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Are You in the Groove?

As we enter the fourth quarter of the 2020–2021 Toastmasters year, are you on track to achieve the goals you set when the program year began? As you may be aware, I am a professionally licensed race car driver, drag racing to be specific. Drag racing is a straight-line race from the starting line to the finish line. As racers we use the term “in the groove” to indicate when we are in the best part of the track, have the best traction, and are on path to reaching the finish line. It is not uncommon to lose traction, get out of the groove, and need to adjust to get back on track.

As we race toward the end of the Toastmasters year I ask, “Are you in the groove?” If you are, keep up the great work. If not, there is plenty of time left to adjust, regain traction, and cross the finish line strong.

It is never too late to regain traction and get back in the groove!

How? To make the proper adjustments, first assess where you are and compare it with where you want to go—a gap analysis. For example, maybe your goal was to complete a path in Pathways, and to date you have completed three levels. The gap is the remaining two levels. After identifying the gap, you begin planning out the remainder of the projects and realize that your home club won’t meet often enough for you to achieve your goal by June 30! You may feel you’re losing traction and getting out of the groove. Don’t worry, there are adjustments you can make to regain traction. Try reaching out to other clubs and ask if you can give a speech at one of their meetings—with clubs meeting online there is bound to be one looking for a speaker at an upcoming meeting. The world is open before you, and it is never too late to regain traction and get back in the groove!

This quote from Garth Stein in *The Art of Racing in the Rain* is applicable as well: “In racing, they say that your car goes where your eyes go. The driver who cannot tear his eyes away from the wall as he spins out of control will meet that wall; the driver who looks down the track as he feels his tires break free will regain control of his vehicle.”

Take your eyes off the obstacles—they are the wall. Look down the track and focus on your goal. Make the adjustments to regain traction and charge toward the finish line and achieving your goals.

Richard E. Peck, DTM
International President

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The Official Toastmasters International Members Group on [Facebook](#) is always filled with conversations started by and for members. Below are a few posts and comments that may help clubs across the world or spark some inspiration.



Advice for the Youth Leadership Program

April Braswell of Orange, California, asked members for advice on facilitating the Youth Leadership Program (YLP).

"I'd love to hear some of your tips, best practices, and experiences with YLP. With whom did you partner? How did you get the word out into the community? Challenges during quarantine if you managed that, like I am currently."

We did a YLP in our corporate club for children of our employees. This was our first time, so we wanted to make it easier on ourselves.

Jean Rossett
Franksville, Wisconsin

For the first two or three meetings at most, you and other Toastmasters take a leading role; from then on you retire to the back of the room and let them get on with it, occasionally interfering when appropriate.

Bob Finch, DTM
Colchester, U.K.

We partnered with one of the local Rotary clubs three years ago. The Rotary club sponsored the course as part of their youth program. We ran courses at two schools initially and this year it was three schools in January/February just before the lockdown.

Ian Bratt, DTM
Springs, Gauteng, South Africa

When I put one on for an inner-city outreach center, every other meeting I would invite a leader from the community to have a talk. A fellow Toastmaster spoke one week, and her talk was probably the most impactful. She was at a mall about five years later when a young woman approached her. The woman said, "You spoke to our group and I'll never forget what you said." How cool is that?

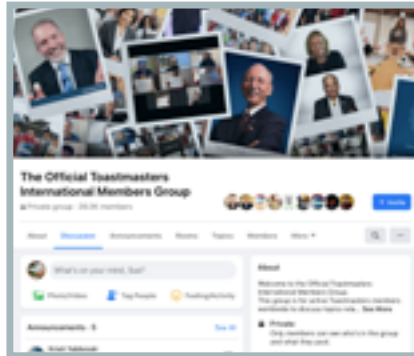
Paul F. Arnhold, DTM
Oak Ridge, Tennessee

Have a great execution plan and have someone to assist you in the meetings.

Merrick Green
Suffolk, Virginia

Try online sessions on Zoom. It has worked out well for us during COVID times and the kids are honing their online presence skills too, which I can see being an important prerequisite for a post-COVID world.

Savitha Setlur, DTM
Dublin, California



Looking for Laughs

Jennifer Regnier, a member of Ottawa Coaches Corner in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, asked:

*"What are some Toastmasters jokes?"
Here are a few that made us laugh!"*

Who's the one at each Toastmasters meeting who is all ears for your spoken language? His name is Ian, Grammar Ian.

Frank Kaiser
Aargau, Switzerland

A proud Toastmaster was giving his first professional speech at a convention. He asked the facilities manager how big was the auditorium. The facilities manager replied, "It sleeps 300."

Kiminari Azuma, DTM
Terao Kita, Japan

How many Toastmasters does it take to change a lightbulb? Just one, but it takes them 5 minutes, then 6 minutes, then 7 minutes.

David Willanski
Adelaide, South Australia, Australia

A cop pulled over a man for running a red light. When asked why he ran the red light, he said he was a Toastmaster and thought that when you see the red light, you have 30 seconds to stop.

Brian Goldfeder, DTM
Old Bethpage, New York

My son/daughter asked me for dating advice. I replied, "I am not going to interfere with your love life. Go ahead and date any Toastmaster you like!"

Charilaos Aneziris, DTM
East Setauket, New York



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Fear of Public Speaking

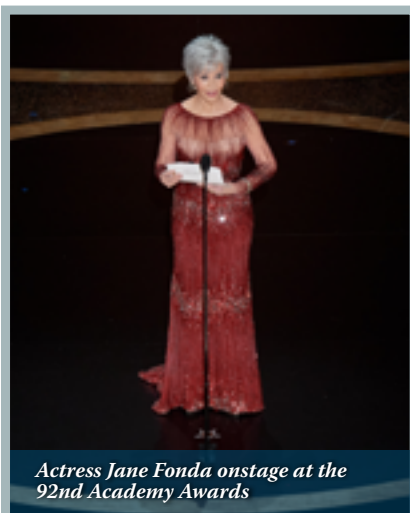


What's so scary about public speaking? In this article, learn why it's such a common fear and discover ways to tame it. Don't miss the related Toastmasters [webinar](#) and podcast.



Hybrid Harmony

Watch videos for extra tips on how to make hybrid meetings work for your club.



Actress Jane Fonda onstage at the 92nd Academy Awards

And the Award Goes To...

A good acceptance speech has the same objective as every good speech—to be gracious, powerful, and memorable. Learn tips and tricks from speech coach Patricia Fripp in this article and accompanying video.

PHOTO BY TEREKAH NAJUWAN/ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS AND SCIENCES



Guest Visits

Read about how other clubs handle recurring visitors, and make sure to set up your next guest with this [digital guest packet](#).

► CLUB PROFILE

Meet the Rough Writers

A California club celebrates both the spoken and the written word.

BY STEPHANIE DARLING

Members of Rough Writers in Long Beach, California, enthusiastically refer to their club as a hybrid of skill sets: a place where speakers become snappy writers and writers become captivating speakers. The ultimate goal is the mastery of storytelling.

Club co-founder Susan Cameron, DTM, a longtime Toastmaster, is a fervent believer in learning and leveraging both speaking and writing skills. She was interested in broadening the format of Rough Writers to extend the creative lifespan of speeches.

“Toastmasters and Rough Writers have the same starting point, which is to write a story,” she says. “Yet once given, speeches are often thrown away. Have you ever noticed that good, informative speeches could be turned into books or other published works? We didn’t want our speeches to die.”

The dual-discipline study teaches a wealth of techniques, such as timing, gestures, vocal variety, pacing, inflection, and eye contact. Members also become comfortable using figures of speech, such as metaphors and analogies.

“Our members learn how to turn a phrase and bring it into their speeches. It’s very important in both mediums to show or create a picture, rather than just tell about it,” Cameron notes.

The club relishes the rich mix of individuals in its membership. In fact, the club name is adapted from the Rough Riders, a U.S. volunteer calvary during the 1898 Spanish-American War. The calvary was known for its daring exploits and cadre of flamboyant characters, including college athletes, miners, cowboys, and Native Americans.

The Rough Writers is home to a similarly colorful cast: veteran Toastmasters, beginning orators, published authors and novice writers, retired professionals, college students, businesspeople, and educators. “However rough their skills may be, members are able to refine and polish their writing and speaking in a supportive and collegial environment,” the [club history](#) says.

Ana Clara Otoni C. Moreno, Vice President Public Relations, delights in the club’s diversity, which she sees as a vital asset to creativity. Imagine sharing stories with a U.S. Air Force veteran, a Brazilian journalist, business leaders, or a seasoned Toastmaster who is a former Hollywood talent manager and a former backup dancer for the iconic American soul singer James Brown.



“We always have fun!” That’s the mantra at Rough Writers, a unique club that provides a diverse experience to speakers, writers, and entrepreneurs.

Lydia Martinez, DTM, another Rough Writers co-founder, agrees that great stories come in both written and oral styles—a belief that led club leaders to explore new ways to serve member interests.

“Some of our early members had published books but needed practice speaking to an audience at a book signing or launch,” Martinez says. So she, Cameron, and another founder, Brad Jorgenson, DTM, sought to create a club that Martinez describes as “flexible enough to be attractive to writers and to members who wanted to work primarily on public speaking and leadership abilities.”

Rough Writers alternate between Pathways and writing-focused meetings. During writing exercises, participants may use stories as Table Topics. Speakers and writers are encouraged to turn their work into short stories or essays.

In fact, the club further supports its mission by publishing an annual anthology of its members’ work and by sponsoring Bragging Writes, a short story writing competition for members.

Will Valdez, the club’s enthusiastic Vice President Member-ship, was looking for the traditional Toastmasters club format when he joined.

“I wanted to improve my public speaking skills. I honestly didn’t know it was also a writers’ club when I signed up,” he says. “However, during my Ice Breaker, I mentioned taking screenwriting courses. As soon as I said that, the club began to encourage me as a speaker and a writer,” he says.

As the club’s 2020 Bragging Writes winner, he’s understandably sold on Rough Writers’ speaking/writing hybrid learning approach.

“The biggest selling point I make about Rough Writers is that we are not a cookie-cutter club. This is a club that lets you express your creativity in different avenues. We have so many supportive members that are ready to give a lending hand and advice. Anyone who joins is welcomed with open arms.”

To learn more about Rough Writers, visit the club [website](#) or the club’s [Facebook page](#).

Stephanie Darling is senior editor for the *Toastmaster magazine*.

▶ TOASTMASTERS NEWS

International President World Tour

International President Richard E. Peck, DTM, has been busy visiting clubs during his world tour! Follow his journey as he visits every country with a club by viewing [this interactive map](#).

Rotary Course Update

All eight Toastmasters-developed courses for Rotarians and Rotaractors are now available on Rotary International's Learning Center, which can be accessed by their members in nine different languages. There are already over 8,000 Rotary members enrolled in the courses! Learn more about the [Rotary/Toastmasters alliance](#).

▶ PRESENTATION SKILLS

6 Tips for Organizing a Successful Online Event

A month before the District 91 Conference in 2020, the COVID-19 lockdown was announced, and everything that could go wrong did. Read the six tips below to learn how this team turned its event around from disaster to an online success.

1 Put the Value for Your Attendees First

If you have a mixed audience—such as new members, non-serving members, club officers, and District leaders—structure your event so that it will be of value to everyone and look for topics that are interesting: public speaking tips from pros, leadership, improvisation/Table Topics®, debates, humor, etc. Just make sure that your topics are centered around self-development, communication, and leadership to maximize value for everyone.

2 Marketing Is Everything

For a small event, one active District Public Relations Manager might be able to handle the job, but if you're planning a large event, you'll need a marketing team. The D91 Conference had two copywriters for social media posts, one designer for the visuals, one video editor, and a person responsible for the website. Find a way to track your marketing performance or you won't know what worked and what didn't.

3 Give It a Professional Feel

The D91 Conference team worked to maintain a professional look to establish credibility. This included [creating a website](#), avoiding images of poor quality, and having a modern graphic design. These days you can make astonishing graphics without any prior experience. A free service that can help is [Canva](#). Want a webpage but don't know how to code? There are plenty of website-building platforms that don't require that knowledge, such as [WordPress](#).

Leadership Self-Evaluations

New resources are available to help you in your leadership journey. Use these club officer [self-evaluation forms](#) in your club to help track leadership growth and close previously missed gaps.

360-Degree Evaluations

The 360-degree evaluations are a new tool available for club officers. These evaluations allow for peers and club members to evaluate officers and aid in their leadership development. Download the [evaluation resources](#) and learn how you can implement them in your club!



4 Master Your Technology

Whatever [technology you use](#), be it the Zoom app for online events or microphones for in-person events, make sure to test it plenty of times and let all your presenters check it ahead of time too. Then have a Plan B in case any of your technology fails at the last minute.

5 Preparation Is Always Key

Make sure every person is fully aware of their role on the day and have plenty of backup plans in place. Being live for two days for nearly 20 hours meant there were plenty of opportunities for things to go wrong, which is why it was rehearsed multiple times. Behind the scenes, we had a backup for every major role.

6 Keep Experimenting

Don't be afraid to try new approaches, because when one door shuts another one opens. At the time, nobody was even sure that public speaking could be performed online, or if Zoom, an app very few people had heard of at the time, wouldn't crash in the middle of the event. Attendees panicked, presenters dropped off, even the leaders were skeptical. Yet, the team continued to work hard and kept on experimenting. And you can do the same with your events!

These tips are extracted from the author's full February 2021 article. [Read it here](#).

Diana Robertson was the District 91 Conference Director in 2020. She is a professional Soft Skills Trainer and Founder of [Skillsme Soft Skills Academy](#).

▶ SNAPSHOT



Canning Vale Toastmasters in Perth, Western Australia, celebrated its 600th meeting in September 2020. The club chose a DC Comics theme because the Roman numerals for 600 are DC. Members dressed up as their favorite DC superheroes and gathered in person, following local COVID guidelines.

▶ CLUB EXPERIENCE

Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers

For over 20 years, I've done volunteering and volunteer management. I was president of Volunteer Loudoun (in Virginia), managed volunteers at political campaign offices, and was an Area Director for Toastmasters, for which I recruited volunteers to help make speech contests possible.

The pandemic has caused new challenges for those who rely on volunteers. Here are three guidelines to keep in mind while developing your volunteer recruitment and retention plan.

1 Know what's involved. When asking people to volunteer, be honest about the time commitment. Before I began organizing Toastmasters contests, I did not realize how much the competitions relied on volunteers. Just know that if you receive an email asking you to be a ballot counter, judge, or timer for the contest—they need you. Our contests were able to run only because of our volunteers.

2 Know what's in it for the volunteer. Is your potential volunteer looking for a productive way to spend their time? Do they want to develop a new skill? Are they achievement-oriented?

When I was asked to be an Area Director, it was through a group email addressed to over 20 people. Although I was flattered, it was relatively easy to say no to this generalized request. After the Division Director reached out to me personally and answered my questions about the duties and time commitment, I accepted the opportunity. It's much easier to say yes to a well-crafted personal request. Additionally, I thought the volunteer work would make me a better candidate in a job search.

3 Make the match! Know the volunteer's strengths and work style. Placing them with the right opportunity is imperative, but it may not happen on the first try. If someone's goal is to make friends after a recent move and you stick them in the back office licking envelopes, it's not going to work. Know your needs, know your volunteer's skill set, and make the proper connection with the appropriate opportunity.

One last tip: Find out how your volunteer would like to be recognized. It's the little things that build relationships, and oftentimes it's a handwritten, heartfelt thank you note that means the most!

Leigh Ann Macklin is a past Area Director in District 29, Division E, Area 53, and a member of Loudoun Club and Purcellville Toastmasters in Virginia.



GET CREATIVE! Traveling *Toastmaster* wants to highlight creativity in quarantine! Take a picture in your home or socially distancing with your magazine or other Toastmasters memorabilia. Send your fun photos to photos@toastmasters.org.



1 | SUSAN BRUSHAFER of Richfield, Wisconsin, visits the Goldfield Ghost Town in Apache Junction, Arizona, in early 2020.

2 | BLANKA GYORGY of Libertyville, Illinois, enjoys reading the online *Toastmaster* magazine before and after playing golf.

3 | PIM PARPART, DTM, of Melbourne, Florida, shares her *Toastmaster* magazine with a cactus in Tucson, Arizona.

4 | DORA VOON, DTM, of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia, and her husband visit Cowes, Isle of Wight, England—home to the oldest and biggest sailing regatta in the world—in February 2020.



View additional **Traveling *Toastmaster*** photos in the [online magazine](#) for some extra inspiration.

Serving Others in Wake of Tragedy

How my experiences in Toastmasters and Rotary changed my life, and others’

BY DAVID JONES, DTM

When I joined Toastmasters, I was already doing public speaking. Two or three times a month I was presenting to drivers who had been arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. I told the story of how my wife of 29 years, Judy, was killed by a drunk-and-drugged driver while returning from a college visit with my 17-year-old daughter Lara.

My wife had been an ordained minister and served as Director of Children’s Ministry at our church. I was speaking to continue her ministry and attempting to save lives by convincing my audience to not drive while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. I felt that if I could save lives by telling her story, it would have made Judy very happy.

In 2011, three years after my wife’s death, I joined the Trailblazers Toastmasters Club in Dublin, Ohio, to become a better speaker, so that I could do my best to convince my audiences to change their behavior. A year later, I joined TriVillage Rotary Club, in Columbus, Ohio, after I married my second wife, Diane, moved into her house, and wanted to make more friends in my new community.

Along the way I served in just about every club officer position—in both organizations—and worked to help my Toastmasters club earn education awards. When the time came to pick a project to complete my Distinguished Toastmaster award (DTM), I wanted to do something meaningful. This is where my Toastmasters and Rotary worlds melded.

I decided to work on a Rotary International project to provide water for a village in Uganda. I picked the village of Namabasa because a friend of mine, Linda McKanna, had been supporting this village for the last 12 years—visiting once or twice a



David Jones

year—and her stories about the lack of basic services for people there brought tears to my eyes. This ended up being a multi-year project, totaling \$110,000, resulting in four solar-powered wells feeding into two 5,000-liter storage tanks, and new, hygienic toilets at the local school.

For the final steps of my project, I made a trip to Namabasa, visiting the site of each well and meeting the people who would be drilling and installing the wells. It was amazing to meet the people of the village and the local Rotary Club. I also gave a Toastmasters leadership seminar the first week I was there, followed by a Speechcraft workshop the second week. This helped tie Rotary and Toastmasters together in a project to help children in Uganda, a project dedicated to my first wife, who had found her calling in children’s ministry.

Meeting the children in the village was an emotional experience and made me glad that I had chosen this venture as my High Performance Leadership project.

My two weeks were spent installing a hand-pump well, giving a month’s food to 110 families, and distributing 250 pairs of shoes that my grandson Matthew had collected at his school.

Back in Ohio, I gave speeches to 17 other Rotary clubs and a Rotary District convention to raise the funds for the project. I attended International Conventions for both Toastmasters and Rotary to meet people from other countries and talk to experts in water projects.

In January 2021, the Rotary-based global grant I had submitted was approved by the District Foundation Chair in Uganda, and it is now being evaluated by Rotary International leaders. Hopefully, it will be approved and implemented this year, providing clean water for over 2,500 people to improve their health and allow them more time to work and provide for their families instead of queuing in line for the pumps.

At the 2019 Rotary International Convention in Hamburg, Germany, I was in the front row when Toastmasters’ then-International President, Lark Doley, and Rotary’s then-International President, Barry Raskin, announced the Rotary/Toastmasters Alliance. I was elated that my two favorite organizations had decided to form a relationship. I am now the District 40 chair for the alliance and will present at an upcoming training session for 200 Rotary President-Elects, demonstrating how Toastmasters can help them become better speakers and leaders. ■

DAVID JONES, DTM, is Vice President Education for the Franklin Club and a charter member of Rise Higher Advanced Toastmasters Club, both in Columbus, Ohio. He is President-Elect of the TriVillage Rotary Club, also in Columbus. His website is www.JonesOhio.com.



TMS Syndrome

Tighten your presentation by avoiding Too Much Stuff or repetitive content.

BY BILL BROWN, DTM

I don't know about you, but the last several months have been anything but routine.

Routine is nice. It enables you to get into a rhythm and work on your various projects, which, for me, include writing magazine articles. But sometimes it is good to get shaken out of your routine, to look at normal details differently, and to have new experiences that remind you of what's important—and in my case, that also relate to lessons in public speaking.

Last summer, my wife and I decided to move from the desert of southern Nevada to the high plains of Wyoming—a distance of 950 miles. When we had made previous moves to new locations, the distances were close enough that we could make multiple trips with our belongings, spreading out the moving drudgery over time. This was more of a “bite the bullet and do it all at once” move. And so the packing began.

A serious problem quickly presented itself. We had a big house in Las Vegas, which meant that we had lots of room to store all sorts of “I might need it someday” items. For example, we had three full sets of china dinnerware, plus enough goblets for a small army. There was no pressure to downsize. As we packed for our move, we discovered that we had TMS Syndrome—Too Much Stuff.

That is when it struck me. I have seen far too many speeches suffer from the same problem.

In Toastmasters, you fit many of your speeches into that famous five- to seven-minute window, so that you can

learn to write to a time limit. Outside of Toastmasters, it is not unusual for the speaking window to be between 45 and 60 minutes.

Unfortunately, with so much “extra room” to fill in those larger windows, speakers frequently do not feel the pressure to edit. After all, “I filled the 45 minutes and didn't go over. What's the problem?”

If you have to cut material because it doesn't move your message forward, do it.

The problem is that, while you may not see that you have crammed too much information into your presentation, your audience members see it clearly. This may result in listeners losing interest in your information. Especially if it is difficult to follow.

I learned a second lesson after we had been in our new home for about six weeks. I contracted COVID-19. Fortunately, I didn't have a bad case. My experience was primarily a mild fever with resultant fatigue. The real problem for me was that it just didn't want to end. Ten days after testing positive, I still had a low-level temperature, and I was always tired. Trust me, that got old. I was ready for it to end.

That, again, reminded me of certain speeches I have heard. While “Too Much Stuff” speeches tend to include

far too much information, these other speeches are different. Here, the speaker repeats the same point multiple times, sometimes using the exact same words. Why do they do this? I suspect they just don't have enough material to fill the time slot. Both of these problems center on the time limit, rather than on effective communication.

If you have a point to make, make it, and then get off the stage. I'm not sure that I have ever heard anyone say, “Wow, what an impactful message. It has changed my life. But she finished 10 minutes early, so what a waste.”

The key is to focus on a strong message. If you have to cut material because it doesn't move your message forward, do it. If you feel compelled to add “bonus material” because you were given 45 minutes to talk, don't do it. End early and put that bonus material in a handout.

Effective communication takes effort. Sometimes there is a temptation to include too much content. Sometimes there is a temptation to repeat the same points to cover up the fact that you don't have enough content. Both of those problems can be fatal to your message. Avoid them like the plague. **T**

Bill Brown, DTM, is a speech delivery coach in Gillette, Wyoming. He is a member of two clubs, Energy Capital Toastmasters in Gillette and Ahead of the Curve Toastmasters in Las Vegas. Learn more at www.billbrownspeechcoach.com.

From Guest to Member

How many times do your guests visit before you make it official?

BY GITEL HESSELBERG

How many Toastmasters clubs do people visit before deciding to join? Many current members joined the first club they visited. But other members take a while, dropping in on different clubs before settling on a “home base.”

That said, how many visits are reasonable before a club asks a recurring guest to officially join? Toastmasters governing documents allow every club to establish its [own visitation policies](#). Some clubs have open-ended policies; others allow a set number of visits before a guest is expected to join.

The Guest’s Point of View

The [Find a Club](#) feature is a convenient way to find club locations, status (corporate or community), online options, meeting times and formats, and any special club focus.

Now—what makes the right fit?

Tommy Price, DTM, was referred to Toastmasters by a friend, who suggested it would be a good way to meet people. Price visited two clubs before finding his Toastmasters home with Port Gardner Bay Gabbers in Everett, Washington. Later, he also joined Leading Edge Toastmasters, an advanced club in Kirkland, Washington.

“As soon as I arrived, somebody spoke to me and shook my hand. Before the meeting, everybody greeted me,” Price says. Afterward, he was asked to share his thoughts about the meeting. “That was the point where I decided ... to join,” he explains. The club’s interest in him sealed the deal.

Azella Collins of Oak Park, Illinois, didn’t find a match at first either. She visited six clubs. All were “very good at what they do” she notes, but she wanted to attain specific new skills.

As a professional parliamentarian, Collins wanted to master greater speaking flair. “I wanted to learn to add humor and really engage people,” she says. During club visits, Collins found herself winning awards, yet she wanted to challenge her existing skills. She found the perfect fit in two Chicago-area advanced clubs: Windy City Professional Speakers and Stage Craft.

“It creates a certain warmth, that guests are always welcome.”

—ARI KLICKSTEIN

Vivaswan Damle, former President of Toastmasters Club of Pune-West, in Pune, Maharashtra, India, visited seven clubs before finding the right one. He was attracted by the club’s hospitality and unique extras: The club meets in English and afterward, hosts a fellowship in Marathi, Damle’s mother tongue. Sharing the language made him feel comfortable.

The Club’s Perspective

So how to handle recurring guests? Ari Klickstein, President of TIC Toastmasters in Manhattan, New York, says his club has no limit on the number of times a visitor can attend a meeting.

“It creates a certain warmth, that the guests are always welcome,” he explains. He added that some guests continue to attend once every three or four meetings, but nobody takes advantage of the club’s open-door policy. The club’s philosophy is “they’ll continue coming as guests until they’re ready to become members.” He adds the club doesn’t push too hard for

that to happen. The policy applies to both online and in-person meetings.

Manama Toastmasters in Manama, Bahrain, has a stricter policy. They allow guests to attend three meetings before deciding whether or not to join. The guest policy is stated during the Vice President Membership’s (VPM) report at each meeting. At the third meeting, the VPM speaks to the visitor about joining.

“It’s not a pleasant situation telling someone that they have to pay,” Biljana Davceva, Vice President Public Relations (VPPR), says, “but we have to be fair to our members who are paying fees.” The Manama club must be doing something right; it has been around since 1964, and currently has 48 members.

NOA Toastmasters Club, a bilingual club in Elst, The Netherlands, alternates between meetings in English and Dutch, and has a policy of three visits. Ronald Creemers, VPM, says guests are encouraged to visit at least one meeting in each language, to compare experiences.

Ultimately, guest visitation policies can be a balancing act between warm hospitality and guiding guests to membership, allowing them to take full advantage of [all Toastmasters has to offer](#).

One thing is certain. It may be the official role of the VPM to convert guests into [members](#), yet if every member is hospitable, it could make the difference between adding a new member or saying goodbye to a guest. **T**

Gitel Hesselberg joined Toastmasters in 2019. She is Vice President Education for her home club, Haifa Toastmasters, in Haifa, Israel, and a member of four other clubs in Israel and South Africa. In her free time, she works as an English teacher.



Titles That Talk

Short, clear, and compelling speech titles make a strong statement.

BY LESLEY STEPHENSON, DTM

Do the titles of your speeches and presentations really talk? You bet they do. They talk to the minds of your audiences, and they solicit responses like the following: *This speech sounds worthwhile.* Or: *This sounds boring—I'll give it a miss.* Or: *This sounds like the best choice of the conference workshops.*

Good titles don't just talk, they lure and entice. They have the impact of a billboard, steering audience focus onto you and your offering. And while compelling titles can't guarantee great content and delivery, they are a first vital step toward ensuring you win the attention of your target audience.

The importance of titles, however, is vastly underestimated. Of the hundreds of presentations I evaluate each year as a communications coach, less than 10% have what I consider to be effective titles. These include the speeches and presentations of company leaders and corporate executives, so there's room for improvement at all levels.

Keep It Short

If you want to create a great talking title, how long should it be? The answer is simple. If you want people to talk about your speech or workshop for days afterward, be sure they can remember its title. That means making it short and well worded, because we humans are no longer much good at absorbing long sentences or remembering lengthy titles. Five words

or less is the recommended maximum length for a speech title.

Back in 2014, the late Rick Haynes, DTM, and I researched speech titles used by competitors in the World Championship of Public Speaking® going back several years. We quickly saw that the vast majority of the finalists' titles contained just one to five words. While it's hard for one-word titles to convey the essence of a speech, the title of LaShunda Rundles' winning 2008 speech, "Speak!" showed this was possible, as did Darren LaCroix's epic "Ouch!" in 2001. However, more often three to five words are needed to effectively signpost your content, as 2007 winner Vikas Jhingran proved with his perfectly simple yet telling title, "The Swami's Question."

Five words or less is the recommended maximum length for a speech title.

On the other hand, if you feel that a longer title works best for your offering, go ahead and try it out. Longer titles can work better for written media—business reports, books, newspaper articles—because people can re-read the title if necessary. Still, an article I wrote for *Tages Anzeiger Magazine* in Zürich, about the Swiss arts patron and conductor Paul Sacher, had my original seven-word title

slashed to just two by the editor: "You Can Do What You Want To" became "His Plan." That experience highlighted for me the importance of shorter titles even for written publications, and it led to a strong title for my Paul Sacher biography, *Symphony of Dreams*.

Haig Simonian, former chief correspondent for the *Financial Times* in Europe, is a strong proponent of clear, short titles. In his corporate workshops, he shares many stories about their virtues. And indeed, if you pick up a copy of the *Financial Times*, you'll find that most titles are pruned for impact. If you want that memorability, you need to keep 'em short.

Don't Lose That Title

Some speakers and writers find that a wonderful title occurs to them even if they're not searching for one at that moment. If that happens to you, write it down. Good titles are in short supply, especially for most corporate presentations, so you don't want to lose a good title you can use at a later point.

If you're searching for a title and nothing immediately jumps out at you, try a method used by many skilled speakers and writers. Take a quiet moment to think about the essence of your speech or article and how you can convey it in a handful of words. Write down all the options that occur to you. Don't worry if some of them sound a bit crazy. If one



is clearly the best, and you feel it is right, then you've found it. If not, select the three or four that are closest to good, and start to experiment by adding, subtracting, and rearranging the words. Your title will emerge from this process.

There's also no one right time to find your title. Some people come up with a brilliant title before they've finished writing their speech or article, and others wait until the end. Both approaches can work.

While you're creating your brainstorming list, remember there should be a clear connection between your title and your content. Why? Well, because your title is the first thing an audience hears or reads. It sets up expectations in their minds. If your title is just a fantasy bouquet of words that sounds good but has little to do with your content, you may end up disappointing or confusing your audience.

Live Things Up

If your title seems dry, try using alliteration (the repetition of first consonants in multiple words), which adds a snappy quality—e.g., *The Perils of PowerPoint*, *Sell the Sizzle*, *Heart to Heart*, *Beyond the Banner*, *Leaders in the Limelight*. Wordplay

is also fun, but a word of caution here: If your speech or article is destined for an international audience, the wordplay that works in your native language may not be understood by non-native speakers.

Good titles don't just talk, they lure and entice.

Beware, also, of punctuation in your titles, especially in those that will be announced to a live audience. Unlike club and speech contest titles, which can be more playful, professional speech titles should be more direct. I've seen workshop and conference titles with question marks, exclamation marks, or even an ellipsis at the end of them. There's a problem with this. First, unless the person introducing you is well schooled ahead of time to inflect accordingly, the announcement of your title may lose the question mark. And how exactly should your emcee signal an exclamation mark? By shouting the word that precedes it?

When it comes to written texts, Simonian, the newspaperman, warns particularly against question marks. The

Financial Times doesn't allow these in its titles, Simonian says, because they suggest that the writer is still sitting on the fence with regard to his or her opinion. "Readers expect the writer to be the expert and to guide them," Simonian argues, "not to ask them questions."

It is hugely worthwhile investing time in creating talking titles. They can earn you money while you sleep, gather your audience's interest before you even begin to speak, and boost your recognition as a thinker, speaker, and writer. And there is huge satisfaction in finding the perfect title for your work.

So, what's in a talking title? In my experience, resounding recognition, a boost for your bank balance, and fathoms of fruitful fun. **T**

Lesley Stephenson, DTM, is a member of two Swiss corporate Toastmasters clubs: *Google Zürich Toastmasters* and the *UBS Rhetoric Club Opfikon*. She is an international speaker and corporate communications coach, and has placed twice in the semifinals of the *Toastmasters International Speech Contest*. Learn more at www.lesleystephenson.com.

How to *Accept* an *Award*



The best acceptance speeches are gracious and full of heart.

BY EMILY SACHS

*I*t's your moment of triumph. So you grab the closest pen or hairbrush and launch into an overdramatic thanking of the Academy, declaring "You like me!" and telling your kids to go to bed as the invisible orchestra drowns you out.

We've all played out that imaginary moment. But maybe we should stop, says San Francisco speech coach Patricia Fripp. Those famous televised award speeches are actually a "what not to do" when receiving an honor. In their brief time in the literal spotlight, most winners resort to over-the-top gushing and false modesty. Or they breeze through an uninspiring laundry list of verbal gratuities.

"Most Academy Award speeches are pathetic," says Fripp, a frequent speaker at Toastmasters conferences and a former Toastmaster herself. "You want the emotional connection. Paint the picture. Inspire passion in others."

If you are active in Toastmasters or your community, or are a generous philanthropist or a dedicated team member, chances are you will eventually be recognized for your time and efforts. And you might be expected to make some remarks in front of your peers when you do. Fear not, fellow Toastmaster: A good acceptance speech has the same objective as every good speech—to be gracious, powerful, and memorable—only in less time than a typical speech.

"You can have more impact with a well-crafted three- to five-minute speech than you can with 45 minutes," Fripp says. "However, every word must count."

Practice in Pathways

The "Deliver Social Speeches" project in the Pathways learning curriculum gives all Toastmasters the opportunity to practice receiving honors—and bestowing them—through a choice of two social occasion speeches. These are designed to be delivered in three to four minutes each. This unique project has endless real-life applications—from offering a toast at a family celebration to honoring a retiring coworker or even getting public recognition.

Pathways offers the following guidelines for award-acceptance speeches:

- ▶ Express your gratitude and be genuine.
- ▶ Demonstrate why you are deserving of the honor.
- ▶ Recognize those who helped you achieve success.
- ▶ Personalize your speech with anecdotes.
- ▶ Respect the audience and the clock.

Fripp's failproof approach to a winning acceptance speech is to tell a story about the organization or group giving the honor. If it's a college alumni award, for instance, talk about the awe you felt the first time you visited the campus in person. For a workplace award, speak about a manager who encouraged you to stay during a difficult period. Or, in the case of a named award, reference the namesake and describe your lifelong admiration of their achievements.

When it comes to pitfalls, Fripp says to avoid these two things: trying too hard to be funny and speaking without preparation. Even her own coaching clients, many of whom are business executives, are steered wrong by award shows. "Be profound, be wise, be gracious. But don't try to be funny if you aren't; otherwise, it will backfire," she says. Even an innocent, self-deprecating remark can bomb. Declaring that you don't deserve an award or that anyone could have done what you did is not only an insult to the other



Aaron Lee (far left) and Will Heeman give award-acceptance speeches in London, England, and London, Ontario, Canada, respectively. Both expressed abundant gratitude and used a dash of humor.

PHOTO OF AARON LEE BY SIMON CALLAGHAN (MUSEUM AND HERITAGE AWARDS); PHOTO OF WILL HEEMAN COURTESY OF THE LONDON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

nominees, but also to the prior winners and especially to those who nominated and selected you.

Will Heeman knows well the careful balance required to be both funny and respectful. The “Chief Daymaker” of Heeman’s, his family’s garden and farm business in Ontario, Canada, he has accepted three business awards in the last five years at the London (Ontario) Chamber of Commerce gala, before 1,500 other community leaders. Business events can be especially dry, and he says that industry puns—“dad jokes,” if you will—can find a receptive audience at them. In 2019, he accepted the chamber’s Environmental Leadership award on the first day of spring. “We’re so excited today,” he told the audience, “that we wet our plants!” The quip hit the mark and still gets repeated.

Preparation Is Key

As for using the big event as your “Evening at the Improv,” Fripp instead suggests being “perpetually prepared” in order to be gracious in front of your peers. We all have the opportunity on a regular basis to practice publicly expressing appreciation—whether on conference calls at our jobs, in committee huddles for our community work, or at our Toastmasters meetings.

For example, if you are asked to present a status update on a project, Fripp suggests you try saying something like, “On behalf of the dedicated three-person public relations team, thank you for the opportunity to report on our progress. You will be pleased to hear that our extra hours and late-night emails enabled us to complete our website redesign two weeks ahead of schedule. This

feat wouldn’t have been possible without the generous technical assistance of the treasurer, as well as your support.” If you work this type of phrasing into your everyday speaking, it won’t be difficult to do so when called up to receive formal recognition, Fripp says. It might even plant the seed that you are a leader worthy of recognition.

Of course, being prepared also means drafting a speech ahead of any awards ceremony and practicing it with others enough times that you won’t need notes. You never know if you will have your hands full with a microphone or the award or if the lectern is unwieldy. Fripp also advises confirming ahead of time if you are expected to deliver remarks. “If you *know* you are going to accept an award, prepare, script, and rehearse,” she says. “If you *believe* you may be called to accept an award, prepare in case.”

Aaron Lee of Oxford, England, was a tuxedoed finalist sitting at the 2017 Museums + Heritage Awards ceremony when he discovered that the winners were giving speeches. A few categories later, he was doubly surprised to hear his name called as a Volunteer of the Year winner. In front of a room of 350 others, the then-university student delivered his first-ever formal remarks.

“Before I was called, I had a mental idea of what I would say,” he says, “and then you get called and that goes out the window.”

Lee admitted to the audience that he hadn’t even known he was nominated until he was short-listed. His shock quickly settled and he expressed appreciation to the audience, the sponsors, his nominators, and even the event staff serving the dinner. He won the award for his work at the Museum of Oxford, a gem of a civic museum that gets overshadowed by those of neighboring Oxford University—“which are alright,” he deadpanned to the crowd representing many of the U.K.’s most notable institutions.

These award winners agree that being honored is only the beginning. Immediately after the ceremony, you will have a room full of people waiting to congratulate you, so make it easy for them. Lee says he got positive feedback after speaking and was also invited to later do a radio interview. Heeman, the Canadian awardee with the agricultural business, says that such a speech might be your only chance to make a first impression to a room of potential customers or connections.

“At the end of the day, winning an award and jumping up onstage and having a big smile on your face—why would you not embrace that moment? I want people to look back and say, “That speech from the guy at the strawberry place, that was pretty good.” **T**

Watch [Will Heeman](#) and [Aaron Lee](#) give their award-acceptance speeches.

Emily Sachs is President of Long Island University-Brooklyn Toastmasters in Brooklyn, New York. A former award-winning newspaper reporter, she now works in financial regulatory compliance.



Speechmaking From the Stars



Hollywood's annual night of Oscar awards gets everyone talking.

BY PAUL STERMAN

Through the years, a number of notable moments have played out onstage at the Academy Awards: crying jags (Gwyneth Paltrow upon winning the Best Actress Oscar); feats of strength (73-year-old Jack Palance hitting the floor and busting out

one-armed pushups); trailblazing (Sidney Poitier becoming the first African American to win an Oscar in a lead acting category); political statements (Marlon Brando sending Native American actress Sacheen Littlefeather to decline his Oscar); and cultural statements (actress Louise Fletcher giving part of her speech in sign language for her deaf parents).

It's a night like no other. The Academy Awards, which made its debut in 1929, is about big-name movie stars, eye-popping designer outfits, glittering gold trophies—and public speaking. It's a unique kind of speaking, to be sure. The lucky winners who hear their names called step into the brightest of spotlights: The annual feting of the film industry is watched by millions of television viewers around the world.

This year's ceremony takes place April 25—delayed two months because of COVID-19 precautions—and is scheduled to be held in person. It will be broadcast live from multiple locations, including the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood.

For Toastmasters members, it's particularly fun to evaluate Oscar speeches from home, listening for clarity, content, and verbal

fillers. *Honey, did you hear how many um's Bradley Cooper had?!* (Imagine an Ah-Counter's exhaustion tracking the 1992 remarks of director Jonathan Demme, who was counted saying “uh” almost 40 times in the course of a five-minute winner's address.)

The acceptance speeches are always an oratorical mix: Some winners are overwhelmed with emotion and struggle to get the words out, others bubble with irreverent jokes, and still others perform with polished grace. Some ramble past the timing signals, which in this case are not green, yellow, and red flashes but, rather, the familiar strains of the orchestra trying to play the speakers offstage.

When Julia Roberts went long in her 2001 Best Actress speech, the conductor gave his cue for the “it's time to wrap it up” music. The actress was not having it: “And, sir, you're doing a great job, but you're so quick with that stick. So why don't you sit, 'cause I may never be here again.” Adrien Brody, in his 2003 Best Actor speech, practically pleaded with the band for more time. “One second, please. One second. Cut it out. I got one shot at this.”

With a show that often breaks the three-hour mark, winners have been asked in recent years to complete their comments in 45 seconds.

The Winner for Longest Speech ...

Back in 1943, actress Greer Carson, nabbing the Best Actress award, delivered a thank-you soliloquy that reportedly stretched past seven minutes—the lengthiest Oscars speech ever—and even included a shout-out to “the doctor who delivered me!”

At the opposite end of the spectrum was Joe Pesci, who upon accepting the 1991 award for Best Supporting Actor, said, simply, “It is my privilege. Thank you.” That's four words more



← Bong Joon Ho of South Korea was named Best Director at the 2020 Academy Awards for the film *Parasite*.

PHOTO OF BONG JOON HO BY BLAINE OHIGASHI/ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS AND SCIENCES



← Film legend Meryl Streep thanked a long list of people in her 1983 Best Actress speech.

PHOTO OF MERYL STREEP BY TODD WAWRYCHUK/ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS AND SCIENCES

than those uttered by Best Supporting Actress winner Patty Duke.

Her 1963 speech in its entirety: “Thank you.”

Then there’s “the list.”

As countless viewers have witnessed over the years, many winners reel off a string of names—people they want to thank for

their years-long journey to the podium. The list typically includes the film’s producer, director, fellow actors (or writers or technical crew), agent, public relations people, parents, spouse, partner, children, etc. Maureen Stapleton, honored as Best Supporting Actress in 1982, covered all her bases, expressing a thank-you to “everybody I ever met in my entire life.”

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences presented a video to all 150 award contenders before the 2006 show. Narrated by Tom Hanks, it exhorted potential winners to “lose the list” and instead be creative and witty. But though the recitation of names might bore listeners to tears, others say it’s important to issue the list of acknowledgements. No less an eminence than Meryl Streep drove that point home when she gave her 1983 Best Actress address.

“I have a lot of people to thank and I’m going to be one of those people that tries to mention a lot of names, because I know just two seconds ago my mother and father went completely berserk, and I’d like to give some other mothers and fathers that opportunity.”

An International Scene

Actors from the land that gave us Shakespeare have always added a dash of eloquence to the American proceedings. The classic thespian Laurence Olivier, presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award in 1979, waxed poetic about “the great firmament of your nation’s generosity” and “the euphoria that happens to so many of us at the first breath of the majestic glow of a new tomorrow.”

Read columnist John Cadley’s take on award-acceptance speeches (page 30).

Truth be told, observers later said they didn’t exactly understand the point Olivier was making—but he sure sounded good.

The regal Helen Mirren managed to deliver an acceptance speech that was both lofty and down-to-earth. She walked onstage carrying her purse in one hand, and an earring in the other, happily celebrated her “gold star,” and saluted the strength of Queen Elizabeth, whom she portrayed in *The Queen*.

A welcome burst of international diversity has emerged in recent years. The Academy Awards has long had a category for “Best Foreign Film,” but a number of filmmakers from other countries have also won in mainstream categories. From 2013 to 2018, five of the six Best Director awards went to a Mexican filmmaker: Alejandro González Iñárritu (twice), Guillermo del Toro, and Alfonso Cuarón (twice). In 2020, the South Korean director Bong Joon Ho captured the prize for the film *Parasite*, which was also honored for Best Picture.

Grace Under Pressure

One of the things a Toastmaster learns is to be in the moment when speaking. If something spontaneously happens and the audience reacts, it’s better to acknowledge the situation than ignore it. If possible, use humor. Oscar winner Jennifer Lawrence gracefully handled just such a moment. On her walk to accept the 2013 award for Best Actress, she tripped on the first step to the stage.

Taking the golden statue and receiving a standing ovation, she quipped, “You guys are just standing up because you feel bad that I fell. That’s really embarrassing.”

An even bigger stumble occurred in 2017, in the ceremony’s climactic moment. Film legends Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway were presenting the award for Best Picture. The Oscar went to the musical *La La Land*. Except it didn’t.

Beatty had accidentally been handed the wrong envelope. As the *La La Land* team exulted onstage, the error was frantically pieced together: The actual winner of the award was *Moonlight*. *La La Land* producer Jordan Horowitz—having just given his acceptance speech!—met the moment. He promptly stepped back to the microphone and called on his competitors to accept their rightful prize.

“Moonlight, you guys won best picture,” he said, even holding up the correct winner’s card to erase any doubts. “This is not a joke, come up here.”

Though the makers of *Moonlight* scored the big victory of the night, Horowitz won high praise for his gracious handling of the epic flub.

It was a classic Hollywood ending: suspense, drama, and a heroic save. **T**

Paul Serman is senior editor, executive and editorial content, for *Toastmasters International*.



Toastmasters energy with a hybrid twist: Rafael Marques, president of Invicta Toastmasters in Porto, Portugal, celebrates remote member Patricia Rodrigues. PHOTO BY: SÉRGIO MENDEZ

Hybrid Harmony

How to make club meetings work when members are online *and* in person.

BY DAVID F. CARR, DTM

In early 2020, online meetings abruptly became the norm for Toastmasters clubs. Now, as pandemic restrictions and health concerns ease in many parts of the world, hybrid meetings are likely to become increasingly common—and this format will present another new challenge.

A few months into the pandemic, I organized a [workshop](#) on hybrid clubs, partly to help me learn more about the subject. I already knew about speaking and presenting in a virtual environment—three years earlier, I had helped charter Online Presenters. I had also organized the first hybrid meeting for my home club, Club Awesome Toastmasters in Coral Springs, Florida, in March 2020, right before our meeting venue closed. These experiences have helped me figure out some best practices to allow members on both sides of the camera to have a great experience.

What Is a Hybrid Meeting?

A hybrid meeting combines both in-person and online participants, and offering an equally positive experience to both audiences can be a tricky balance.

That said, hybrid meetings are worth trying when your club is ready. The ramifications of the past year will be felt for a long time, and we are likely looking at a new normal. As long as COVID-19 remains a concern, some members will be reluctant to return to in-person meetings, while for others the convenience of meeting online has made attending meetings easier. For others, the advent of online meetings has allowed them to join clubs around the world. There are also members who have sorely missed in-person meetings and are ready to give safe get-togethers a try. As restrictions in your area ease, a hybrid model might be worth an experiment. You can always vote on the format officially at a later time.

So how can you meet the hybrid challenge, making sure both audiences can see, hear, and share equally in the meeting?

Make Sure Everyone Can Hear

Without question, sound is the biggest stumbling block to hybrid meeting quality. You'll need a microphone in the meeting room, positioned close to the speaker,

and you'll want to make sure other mics in phones or laptops are turned off, because more than one live mic will cause audio problems.

“There has to be the willingness of people to try, and to realize it’s not going to be perfect the first time.”

—BIRGIT STARMANN, DTM

You will also need a speaker (in this case, a sound output device, not the meeting role). Portable speakers can be connected to the computer that is logged into your online meeting tool. Zoom and other meeting tools include sound cancellation software that helps prevent feedback, provided that both mic and speaker are plugged into the same computer. You may want a second speaker in the room, but it should be placed far from the mic.

You can either use a wireless microphone and hand it from one person to the



5 QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE ADOPTING A HYBRID FORMAT

- 1 Are club leaders and members willing to commit to making the hybrid-format meeting work, resolving the challenges likely to arise along the way?
- 2 Does the meeting site offer reliable access to internet bandwidth and the equipment needed to conduct hybrid meetings?
- 3 Does the club have several people who can competently handle logistics and are willing to take the responsibility?
- 4 How does the club plan to ensure that both local and remote attendees can participate equally?
- 5 If you are a community club, will you now accept members from outside your local area?

next, or use a standard microphone at the lectern and have everyone come there to speak (be sure to wipe both down before each speaker). A conference room speaker/microphone could be a third option.

Make Sure Everyone Can See

Consider the placement of webcams and displays or projector screens—you want to make sure members on both sides can see and understand what is going on. It's helpful to have one camera on the in-person speaker and another on the in-person audience. That way, remote participants can see both the speakers and the audience. The faces of online participants can be displayed on a projector screen or television in your meeting room.

And finally, remember that if the timer is in the physical room, you'll need to ensure the timing cards or device can be seen by the speaker, wherever they may be.

Hybrid Meetings for Clubs

Graham Cairns, DTM, of Upper Mount Gravatt, Queensland, Australia, has been coaching several clubs on how to conduct hybrid meetings. Some of these clubs prefer the hybrid format, not only because of COVID-19 concerns but because it allows them to reach more members geographically, something particularly helpful given Australia's wide-open spaces.

Cairns recommends that clubs start simply, depending on equipment provided by a tech-savvy member, making sure club members enjoy the mixed-format experience before committing money to it. He also cautions about one drawback to hybrids: Club members in the physical space might become less aware of online participants and not include them fully in the meeting. "Everybody should be part of the club, and everyone should be part of the meeting," Cairns notes.

Birgit Starmanns, DTM, of Mountain View, California, says there is also a long-term professional value to learning

business-applicable technology. As a California employee of the German software company SAP, she has participated in hybrid meetings for years, and acknowledges hybrid meetings might be bumpy at first.

"Everybody should be part of the club, and everyone should be part of the meeting."

—GRAHAM CAIRNS, DTM

For Toastmasters, "there has to be the willingness of people to try, and to realize it's not going to be perfect the first time," she says. Flexibility and patience are key to experimenting with the hybrid format.

"We're in a low-risk environment where we can experiment, and fail, and ask for help—and we should take that opportunity," agrees Markus Seppälä, Vice President Education at Basel International Speakers in Basel, Switzerland. After a few months online, his club went hybrid. However, in-person attendance has recently tapered off, due to renewed COVID-19 concerns and border crossing issues for members from France and Germany. "When people are coming to the meeting, I don't ask whether they'll attend

virtually or in person—because I don't care," Seppälä says. He has documented what he has learned in [tutorial videos](#) and shared equipment recommendations.

Agostinho Cajetan Barretto, DTM, based in New York City, has created a wealth of information on hybrid meetings and technology. He is a District 20 Division Director and a member of six clubs in the United States and Kuwait, and was among Toastmasters recognized in the [2020 Masters of Online Meetings](#) series. Barretto recently led two hybrid meeting demonstration meetings, one from a well-equipped corporate conference room, and another using basic consumer technology and free software. The [high-tech session](#) was easier but the [basic equipment](#) "worked just fine," Barretto says.

Ultimately, if your club decides to [give hybrid meetings a try](#), your ideal set-up will depend on member preferences, budget, meeting facilities, and the tech aptitudes of members.

Don't underestimate the hybrid challenge, but don't be afraid of it, either. **T**

David F. Carr, DTM, is a writer, editor, and digital consultant based in Coral Springs, Florida. He is a member of *Online Presenters* and of *Club Awesome* in Coral Springs. He is also the founder of the *WordPress for Toastmasters* project and runs the [Toastmost.org](#) club website hosting service.

SCARED

of Public Speaking?

You're not alone. Learn why giving speeches can be terrifying—and how to tame the fear.

BY KRISTEN HAMLING, PH.D.

Last year I gave a virtual speech about workplace resilience to business leaders during lockdown in New Zealand. I desperately wanted to make a good impression and persuade my audience to take mental health more seriously.

Up until just before the speech, I was calm, confident, and self-assured. My confidence came from years of attending Toastmasters, completing a Ph.D., and my work as a trauma psychologist.

But my experience accounted for nothing the moment I felt pressured to be the best, which is what I felt when I started to speak. My creativity and spark were replaced by anxiety and fear. I felt sick and light-headed and couldn't

remember part of my speech. I had put so much pressure on myself that my body reacted as though this speech was a life-or-death situation, and my performance suffered as a result.

The Science Behind the Fear

I am not alone in my experience, as Toastmasters well know. Matt Abrahams, a lecturer on strategic communications at Stanford University in California, says "Communication anxiety is absolutely normal." Wanting to make a good impression when we speak publicly is natural and helps us maintain status within our group. Historically, increased status in a group kept you attached to your tribe, which promoted survival. Public speaking threatens our status in the group because we become singled out and open to scrutiny, says Anwasha Banerjee, DTM, Ph.D., a neuroscientist and member of Dogwood Club in Atlanta, Georgia.

Banerjee explains that when we feel vulnerable, the primitive parts of our brain get activated to coordinate the body's survival response to danger, which primarily is fear. In her TEDx Talk "[Stage Fright: Don't Get Over It, Get Used to It](#)," Banerjee says that, as far as the body is concerned, public speaking is akin to being stared down by a tiger.

As a trauma psychologist, I'm all too familiar with the fear response. In my practice I consistently observe anxiety and fear stopping people from performing at their best and achieving their goals. I've had a few clients whose fear of public speaking is so intense that it's considered a phobia. As a result of fear and physical symptoms of stress, they either avoid all forms of public speaking or endure it with significant distress. This true phobia of public speaking is called *glossophobia*, which is sometimes linked with a traumatic event in the person's life. If you experience this level of fear, you may want to seek professional help. For those of us whose symptoms are unpleasant but not debilitating, the following advice could help. And Toastmasters is the perfect place to practice.

Connection Trumps Perfection

Lesley Stephenson, DTM, a professional speaker and Toastmaster in Zug, Switzerland, teaches people how to manage their fear of public speaking. She says, "Stage fright is normal; live with it." She recommends to stop trying to fight the symptoms of stage fright and instead learn how to manage them. "Public speaking gets easier and better over time as fear gets replaced by a lovely sort of buzz of excitement."

Stephenson says preparation is the key to reduced speech anxiety. She recommends writing out the entire speech, but to memorize just the beginning and ending. Trust your rehearsal and knowledge of the material to deliver about 70% of the script.



Watch this Toastmasters [webinar series](#) for more tips on conquering the fear of public speaking.

Stephenson says, “When you try to remember your speech word for word, it reduces the conversational tone, which in turn increases disconnection with the audience.” Instead, she suggests to aim for “connection over perfection,” noting that social connection activates our body’s calming response and reduces anxiety.

Letting go of perfectionism is an effective way to manage fear of public speaking. Banerjee, a native of India, focuses on developing a relationship with her audience rather than appearing perfect. Although she has an accent and says she makes grammatical errors, she recognizes that she receives far more positive feedback for being genuine and authentic than she does for being a “perfect” speaker. Banerjee embraces the idea that “it’s perfectly okay to be imperfect.”

The Window of Tolerance

Effective preparation was something my virtual speech lacked. I didn’t get enough sleep the night before and I was unfamiliar with giving online speeches. I should have practiced more. It also took place at the beginning of the pandemic and my stress levels were high. The lack of planning resulted in too much stress, which pushed me outside of my “window of tolerance.” That is the optimal zone of arousal where you perform most effectively.

“Public speaking gets easier and better over time as fear gets replaced by a lovely sort of buzz of excitement.”

—LESLEY STEPHENSON, DTM

Too much stress activates your sympathetic nervous system (the “fight, flight, freeze” response) which takes you outside your window of tolerance. When outside your window, your attention becomes preoccupied with the negative. You may focus on the slightest of mistakes or interpret others’ behavior in a negative way. Like when we think that one person’s yawning is evidence that our speech is terribly boring. We lose sight of the possibility that the yawner may not have slept well the night before, and we can’t refocus our attention on the 50 other interested faces in the audience.

The other thing I try to remember when speaking in public is that you can’t please everyone. I think of my audience as a bell-shaped curve: Some people will love your speech, some people will think it’s okay, and some may even hate it. Stephenson’s advice is to “remember that people are really quite fickle, so don’t aim for popularity; aim for respect.”

Although moderate public speaking jitters can promote performance, too much anxiety can prevent meaningful connections with your audience. Abrahams explains, “Nervousness can make your audience very uncomfortable.” If your audience notices

your nervousness, he says they can’t concentrate on the message and instead worry about your ability to deliver it. So how do you dial down the anxiety to a manageable level?

Emotional Regulation

One of the best ways to manage anxiety is through mindfulness. It brings you into the present moment so you can observe your thoughts and feelings without reacting to them. For example, had I practiced mindfulness during my speech, I would have noticed that my thoughts (e.g., *I have to deliver the perfect speech or people will think I’m incompetent*) had become catastrophic and irrational. Mindfulness would have allowed me to notice my thoughts, let them go, and focus on doing my best.

This quality can be achieved in many ways, but a good start is with mindful breathing. Bring your attention to your breath and the feeling of it entering your body. Follow the breath for 10 minutes. Slow diaphragm breathing activates our parasympathetic nervous system—the body’s calming response. Other mindful activities include naming three things you can see, feel, hear, and touch, and focusing on what you are grateful for in the moment. Try a mindfulness exercise whenever you find yourself worrying or imagining the worst-case scenario.

Having the ability to manage strong emotions is critical for public speaking. Sometimes anxiety is a good thing, as it gives you the energy to take on a difficult speech, says Abrahams, the Stanford lecturer, but other emotions, like shame, could ruin a speech if not carefully managed. Abrahams makes a good case for emotional regulation in his 2018 TEDx Talk, “[Speaking Up Without Freaking Out](#).” He explains how he successfully navigated shame during a speech that saw him split the backside of his pants in a failed karate kick.

Ethan Kross, a professor of psychology at the University of Michigan, found that when people talk to themselves in the third person (e.g., how should Kristen get ready for her next speech?), they gain psychological distance from their problems. Kross reasons that when a friend comes to you with a problem, it’s relatively easy for you to coach them through it, because you are psychologically distant from the problem. Your friend’s problem doesn’t seem as urgent to you. Perhaps the simple trick of psychologically preparing in the third person might help you to better prepare for and deliver your next speech.

Habituate Your Fear

Creating new speaking habits is also an effective way to stop yourself from overthinking during a speech. Banerjee, the neuroscientist at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, says that completing a task for the first time requires a lot of thinking, and overthinking can generate anxiety and lead to inner strife.

As a psychologist, I often see this happen. A client of mine recently became acutely nervous about making a speech and her thoughts began spiraling. She said, “If I do badly in my speech, then people will talk about me behind my back. I’ll get bullied and



MAKE THOSE NERVES WORK FOR YOU

The top reason people give for joining Toastmasters is to build confidence for public speaking. Many people assume that the best strategy to quell the fear is to try to stay calm. In theory that's good advice but trying to calm yourself down when you're nervous adds to the anxiety, making matters worse.

Research from Harvard University suggests that anxiety and excitement are closely related. Most of our physiological, or involuntary, responses to anxiety are the same as when we are excited. The study suggests a simple, yet counterintuitive approach to calming our nerves before giving a speech: Don't. That's not a misprint, don't try to calm yourself down.

Although it isn't easy, we can train our brains to become excited about public speaking. I decided to take the advice of the Harvard study, and I'm here to tell you that it *does* work. Here's the formula I found that works for me:

- ▶ **Practice.** Just as you would practice a speech, practice getting excited for a speech. I've found that waiting until the night of the speech does not work. My mind is already racing, and it is difficult to concentrate.
- ▶ **Keep it simple.** Stick to one "exciting topic." For example, think about that upcoming vacation but don't try to add to it by thinking about the equally exciting upcoming holiday with family and friends.
- ▶ **Give yourself time.** Start to get excited a couple of hours before your speech. I have found that waiting until the last minute isn't as effective. That inner voice is strong and needs time to warm up.
- ▶ **Don't be discouraged.** It may not work the first time. For me, it didn't work until the third time I tried.

The brain is powerful, especially the inner voice that tells us we are nervous. The good news is that same inner voice is something that we can control. With practice you can make those nerves work for you and make your next speech the best one yet.

Des Moloney is a member of Rockland Toastmasters in Blauvelt, New York.



be all alone, then I'll get sad and depressed." Our brain can come up with all sorts of scary scenarios when we're stressed, and our body reacts as if each of those thoughts may come true. However, when a repeated action consistently leads to a good outcome, our brain encodes the process, which creates a new habit. If you form enough good habits in public speaking, you can habituate your stage fright, says Banerjee.

We can create new habits by following the three-step process put forth by Charles Duhigg, author of *The Power of Habit*: cue, routine, and reward. I tried this technique with a client whose stage fright made him lose his voice during a first performance. Afterward, we created a new cue for his upcoming shows: Holding an amethyst crystal during the performance would remind my client to stay calm and present. We then practiced a new routine: Pause, breathe, touch the crystal, and say, "You've got this." At the second show, he nailed it, providing the reward for his cue and routine. By the third

and fourth shows, my client had formed new habits and reported having some fun with his performance.

"It's perfectly okay to be imperfect."

—ANWESHA BANERJEE, DTM, PH.D.

Although facing any fear can be scary, the growth and resilience we develop along the way is worth it. Banerjee reports that the increased self-confidence she's gained in public speaking enables her to speak up in situations that she would never have in the past. She can confidently hold a conversation in any context, and as a result, her personal and professional network has grown. But facing your fear of public speaking requires effort. Hopefully, the advice in this article is more reliable than my father's advice to me: "Just imagine everyone in the audience is naked." Luckily, I joined Toastmasters, and everyone gets to keep their clothes on.

Kristen Hamling, Ph.D., is a trauma and positive psychologist and a Toastmaster in Whanganui, New Zealand. She is the founder of Wellbeing Aotearoa, which focuses on trauma-informed well-being practices. A facilitator, coach, and researcher, she has also served in the Australian Army Reserve. Learn more on her [website](#).

Maximize Your Meeting Role Lineup

From Quiz Masters to Mystery Greeters, some clubs are adding non-traditional roles.

BY KATE MCCLARE, DTM

Visit St. Vladimir Toastmasters in Toronto and you can watch the Quiz Master test members' listening skills. At Friends Club Toastmasters in Manama, Bahrain, the Mystery Greeter will make sure you're welcomed warmly. Sign on to the Online Presenters Club for the Watcher's tips on your use of the virtual meeting space.

You may find members performing similar duties at other Toastmasters meetings, but you won't find these roles listed in *The Navigator* or Toastmasters International's other official handbooks. They're among many non-traditional roles that add fresh ways of developing members' skills.

There's no requirement that functionaries be limited to the traditional Ah-Counter, General Evaluator, and timer described in the organization's handbooks. If your meeting agenda is starting to feel routine and predictable, adding a custom role or two is a simple way to spice things up. Here's how a number of clubs add their own signature.

Educational Roles

Some roles are added to dig a little deeper into the education program. Dublin South Toastmasters, in Dublin, Ireland, assigns a

member to briefly explain a Pathways path in a minute or so.

"We found it very important, as Toastmasters was transitioning from the traditional education program to Pathways, to communicate with members around what their options are and what the different paths mean from an educational perspective," says Vice President Membership Peter Golden.

Since members had a number of questions about Pathways last year (when it became Toastmasters' official education program), this meeting role was highly beneficial, Golden adds, noting that many club members chose their path from the Pathways descriptions provided in each meeting.

Speakers Forum, an advanced club in Northern California, is one of many that added the Education Minute Master (EMM). "The EMM gives a short talk, ideally two to three minutes, on some educational topic," says club member George Marshall, DTM. "Topics have included how to write the beginning or end of a speech, advice on presentation techniques, and explaining some aspect of club procedures.

"The members learn something about the offered topic, and the EMM gets to



practice doing a succinct information session. Any member is eligible to do these, but it is usually an officer or one of the more experienced members."

Speakers Forum also has an Evaluation Leader, a different take on the General Evaluator. The Evaluation Leader facilitates a round-robin feedback session—where all or many members offer comments rather than just one evaluator—after each speaker. Like many other clubs, Speakers Forum also has a Joke Master (more on that later).

Friends Club, the Toastmasters group in Bahrain, assigns a Leadership Evaluator to monitor how well members practice leadership skills. The evaluator chooses a leadership skill such as critical thinking, time management, or mentoring, and gives general feedback on its use in the meeting.



They'll Be Watching You (and Listening)

Friends Club is one of many that assign members to keep their eyes (and ears) open during meetings. “We have a Mystery Greeter tasked to report if all members were welcoming and friendly during the meeting,” says Nomel Gilonos, DTM, a Friends Past President. “The Mystery Greeter checks if members help create a positive first impression for all guests and members.”

Center Berlin Toastmasters in Germany has had a Listener role since forming in 2015. “The Listener role is a well-established tradition in Berlin clubs,” says Club President Mascha Logačeva. “It is a challenging role which helps us develop the skill of attention to detail.” The Listener quizzes members to see how well they listened to each speaker. “It brings a lot of energy to our meetings. Everyone shouts out their answers” (after unmuting their Zoom microphones).

“The Listener role is a well-established tradition in Berlin clubs. It is a challenging role which helps us develop the skill of attention to detail.”

—MASCHA LOGAČEVA

Center Berlin Listeners has taken various approaches, including that of one member who structured the session like a game of *Jeopardy!*—the member shared the answers and the rest of the club had to come up with the questions.

Quiz Master is a coveted role at St. Vladimir Toastmasters, in Ontario, Canada, says Club Secretary Matthew Kleinosky, DTM. Near adjournment, members are quizzed about various aspects of the meeting.

“Members enjoy the friendly competitive energy, the creativity of the Quiz Master, and the chance to evaluate their own listening in the meeting,” he says. The weekly quiz, he adds, “raises the energy of the meeting by encouraging all to participate in answering.”

The member who serves as Quiz Master stretches their analytic skills, says Kleinosky. “It requires quick processing of a significant amount of content to create a wide-ranging, yet concise, set of questions.”

Online Feedback

Many clubs have added a Body Language Monitor to their meetings; Online Presenters, whose founders are based in District 47 (South Florida and the Bahamas), evolved that to a role called the Watcher.

David F. Carr, DTM, who led Online Presenters to charter in 2017, says body language may be more limited online, “but there are lots of other issues with how you present yourself visually. How well is your picture framed within the webcam? If you are using body language such as hand gestures, are you keeping them within the frame? How’s your lighting? Is what we see in the background helping or hurting your presentation? If you’re using visual aids, are you using them effectively? The Watcher takes notes on all those things and gives a report at the end of the meeting.”

The Online Presenters club also assigns a Chat Monitor to assist the

Toastmaster of the Day and report technical difficulties as well as interesting, useful, or amusing items. The Chat Monitor forwards questions posted to the chat window for the speakers.

Just for Fun—Mostly

Non-traditional roles like Joke Master, a commonly assigned task, often serve as a simple, lower-pressure role for nervous newcomers. “It gives the member the chance to practice delivering a joke, including delivering the punch line and punch word for best effect,” says Marshall, of Speakers Forum. “Any member can do this role. When the Joke Master is successful, the room fills with laughter, and it does indeed lighten the mood.”

St. Vladimir Toastmasters uses a Joke Master, and also devised The Last Word to go out on a lighter note.

“Each member taking this role prepares a 60- to 90-second speech or final thought that closes the meeting,” says Kleinosky. “Sometimes it is on a subject that the member cares about; sometimes it’s humorous; sometimes it’s informed by things which just happened in the meeting. We find that it is always an interesting, popular, and effective way to end our meetings.” **T**

Kate McClare, DTM, is a professional copywriter and editor. She is Club President of Miami Advanced Toastmasters in Miami, Florida, and hopes one day to be named Snack Master.

Member Achievements

Stories of success in speech contests, careers, speaking events, and earning designations.

Monica Toisenegila, DTM

Komuniti Toastmasters • Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea



Be the Change Wherever You Are

I am from Papua New Guinea, and in August 2020, I believe I became the first-ever Papua New Guinean national to earn the Distinguished Toastmaster designation.

My encounter with Toastmasters began in 2014 when a senior executive at my employer asked me to charter a Toastmasters club in the company so employees could better respond to customer service feedback.

I helped set up the corporate club—Steamies Toastmasters—and through the club, schools in the country participated in the Youth Leadership Program and Speechcraft. We also began an initiative for school debates on World Environment Day, an annual event that has been in place for the last six years.

Through my experience in Toastmasters, I have gained confidence and taken on leadership roles, both professionally and personally. I have hosted and facilitated Speechcraft courses for young women and nonprofit organizations, and for female politicians to help prepare them for their political campaigns. Toastmasters is helping to break down barriers and more and more women are courageous and able to speak in public. Toastmasters training is empowering and giving confidence to many women in this country.

I am grateful for the immense benefits I have received as a member. My network has expanded globally, and I have made international friends through my Toastmasters journey.



Tom Dowd, DTM

TD Legendary Leaders Toastmasters • Camden, Maine



Toastmasters Skills Transfer to Tobogganing

In early 2009, I was approached to be an announcer for the U.S. National Toboggan Championships. I didn't know what I was getting myself into, but I agreed. After a couple years, I took over the full-time duties and have been at the microphone for every National Toboggan Championships since.

Who is the audience? There are over 400 teams vying for the national championship. These wooden sleds can travel as fast as 40 miles per hour down a 400-foot wooden toboggan chute in a race that typically only lasts eight to 10 seconds. There are as many as 8,000 spectators from as far as Hawaii and Australia.

I take pride in my ability to use voice inflections and strategic pauses, and to banter back and forth with the crowd. After 11 years of announcing, I've learned to individualize the messaging to the teams and crowds that come and go throughout the day. This isn't easy when I speak for 15-20 hours over two days. Preparation is important for any emcee of an event. This includes running through the team names ahead of time, doing research for entertaining cultural references that can make people chuckle, and never forgetting the tradition of how we got here in the first place.

Once a year I can break away from being shy and introverted to be the "Voice of the National Toboggan Championships." Kennebec Valley Toastmasters in Augusta, Maine, and TD Legendary Leaders Toastmasters in Falmouth, Maine, gave me the tools to relate to the audience, adapt on the fly, and tell stories to keep people entertained. As long as I have a little serendipity and a major shot of confidence, I'm not sure there is any other place I would rather be on a cold February weekend.



Mary Hiland

Gahanna Toastmasters Club • Gahanna, Ohio



Blind Toastmaster Offers Advice

Presenting before an audience of any number, I mentally review the lessons I learned as a Toastmaster of 15 years: Begin with a catchy opening, use vocal variety, make eye contact, and capitalize on all the other skills I practiced over the years.

Being a blind Toastmaster has taught me to master a few other skills. For example, if you're totally blind, fake the eye contact. Pay attention to where that laugh came from and look that way. Then focus on another spot. Try to memorize, because watching you read Braille can be distracting. Practice approaching and leaving the lectern or the stage with poise and dignity, either with assistance or independently. Use secret props to stay facing the audience without hanging onto the lectern. For speech contests, I used a small throw rug, which I placed in front of the lectern, and I always had at least one foot touching it.

For regular meetings, learn the names that go with every voice. When you are the evaluator, be honest about your blindness and ask your speaker where they are so you can direct your remarks to that person specifically.

I am grateful to the Gahanna Toastmasters Club for giving me the confidence to write two books (*The Bumpy Road to Assisted Living: A Daughter's Memoir* and *Insight Out: One Blind Woman's View of Her Life*) and to enjoy promoting them with book readings. I recruit an assistant to do the reading part, because I'm not a very good Braille reader. I hold the talk together with stories and segues. I usually perch on a stool while my reader stands, thus providing visual as well as vocal variety. I love performing. Thanks to Toastmasters, I can.

Khalifa Baisden

Inspired Speakers Toastmasters Club • Tacarigua, Trinidad and Tobago



18-year-old Conquers Speech Contest

A brief confession: Up until I was almost 18 years old, I had never heard of Toastmasters. Now, past my 18th birthday, I am honored to be the 2019 National Toastmasters Speech Champion of Trinidad and Tobago and the second-place winner in the region quarterfinals, which was held in Kralendijk, Bonaire, Caribbean Netherlands.

It has been a remarkable journey. Just six months after I joined Toastmasters, I earned first place in the Trinidad and Tobago contest, and one month later, I represented my country in the Caribbean leg of the competition. Through mentorship and club evaluations I grew steadily in confidence and delivery, and I began believing more in my own innate creativity and innovativeness.

I had to be innovative to even compete in the region quarterfinals, as I was in the middle of my Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations for school. I received official approval to take my exam outside of my home country, where the contest was taking place. It took me 48 hours to arrive for the competition, but I made it in time for the contest. However, due to my flight schedule, I had to leave for the airport immediately after the contest—a taxi waited just outside the doors for me. I missed many of the contest events, but I had to make it to another school exam back in Trinidad!

Attending and competing in the contest was an invaluable learning experience. I have used the early success I have found in Toastmasters to build my confidence in my communication ability and discovered the benefits to be gained from commitment, discipline, and sacrifice. I'm glad I met you, Toastmasters. Thanks a million! **T**



Do you have a Toastmasters success story you'd like to share about yourself or another member? Write it in fewer than 300 words and send with a high-resolution photo to submissions@toastmasters.org.

A Word on Awards

Forget the trophy. The important thing is to look like you deserve it.

BY JOHN CADLEY

I should get an award. How many times have you said that to yourself? If you're my plumber, you probably said it the day you kept a straight face while I, with my balding head, expressed shock at how the bathroom sink could have possibly gotten clogged with a man's hairpiece. Driving home, I can hear him chuckle and say: *Man, I should get an award ...*

Or if, heaven forbid, you're my family doctor and must pretend to take me seriously when I ask if athlete's foot can be fatal. When I leave, I know he's wondering, *Where's my Oscar?*

Unfortunately, tradesmen and physicians don't get awards for doing hard jobs made even harder by characters like me. But they can win other awards—and so can you! The bowling league, the club golf tournament, the Garden Club Prize Petunia competition, the Good Citizenship Award, Salesperson of the Year, Apple Pie Contest at the State Fair, the local 5K Walk-a-Thon—all opportunities for *you* to be recognized for superior performance. If the plaque or trophy is simply handed to you on the spot, you're home free. More often than not, however, it requires you to attend some sort of dinner at which you will be called up to accept your award and “say a few words.” This is when the ceremony turns into a dream to cherish or a nightmare to forget, depending upon what you say and how you say it.

Let's start with the basics. As you rise from your table and approach the stage, don't trip and fall. Nervous people tend to do this, and as sympathetic as they may be, the audience will find it hard to see you

as distinguished when you're lying on the floor with fruit cocktail in your hair. Next, don't cry. It may be an emotional moment for you, but for everyone else it's time for dessert and coffee, which they will not enjoy if they have to watch a grown person sob over *Grandiflora petunias*.

A little humility is fine, but excessive sentimentality is like forcing the audience to eat a sheet cake.

Assuming you've avoided the above pitfalls, accept your statue, and approach the microphone—and again, watch the nervousness. You want to speak into the microphone, not the statue. Then thank those who have helped you achieve this distinction—up to a point. Mentioning your supportive spouse and a few mentors is fine. Acknowledging every helpful person in your life back to the doctor who delivered you is going too far. Nobody cares. Really. Nobody. Not even the doctor. Keep it short but not too short. A quick, curt “Thank you” is brief but it shows a certain lack of appreciation, as if a waitress just served you a hamburger. Rather, take a few minutes to express your gratitude, acknowledge your worthy competitors, say something self-deprecating (the world loves a humble winner), and get off the stage—without tripping. Avoid the temptation to say you don't deserve this esteemed honor. It's like telling the awards committee

they have lousy judgment. On the other hand, don't say you *do* deserve the award. Nothing ruins a pleasant social gathering like someone holding a piece of engraved plexiglass over their head and shouting, “It's about time!”

Don't be saccharine or fawning. As mentioned, a little humility is fine, but excessive sentimentality is like forcing the audience to eat a sheet cake. And NO POLITICS! If you want to see men and women in tuxedos and evening gowns attacking each other with table centerpieces, telling them who to vote for is the way to do it.

So far I've talked about receiving an award, but let's not forget that someone has to give it—i.e., the presenter—and that person could be you. There is an art to this as well. First and foremost, you must conceal your seething resentment at not winning the award yourself. This takes real talent, and if you can pull it off you deserve an Academy Award in the Best Insincere Performance category. Briefly introduce yourself and don't include any post-nominal honorifics like “Ph.D.” or “Esq.” to suggest you're just as worthy. Sum up the criteria for the award, tell a funny anecdote about the honoree (funny ha-ha, not funny you-stink), present the award, and then join in the applause as the person of the hour leaves the stage. And hope they trip. 📺

John Cadley is a former advertising copywriter, freelance writer, and musician living in Fayetteville, New York. Learn more at www.cadleys.com.



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CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - BO BENNETT, DTM

You might know Bo as the creator of FreeToastHost, the host of the Toastmasters Podcast, or the Founder of eBookIt.com. Or perhaps you never heard of the guy. Either way, you will enjoy his latest book, *Some Really Personal, Yet Entertaining Stories From My Life That You Will Enjoy and May Even Find Inspiring*.

What is a "normal childhood?" Does it include almost being murdered by your sister with an ax? Speeding around town in the back of a station wagon because your mom is chasing an "alien spaceship"? Being busted by the police for intent to light a pond on fire? Tackling your mom to the ground and wrestling a knife out of her hand because she was trying to kill your dad? While my stories may be unique, readers will be able to relate to the broader themes that are part of a normal childhood such as sibling rivalry, eccentric parents, doing stupid things, and frequently preventing one's parents from literally murdering each other.

Although some of the subject matter is not something one would generally laugh at, you have my permission to laugh. Social rules don't apply here; my rules do. It works for me, and who knows, after reading the stories from my past, you might be inspired to see your own screwed up past in a more humorous light.

Some Really Personal, Yet Entertaining Stories From My Life That You Will Enjoy and May Even Find Inspiring by Bo Bennett is available in ebook, paperback, and audio, at 

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