMPROMPTU SPEAKING



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# Tactics For Tackling Table Topics

Simply put, go with your gut! Don't overanalyze the topic.

BY CRAIG HARRISON, DTM, PDG

Table Topics can be the most daunting part of the Toastmasters experience. But it can also be the most exhilarating. The key is in your preparation and perspective. Armed with enthusiasm and creative tactics, you can make Table Topics a successful experience.

Even without knowing in advance the topic you will be asked to address, you can prepare your mind and body beforehand. These strategies will help you face Table Topics with confidence at your next club meeting or contest.

## Pay Attention

Table Topics is about being “in the moment,” so it's important to mentally prepare yourself to respond to a question. Are you *present* when you're about to participate in Table Topics, or are you preoccupied? You want to be 100 percent attentive to the meeting or contest. What is happening in the room? What has been said already? Has a theme emerged? You can reference things previously said or done in the meeting and win points for relevancy.

## Be Current

Regardless of the topic or question you are asked, you can link it to current events. What's trending on social media and news sites? Think about events that occurred at your club that day, and

also about what's happening in your community, or even in your country, that week or month.

Examples of subjects you can tackle:

- Was the traffic brutal on the way to the meeting?
- Is the weather particularly strange that day?
- Is the construction noise outside the window annoying?

Talking about topical issues or events makes your response fresh. Whether you are referencing the Olympics, a holiday, a human interest story in the news or a scientific breakthrough by a local company, each is a shared experience with your audience that will resonate.

## Follow First Instincts

Our first instinct when we hear a topic is often the one we should act on. An instinct provides us with a head start. Whether your reaction to a given topic is a “gut” feeling, or one that gets your mind painting an image, your reaction suggests you have a point of view, a line of reasoning or a curiosity to be indulged. Go with it.

## Associate!

Psychiatrists use word-association activities to get patients to say the first thing that comes to mind when a word is posed to them, without self-censoring.

“In working with word associations, we measure the time it takes for someone to come up with a word or an idea,” says Doreen Hamilton, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist in Berkeley, California. “If there is a delay, it can indicate that the person is censoring. ... In most cases it is fear that creates this block. They're afraid they'll be judged and criticized.”

You don't need to worry about being judged and criticized in Toastmasters—it is a safe, judgment-free environment. Simply put, go with your gut! In my 22 years attending Toastmasters meetings and contests, I've seen many topic respondents overanalyze a topic. If you go with the initial response you hear in your mind or heart, listeners will likely relate to your message.

## From Foreign to Familiar

All of us approach the lectern with knowledge, experience and our own points



### When You're the Topicsmaster ...

Contrary to popular belief, the best part about serving as Topicsmaster isn't immunity from being called to answer a Table Topic. As Topicsmaster, you are entrusted with a key portion of your club meeting. The topics you choose reinforce the meeting theme, and provide drama, amusement and a sense of surprise for your meeting. It's both a responsibility and a privilege.

Try these ideas the next time you lead Table Topics.

**Can You Sell It?** George Marshall, DTM, a member of Star Search Toastmasters in Fremont, California, has each Table Topic respondent reach into a grab bag and pull out obscure objects: grandma's old kitchen implements, odd garage shop tools and other miscellaneous items. Then he asks the question "What is it?" Whether respondents give truthful or fanciful explanations, it's all good fun. A variation on this approach: Ask respondent to "sell" the item to the audience.

**Can You Define It?** At one club I regularly visited, respondents were shown an obscure word from the dictionary and asked to define it. Truthful or not, a compelling explanation always wins. How would *you* define the words *eccedentesiast*, *interfenestration* or *sgiomlaireached*? (The Topicsmaster reveals the true meaning after each response.)

(Sidenote: That club I visited—which is no longer in existence—was at a northern California retirement community where my grandparents lived. They would join me at the meetings. The club videotaped its speech contests and showed them on closed-circuit TV throughout the retirement community!)

**Presenting the Past.** Using an old newspaper, magazine or *Toastmaster* magazine from 40 to 50 years ago, issue each respondent a headline. Respondents then use their imagination to create a plausible story to match the headline.

**Interpretations.** When he has served as Topicsmaster, Doug Mills, ACS, ALS, of Dimond Talkers in Anchorage, Alaska, has displayed children's drawings and asked respondents to interpret and tell a story about each one.

**The Progressive Story.** The Topicsmaster starts the story and ends it. After the beginning of the story, each member is expected to contribute exactly one sentence. Participants co-create a story a line at a time, in one to two minutes.

— Craig Harrison, DTM, PDG

of view, yet the topic may be something we know nothing about. What to do? One strategy is to connect the topic to one you *do* know about. This is called "bridging"—as in building a bridge from what you don't know to what you do know.

An example:

**Topic:** How do you split a subatomic particle?

**Response:** I don't know about atomic particles, but I do know something about splitting things up. As a quintuplet I grew up believing everything was divisible by five. All through my childhood, food, candy and even toys were split five ways.

### Our first instinct when we hear a topic is often the one we should act on.

#### Use What You Know

Does the topic remind you of a quote? Or a joke? Or a saying? You can latch onto that to jump-start your response. Remember, you're buying time to think, brainstorm and draw the audience in, all at the same time.

#### Nature Is Your Friend

When you're given a difficult topic, try looking for an equivalent in nature. Can you draw a parallel between the topic and some process, pattern, cycle or occurrence in nature? Can you relate it to the weather, the seasons, migrations of animals or another natural phenomenon? In various Table Topics responses, I've heard locales mentioned such as Mount Fuji in Japan, the town of Katoomba in Australia, and the Grand Canyon in the U.S. I've also heard references to the march of the caterpillars, how salmon spawn after swimming upstream, and the running of the bulls in Pamplona, Spain. Each topic response was captivating.

#### Embody the Topic

So much emphasis in speechmaking and responding to Table Topics is placed on what to say. Yet sometimes the best way to



inhabit the topic can be physical. During one of my club meetings, a member was asked whether he preferred brownies or cookies. He reflected on the topic and then pounced into action as the Cookie Monster puppet character from the famous children's TV show *Sesame Street*. By exaggerating his body movements, deepening his voice and widening his eyes, he became the character and unanimously won the award for Best Table Topics Speaker that day.

"Everything starts with your body and breath: The physical production is key to the vocal production," says theater instructor and director Jane Courant of Oakland,

## Are you *present* when you're about to participate in Table Topics, or are you preoccupied?

California. She speaks from 25 years of experience. "Many actors, in theater and film, will begin with the physicality. That's how they start to build their character's walk and talk. That's where they derive their voice from."

### In Medias Res

*In medias res* is Latin for "in the midst of things." It's a literary technique found in storytelling, books and movies. When we're given a topic, the assumption is that we will build our story or logical argument in linear fashion. But sometimes we can sandwich the topic in the *middle* of a story.

As a speaker, you can announce the topic, and then fill in how you arrived at this point by giving flashbacks or describing the story behind it. For example, if your topic is, "I was accused of plagiarism," focus on how this came to be, not on what you will do going forward from the accusation. Your next sentence might be: "It all started when I was asked how I would fill in the blanks to the sentence \_\_\_\_\_." Follow up with an explanation of the steps leading to the topic's assertion or phrase.

### The Answer to 6 Questions

Another effective framework for a response is to answer these six questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? This helps you work your way through several aspects of a topic. Patrick Donadio, ATM, a 24-year member, uses this technique for Table Topics as well as in his executive coaching practice. A member of the Online Computer Library Center Toastmasters in Dublin, Ohio, he suggests beginning your speech with: "When I think about this topic, I naturally have questions about it. For instance, why ...?"

### Structures for Succeeding

Donadio recommends additional formats for responding to topics. One technique is to address both the pros and cons of a subject, spending a minute on each. Suppose you're given the topic of "a new law mandating zero tolerance for littering." First you can speak to the advantages of such an ordinance. Next, you can address the drawbacks to it. You can remain impartial or provide your opinion as you lay out both sides of the topic.

### Talk About Time

Donadio also encourages speakers to use a three-part approach to fashioning a response, speaking to the past, present and future for a given topic. If your topic is "human rights for animals," you might compare society's past and present treatment of animals and then share your vision for animal rights in the near or distant future.

### Physical Tips for Topic Mastery

Jacqueline Wales, author of *The Fearless Factor*, speaks about overcoming fear and finding one's voice. As it pertains to Table Topics, she says, "First take a deep breath

and let it all out before rushing to answer. This deep inhalation clears the mind and gives you a moment to relax." People naturally feel nervous about making a mistake or looking foolish, adds Wales. But use that to your benefit.

"Nerves are part of the drive to succeed. It's the adrenaline rush that comes before a performance," says Wales. "Instead of thinking of it as fear, think of this as an extra boost to get you going." ■

**CRAIG HARRISON, DTM, PDG**, is a member of the Evening Stars club in San Francisco, California. A professional speaker and trainer, he offers public speaking resources at [www.SpeakAndLeadWithConfidence.com/handouts/](http://www.SpeakAndLeadWithConfidence.com/handouts/).



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# The Art of Nesting

How a simple technique can help you take command of the stage.

BY BRETT GRESHAM, CC, CL

**S**o you've made it. *"Ladies and gentlemen, it is my privilege to present our keynote speaker for the evening ..."*

You walk that long walk across the stage, desperately trying to avoid the betrayal of millions of snapping synapses in your body that walk the journey within you. It's show time!

The latest research I saw indicates that a television commercial has just four seconds to grab our fleeting attention, or we will move on. The public speaker probably has a little longer than that before audience members begin to tune out, but those

motivated or informed), and you will arrive onstage to rolling applause. Your eyes will warmly meet the MC's eyes, and you'll shake his or her hand and then move with gravitas to the lectern, now yours by right. It is time to nest.

**Nesting:** *"The tendency to arrange one's immediate surroundings ... to create a place where one feels secure, comfortable or in control."*

Deliberately place your notes on the lectern, and check them to ensure they are all there, and in order. Remove anything from the lectern that is not yours, or not

speeches delivered a few years ago. If you speak without notes or in a competition, a three-second pause has impact; but, a 10-second pause suggests you've forgotten your opening line. If you have notes and a lectern, a 10-second pause suggests confidence and control; a 30-second pause implies you are unprepared, self-absorbed or nervous. There is a fine line between appearing in control and seeming forgetful.

If you are nervous, nesting delivers a double amount of goodness because it communicates exactly the opposite. The audience believes you are *in* control, when in fact you are taking time to *gain* control and get those butterflies to fly in formation. If you breathe deeply and appear confident, the audience will assume that you are ... and so you will be.

The next time you watch a presentation from a master of public speaking, watch how he or she nests and takes control of the stage. Feel the anticipation as it builds in the audience, and then see how, just at the right time, the speaker begins.

*"Ladies and gentlemen, good evening."*

It's show time. ■

**BRETT GRESHAM, CC, CL**, is a member of the Synergy Toastmasters club in Adelaide, South Australia, Australia.

## More can be said in 10 seconds of silence than in five minutes of rational discourse.

first few seconds are still very important. Whatever you do, don't be tempted to fill those seconds with words! That gap in time, that worm hole between the words of the master of ceremonies (MC) and your speech—that brief underrated moment—is your time. It's a crucial time; it is your time to nest.

Novice speakers often ride the wave of jangling nerve endings headlong into painstakingly crafted opening lines, plummeting like a runaway train to fill that unforgiving minute of pause with 60 seconds of words, words, words. But this is the time to let silence weave its magic. More can be said in 10 seconds of silence than in five minutes of rational discourse. It is time to nest.

If you are lucky, you will be introduced by a Toastmasters-trained MC who will prepare the audience to be wowed (or

needed. If you wear reading glasses, put them on now. Adjust your microphone, breathe deeply and do not rush. It is your space; make it just the way you like it. This is not wasted time; this process of nesting communicates volumes to your audience. It is indicative of your state of mind and internal dialog: *While I stand upon this stage, this stage is my stage.* It also sends the unspoken message: *What I am about to say to you is worth waiting for.* The audience will wait, for it is you they have come to hear. This is your time.

Look up, smile, pause and then say, *"Ladies and gentlemen, good evening."* You get one shot at that line; make it resonate off the walls.

Be wary of excessive nesting, however. Like many, I cringe at the extravagant pauses taken at the beginning of some World Championship of Public Speaking



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# Official Notice of Vote

## Your 2014–2015 Officer and Director Candidates

On Saturday, August 23, 2014, you will have the opportunity to vote for the international officer and director candidates of your choice while attending the International Convention in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The International Leadership Committee nominated officer candidates

for the positions of International President-Elect, First Vice President and Second Vice President. International director candidates were nominated for Regions 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 14. The Committee's selection is presented in accordance with the Bylaws of Toastmasters International, Article VIII, Section 1.

### 2014 Annual Business Meeting

12:30 p.m. Saturday,

August 23, 2014

Kuala Lumpur Convention Center  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

### Officer Candidates



International  
President-Elect  
**Jim Kokocki, DTM**



First  
Vice President  
**Mike Storkey, DTM**



Second  
Vice President  
**Balraj Arunasalam, DTM**



Second  
Vice President  
**George Thomas, DTM**

To review details of each officer nominee's qualifications, please visit the Toastmasters website:  
[www.toastmasters.org/officercandidates](http://www.toastmasters.org/officercandidates)

### Director Candidates

#### From Region 2

Gloria Shishido, DTM

#### From Region 6

Ross Mackay, DTM

#### From Region 10

Ede Ferrari-D'Angelo, DTM  
Charley Patton, DTM

#### From Region 14

Ritchie Chong, DTM  
Ho Fong Ming, DTM  
Patrick Oei, DTM

#### From Region 4

George Volz, DTM  
Joan Watson, DTM

#### From Region 8

Richard Furbush, DTM  
Dennis Wooldridge, DTM

#### From Region 12

Kaylene Ledger, DTM  
Charlie Starrett, DTM  
Ross Wilkinson, DTM

To view details of each director nominee's qualifications, please visit the Toastmasters website:  
[www.toastmasters.org/directorcandidates](http://www.toastmasters.org/directorcandidates)

It is the right and duty of all clubs to participate in the vote, either through their representatives at the convention or by proxy. If you are attending the convention, you will have the opportunity to meet and talk with all the international officer and director candidates before the election. Additional nominations for officers and directors may be made from the floor at the Annual Business Meeting.



Conn Jackson, pictured holding the American flag, belongs to three clubs in Atlanta, Georgia, including *Beyond Sight Communicators*, a club with visually impaired members.



Conn Jackson, CC:

## TV Host Hooks the Stars

Creator of *CONNeCTed* isn't all talk.

BY MARY NESFIELD

Conn Jackson is passionate about entertaining and inspiring his viewers, whether he's on TV, speaking at a major university or dressed as Goofy at Disney World.

Jackson is the creator and host of *ConnTV*, a syndicated cable TV show in Atlanta, Georgia, on which he frequently interviews celebrities. Episodes of the show are also picked up on Atlanta radio and iHeart Radio, and podcasts are available on iTunes. *ConnTV* guests have included famed cellist Yo-Yo Ma, Olympic gold medalist Gabby Douglas, dog-training guru Cesar Millan, and the legendary singer and actress Julie Andrews. Last year, Jackson interviewed Toastmasters International CEO Daniel Rex.

A professional speaker and Toastmaster, Jackson presents at universities and corporations on topics related to relationships, hospitality and overcoming challenges. He has spoken at Harvard Business School, UPS World Headquarters and the March of Dimes. Jackson polishes his public speaking skills in three Toastmasters clubs in the Atlanta area.

When Jackson speaks to audiences about overcoming challenges, he speaks from personal experience. As a child, he was told he had learning disabilities, including dyslexia and a difficulty with processing sounds. They were so severe that he was told he would not graduate from high school. But with the help of several mentors, he not only

completed high school but graduated from Harvard University and later created his own media business—Get *CONNeCTed*.

Jackson exemplified what it means to connect with people when earlier this year he came to the aid of local commuters. Atlanta was hit with a severe snowstorm in January, and when snow turned into ice on the highway, hundreds of cars became immobilized on a steep slope along Jackson's route home. Along with other commuters, he took action to rescue stranded motorists. Jackson brought home more than a dozen strangers that night—including some from India, Canada and Central America; he shared his food and kept his guests warm until road conditions improved.

In this interview, Jackson shares his experiences, including lessons learned from his past jobs and how he completed an Ironman Triathlon.

### Why did you launch Get *CONNeCTed*?

I used to work on Wall Street, but after 9/11, I realized life is short. That event challenged me to pursue my passion of creating entertainment that inspires others. In 2002, I moved to Atlanta because many entrepreneurial companies started there, including CNN, Home Depot and Delta. I nicknamed Atlanta the "I-have-a-dream city" because of its famous former resident, Martin Luther King Jr.



Conn Jackson

### What do you like best about your job?

It's learning from passionate, knowledgeable, successful people in fascinating positions, and applying what I learn to my life and sharing it with viewers.

### What are some of the most memorable moments from your show?

Well, along my journey I have been cussed out by [U.S. film star] Samuel L. Jackson and walked out on by Jane Fonda. These are memorable experiences, but my interviews with [American poet and author] Maya Angelou and Sara Blakely [founder of Spanx] had the most impact on me.

**“I used to work on Wall Street, but after 9/11, I realized life is short.”**

### How did you overcome your learning disabilities?

The key was remembering my grandmother's quote: “When you're in the frying pan of life, there is only one thing to do ... *sizzle*.” Simply said, you find a way to overcome challenges. The professionals never thought I would finish high school, let alone Harvard, having the auditory processing ability of a 4-year-old. Find a way!

### Tell us about the time you worked at Walt Disney World as a street entertainer.

I used to portray different Disney characters, and my favorite character was Goofy. Disney characters cannot talk in costume, but Goofy's body language was large and expressive. That was a total blast.

### What made you want to join Toastmasters?

Maya Angelou challenged me by saying, “People will not remember what you said, but they will remember how you made them feel.” I joined Toastmasters knowing that I needed to focus on the feeling part.

### What was your action plan?

I joined three clubs in the Atlanta area: Speakers Roundtable Advanced; Jokers Wild to better express humor; and Beyond Sight Communicators, a club for the visually impaired where I learn to capture other senses in my speech.

### What did you learn from Toastmasters?

When I joined, I thought speaking was all about having a thesis, three supporting points, and a strong and challenging conclusion. I quickly found I needed to learn to incorporate feeling, the senses and humor in an organized, storytelling format.


### How has Toastmasters helped you?

Without question it has helped me with building confidence, listening, and getting to the point quickly and powerfully. Thanks to Toastmasters, last year I won the division-level Table Topics Contest and came in second in the Humorous Speech Contest.

### Why did you enter an Ironman Triathlon?

I saw it on TV and wanted to see if I could swim 2.4 miles, cycle 112 miles and run a marathon (26.2 miles). I learned that the Ironman is all *mental* when I broke my collarbone 60 miles into the bike ride and still found a way to finish. Find a way!

### On a lighter note, what got you dancing the “Harlem Shake”?

It's important not to take life too seriously. The Harlem Shake videos are short, creative clips that people universally took part in on YouTube as a common and fun collaboration. See the one titled “Pro vs. Conn Harlem Shake” to see if I can dance or not. 

*See and hear more from Conn Jackson at [www.ConnJackson.com](http://www.ConnJackson.com).*

**MARY NESFIELD** is associate editor for the Toastmaster magazine.

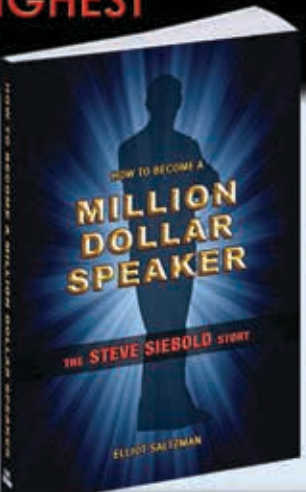
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# Appreciating the Arts

In which the author asks you to appreciate how hard he's trying.

BY JOHN CADLEY

**A**rt can be anything—a majestic golf swing, a perfectly prepared meal, even, dare I say, a well-written humor column. But “The Arts” are another story. When someone starts talking about the Arts I get uneasy. I know it’s going to be something I’m supposed to appreciate but don’t, or something I’m expected to understand but can’t. Literature, painting, dance, sculpture, classical music, opera, theater, foreign films—I know this stuff is great but I couldn’t tell you why if my life depended on it. Take modern dance, for instance. I know all that choreography is communicating some deep truth about the human condition, but all I can think is, *Why are they wearing black leotards?*

Then there’s the “Mona Lisa.” I saw the Mona Lisa at the Louvre. Just a painting of a woman smiling. Or is she? That’s what makes it famous. Her expression is “enigmatic.” We don’t know what she’s thinking. Well, folks, I hate to say it, but since when has any man known what a woman is thinking? I know that look. Every husband does. It’s the look that says, “You’re in trouble and I’m going to let *you* figure out why.” So there I am, staring at the world’s most famous portrait, thinking: *She looks like she just picked up her husband’s dirty socks.*

Opera is another one. I know how much talent, technique and training it takes to belt out those arias and recitatives. No question, these performers have some serious vocal chops. But I still can’t help it. Every time I hear an opera singer, it sounds like someone making fun of an opera singer.

Sculpture isn’t so bad. I can look at Michelangelo’s “David” or Rodin’s “The Kiss” and pretty much know what I’m looking at, even if I’m wondering, *Jeez, didn’t anybody wear clothes back then?* But then there’s modern sculpture, where huge pieces of metal are welded together so it looks like a piece of fallen space debris and the title says, “Lilies in a Field.” Uh, OK ... if you say so. To me, the genius is in how they got this 5-ton behemoth out of the sculptor’s studio and onto a plaza in the middle of a city. Let’s give a Kennedy Center lifetime achievement award to Al’s Moving Company for that one.

I think the problem is the word *modern*. Up to a certain point, art depicted something recognizable. Then things got kind of “arted-out,” if you will. Everything in the world had been painted or sculpted or written about. Artists had nothing to do. “So what,” you say. “Let ‘em get real jobs like the rest of us.” I know that sounds good, but trust me, you don’t want a frustrated artist working in a grocery store. She’ll arrange the produce into a piece of abstract expressionism and it’ll take you two hours to find the bananas.

What happened was artists started creating art about ... *art*—the old “art for art’s sake” movement, where you leave the museum or theater asking, “What was *that* about?” Apparently, whatever your reaction is—that’s what it’s about (unless your reaction is “a monkey could do that.” In all likelihood, that is not what the artist intended).

For all that I don’t know about the Arts, this is what I do know:

- 1. The Arts can’t make money.** They have to be subsidized by global corporations that want to be seen as “giving back” to the community—while getting a big tax write-off in the bargain.
- 2. The Arts can’t be popular.** You can’t have the unwashed masses forming lines around the block to get into the New York Metropolitan Opera. This would put the Arts in the same league with *American Idol*, and you’d have people in gated communities from Beverly Hills to Barcelona canceling their contributions to *Masterpiece Theatre*.
- 3. The Arts can’t make you laugh.** If you guffaw you’ve obviously missed the point. You will then be escorted from your seat and taken to a small room where a professor of classics from Yale will teach you how to stroke your chin, knit your eyebrows, and nod knowingly in the manner of a true “Arts Appreciator.”

I’ve been practicing in the mirror. I think I almost have it. **■**

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**JOHN CADLEY**, a former advertising copywriter, is a freelance writer and musician living in Fayetteville, New York.

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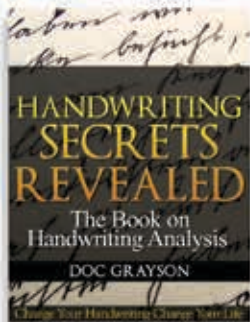
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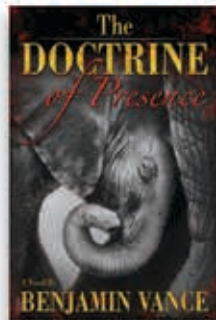
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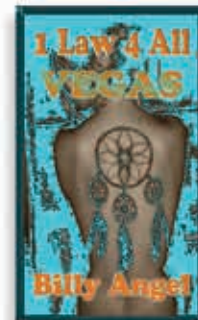
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