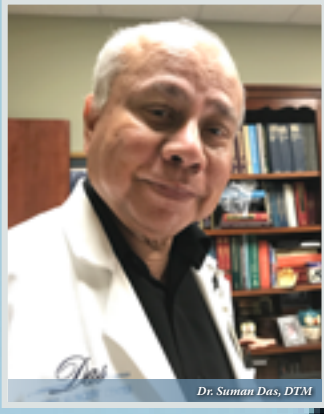


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Celebrate the Positives of the Past Year!

The end of the 2020–2021 Toastmasters year is almost here. This year has been unlike any other—it has been a year that tested the resiliency of all of us, and one in which many sacrifices were made: from in-person meetings and conferences, to in-person Mid-year Training and Convention. It was a year where we all seemed to be glued to the computer a little more than we were used to. We have all been a witness to history. Yet, rather than focusing on what we have lost, let's celebrate our successes.

As Molière once said, “The greater the obstacle, the more glory in overcoming it.”

As a new member, did you deliver your Ice Breaker speech, taking the first step in developing and strengthening your communication skills? If so, congratulations! That first step is the longest stride on your path. Maybe you completed your first, second, or even fifth path in Pathways. Think back to July 1, 2020, and reflect on the improvements you have made in your communication and leadership skills. Celebrate all that you have accomplished.

Take time to celebrate you, your accomplishments, and your resiliency.

Leaders developed a new set of skills. Toastmasters leaders had the distinction of navigating an entire year through a global pandemic, developing leadership skills that no one had before. Celebrate what you learned and the skills you gained.

Did you become a Zoom-setter, traveling to clubs around the world, participating in meetings, meeting new people, and learning about new cultures? Maybe you even delivered a speech, provided an evaluation, or participated in Table Topics at a faraway club, unique opportunities that arose from our current environment. Celebrate being a part of making the world a little smaller and decreasing the distance between us.

I personally had the privilege of joining in memorable events, such as witnessing the Dasmariñas City Toastmasters in the Philippines celebrate the induction of 11 new members during a single meeting; seeing MNI Speakers become the first club to charter on the island of Monserrat; and participating in club anniversary celebrations with other outside members from around the world.

There may have been times during this Toastmasters year when things seemed dark, but it was during these times that each of you became the light for others. You continued to be there for one another, offering support and encouragement. Take time to celebrate you, your accomplishments, and your resiliency.

My first “Viewpoint” in September 2020 was titled, “Undeterred, Unwavering, Unstoppable ... We Are Toastmasters!” Every one of you proved that statement to be true. Thank you.

Richard E. Peck, DTM
International President



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Below are a few posts and comments from [Facebook's](#) Official Toastmasters International Members Group that may help clubs across the world or spark some inspiration.

Virtual Travelers

Cynthia Stott, DTM, of Heart2Heart and Leaders Worldwide clubs in San Francisco, California, posted,

“Attention world travelers! Have you virtually traveled to other Toastmasters clubs around the world? What was your experience?”

It is great to meet new people and discover how other clubs work.

Fred Eijkenboom • Rotterdam, Netherlands

I like to visit our Spanish-speaking clubs. The feedback and general evaluation sections are often incredibly detailed and top-notch. I invite everyone to visit our Spanish English club, Los Oradores of Sacramento in California, for a lovely evening of fellowship and support. We enjoy welcoming visitors from around the world who can access us because we speak both languages.

Diwata Fonte • Sacramento, California

It's incredible to meet and learn from my Toastmasters family around the world without the travel expenses. I love it!

Colette Hughes • Sterling Heights, Michigan

Absolutely amazing. It gave me a better understanding of the universal audience.

I also got some interesting anecdotes about the cultural differences across the globe.

Gayatri Deshmukh • Nashik, Maharashtra, India

Yes, and you should! It's fun to see other clubs and how they do things. You can give them suggestions and invite them to your club. You can take new ideas back to your own club.

Kristy Hopper • Tucson, Arizona

We are all the same in values yet so different in styles we communicate!

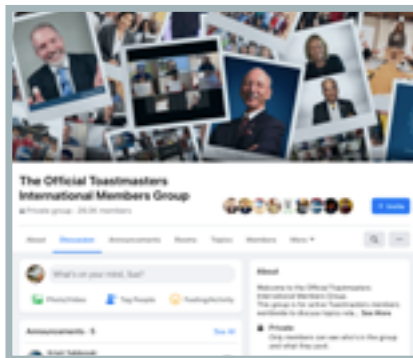
Bhanu Dabadi, DTM • Thapagaun, Kathmandu, Nepal

I have visited the U.S., Canada, U.K., Sweden, Slovakia, India, Australia, and Botswana. Every one is a different experience and I've enjoyed them all!

Karen Armour, DTM • Johannesburg, South Africa

Yes, I love to travel to other Toastmaster clubs virtually and have made the most awesome connections.

Laurina Bergqvist • Hassleholm, Sweden



Winning Speech Tips

Alexis Santacruz, DTM, of Nuance Toastmasters Club of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, asked,

“Can you give your best tip to write and deliver a winning speech?”

Come up with a great analogy for a life lesson, couple it with a personal story and anecdotes, and you've got a winner!

David Levy • Cincinnati, Ohio

Rehearse. Rehearse. Rehearse.

Glenn Ross • Austin, Texas

Fine-tune, memorize, and rehearse your open and close. Rehearse the whole speech no less than six times, using a stopwatch to ensure it is inside the time parameters. If it's not, make adjustments. Rehearse to people you trust and who can give you honest feedback. Also, rehearse any body language, tone of voice, and use of visual aids.

Chris Rigby • Auckland, New Zealand

Words should flow from your heart and not your mouth.

G M Subramanyam • Thane, Maharashtra, India

Be authentic. Even if your idea or presentation is abstract.

Demetrius Pagan • Niceville, Florida

Meaningful message delivered in an entertaining manner.

Asghar Rana • Colombo, Sri Lanka

If it's your message, you can't lose with it regardless of where you place.

Robert Bunn • Cedartown, Georgia



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Hear the latest episodes from [The Toastmasters Podcast](#).



Listen to advice from the author of *Toastmasters Toolbox* on how to find speech topics.



Catch up on the most recent [webinars](#).



Public Speaking in a Multilingual World

Communicating across borders takes more than just learning the language—you must speak the culture. Listen to an exclusive podcast with trainer Carol Bausor as she encourages you to brush up on a foreign language and take advantage of online meetings around the globe.



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Time For a Check-up

How healthy is your club? It might be time to take its pulse. Read this article for tips and watch videos for inspiration to keep your club strong.

Miss Something From a Previous Issue?



We have you covered. Visit the [magazine archive](#) on the Toastmasters website, pick a month, and click on “View web version” for the online edition or “View PDF” to download the full issue.

▶ MEMBER MOMENT

Good Aim

Pool champ spreads her enthusiasm for the sport.

BY PAUL STERMAN

Jackie Karol is talking about the game of pool and she's on a roll. In a recent interview over Zoom, the Portland, Oregon, Toastmaster demonstrates shot-making form ("use your arm like a pendulum"), describes the virtues of this table sport—with its caroming balls, tricky angles, and mental challenges—and even shares colorful anecdotes about its history.

To wit: Frenchman Francois Mingaud, one of the game's pioneers, so astonished early 19th century spectators with his dazzling spin shots that he was accused of performing witchcraft.

That was among the nuggets Karol included in a Toastmasters speech she once gave about "all the different, amazing, unusual events that have happened in pool." When it comes to pool wizardry, Karol knows of what she speaks. She has been an elite player in the sport, competing in televised events, playing on the International Pool Tour, and winning national championships in 8-ball pool and in trick shots.

She has also used her pool savvy in a variety of entrepreneurial avenues, leading team-building events and social programs, operating pool leagues, performing trick-shot demonstrations, designing pool curriculum, and running an academy—what she calls "Pool School."

"Toastmasters has helped tremendously," says Karol, who belongs to a Portland club composed of members of both Toastmasters International and Rotary International. "Many of my Pool School classes are in group settings, and the corporate team-building events, parties, and employee meetings can be 50- to 100-plus people, where I have to use a microphone so that everyone can hear me. It's important that I speak clearly and am able to hold everyone's attention."

Take Your Cue

A pool table is covered in cloth and has rails and six table pockets. Using a cue stick, you strike a white cue ball with the intent of strategically knocking other, variously numbered balls into the pockets. Karol's dad was an outstanding pool player, and he started his daughter young.

"My dad bought me my first pool cue stick when I was 3, and I would sit on a stool so I could reach the table," she says. "My dad was a great teacher of fundamentals ... We definitely spent a lot of time playing together, and he really helped me a lot with the mental part of the game, like focusing and relaxing."

Part of what intrigued her were the intellectual challenges of pool. Her dad, a nuclear engineer, taught her the science behind



the sport, and she relished figuring out intricate shot angles and mastering strategy.

"There is so much physics and variables involved—colliding spheres, cushions, temperature, new or used cloth, etcetera," says Karol, who graduated college with a biology degree. "A player's brain has to calculate all of this and turn it into a precise motion with proper mechanics, follow-through, English [a type of spin], power and acceleration, and more."

Another challenge she embraced: competing against men in a male-dominated sport.

Karol communicates her passion for the game through teaching. Richard Parker, a Chico, California, college professor who has taken lessons from her, says Karol excels in that role. "She possesses the one most important feature shared by good communicators: She knows what she's talking about!"

Pool and Public Speaking

Karol sees definite parallels between pool and public speaking: Both require mental focus, preparation, and lots of practice. Even mirrors are a shared tool: In pool, she says, you can use "mirror training"—watching yourself practice your shot-making form in front of the mirror—just as speakers rehearse in front of the mirror to improve.

These days Karol is putting her science skills to work in a new professional pursuit: medical device sales representative. It's one more field where communication skills are an asset.

But whatever line of work she is in, pool tables will never be far away.

"It's been a great career," Karol says of the game, "and will always be a big part of my life."

To see Jackie Karol perform some of her nifty trick shots, visit www.angelofbilliards.com.

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

▶ ROTARY/TOASTMASTERS COLLABORATION

Australia Event Highlights Women’s Day

Rotary International and Toastmasters International members in Australia celebrated International Women’s Day by teaming up for a special event. More than 60 people attended the hybrid in-person/online program, which featured a panel of speakers and a message to the group from New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern.

The event raised more than \$1,700 for Rotary’s Give Every Child a Future project, which provides vaccinations for childhood diseases to children across nine Pacific Island countries, including New Zealand and Australia.

The meeting took place March 8, presented jointly by the Parramatta Rotary Club and Parramatta Toastmasters. (Parramatta is a suburb of Sydney.) Rotary International’s South Pacific and Philippines Office also collaborated on the program. Monique Tonna, DTM, Director of District 90 (which covers Toastmasters clubs in New South Wales, Australia), was the guest speaker.

Reflecting on her speech, Tonna says, “My main theme was that I am a leader first and that I happen to be female.”

Last year, Toastmasters and Rotary officially formed a [strategic alliance](#) and encouraged clubs in both organizations to pursue local collaborations as well. The Women’s Day event reflected that spirit

of partnership, says Tonna, a member of three clubs in New South Wales.

“Both Toastmasters and Rotary attendees were very excited about the collaboration,” she says, “and I did get asked a number of questions about what clubs can do to foster and expand the relationship between the two organizations.”

The in-person activities were followed by an online broadcast from the Rotary Club of Melbourne, which holds an annual International Women’s Day event. The broadcast included a panel of speakers and a message from Prime Minister Ardern, which touched on women in leadership and what the world will be like for women in the future.

Tonna says she and other Toastmasters and Rotary leaders will continue exploring future opportunities in the region for collaboration between the two organizations.



District 90 Director Monique Tonna

▶ PRESENTATION SKILLS

10 Tips from Toastmasters International

1 Avoid speaking in monotone. Use inflection to signal significant points in your speech and keep the audience engaged.

2 Step up. If you haven’t filled a certain meeting role in your club yet, make it a point to do so at an upcoming meeting. It will not only get you out of your comfort zone, you’ll also gain a better understanding of the overall club experience.

3 Manage your time. Serving as a [timer](#) at your club meetings and giving speeches with time limits will help you master time management skills that will help you in all areas of your life.

4 Speak your case. Sometimes public speaking has an audience of one, such as a traffic court judge or customer service representative. Presenting a well-organized argument can help you win your case.

5 PREP (Point, Reason, Example, Point). Start your speech with a clear point. Explain your reason for choosing the subject. Illustrate your point with examples. End with a clear point that wraps up the speech.

6 Use common language. Impress your audience through your presentation and mastery of your topic, not by using complicated words. For example: Say “help” instead of “assist” or “use” instead of “utilize.”

7 Don’t get lost in translation. If you deliver a speech in your second (or even third) language, use humor, metaphor, and analogy sparingly, as these don’t always translate well into other languages.

8 Take jokes for a test drive. If you want to include a joke in your speech, write several options and test them out with your family, coworkers, or club members to see how they are received.

9 Use people’s names. People love to be addressed by their name in conversation. To help you remember someone’s name, be sure to say it back to them to verify you have it right, and try to use it several times to make it stick.

10 Keep a journal. When you get ideas for speech topics, jot them down in a journal so you have them to refer to when you’re tapped for ideas and need inspiration.

▶ **SNAPSHOT**

In December 2020, Toastmasters in Division N, District 98, hosted a meeting onboard the Mazi Metro in Nagpur, Maharashtra, India. After nine months of online meetings, the unique venue was a welcome change and attracted many members. The metro was recently introduced to the city and not many people have used it, so Division Director Mayuri Assudani, DTM, knew it would be a space members would feel physically comfortable in, while adhering to mask-wearing and social distancing guidelines. “An aerial view of the city was an added bonus,” she says.

Members volunteered to take on roles and carry the club gavel, banner, timer cards, and certificates for the hour-long trip around

the city. Everyone wore Toastmasters T-shirts, badges, or name tags, and some members posted photos of the meeting on social media and recorded Instagram Live videos. Assudani says, “We learned to work together in a team. There was excellent coordination and cooperation from each member, and of course, we made memories.”

She recommends that clubs across the world find ways to enhance their members’ experiences while also respecting COVID-19 guidelines. “It is important to remember to not be in a crowd, wear masks, and maintain social distance, but the joy of meeting in person is unparalleled.”

▶ **TOASTMASTERS NEWS****2021 Virtual Convention**

Mark your calendars for Toastmasters International’s 2021 Virtual Convention, taking place August 23-28, 2021. Check our [Convention webpage](#) frequently for more information.

2021 International Speech Contest Semifinals

This year, following the region quarterfinals, two contestants from each region will be randomly assigned to one of four International Speech Contest Semifinals, which will be held during the Toastmasters International Convention. The [regions for each semifinal](#) have been determined, so be on the lookout for updates regarding who will represent your region!

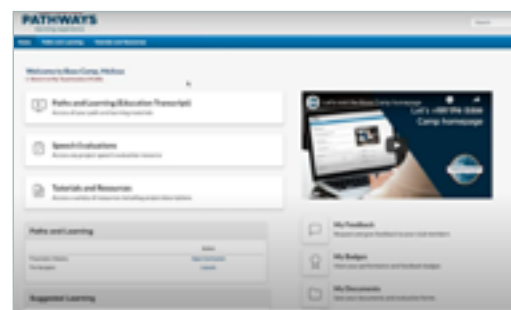
Working on Last-Minute Achievements for Your Club?

All submissions for the program year must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. Mountain Time on June 30. Submissions received on or after July 1, 12 a.m. Mountain Time will be applied to the 2021-2022 program year. Additional explanations of deadlines and submitting documents to World Headquarters are outlined in the [Distinguished Club Program Manual](#).

Pathways Video Tips

Visit Toastmasters International’s [YouTube channel](#) for helpful videos to enhance your Pathways experience.

From learning how to view badges to selecting and completing elective projects, these tutorials are available for anyone needing a refresher on Pathways’ Base Camp features.

**Customizable Club Zoom Background**

Take advantage of this [new Zoom background](#) that you can customize with your club name to show your club pride! Whether you’re visiting a club in another country or you’re expecting guests at your own meeting, use this background to highlight your club.



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 | SRI LANKA INSTITUTE OF MARKETING TOASTMASTERS CLUB** members in Colombo, Sri Lanka, pose with the digital edition of the *Toastmaster* at their club meeting.
- 2 | CHRISTOPHER KEITH ALMEIDA, DTM**, of Doha, Qatar, stands near the Great Pyramid of Giza, also known as the Pyramid of Khufu, in Cairo, Egypt, prior to the pandemic.
- 3 | ANKIT DASGUPTA, DTM**, of Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra, India, hikes to the peak of Kedarkantha Mountain in the Himalayas of India.
- 4 | DIMOND TALKERS CLUB** officers of Anchorage, Alaska, attend the 2020 Fur Rendezvous Celebration in Anchorage. Since 1935, this winter festival has featured cultural and sporting activities, town events, and winter fun.



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

Sailing in Uncharted Waters

Our newly chartered club faced bumpy weather but that didn't dampen our spirits.

BY SHENALI DIAS

The Bar Association of Sri Lanka Toastmasters Club, in Colombo, was chartered in June 2020, a bare handful of months after Sri Lanka emerged from a two-month pandemic lockdown. The country was gradually opening up again. The sun was shining, the birds were singing, and we were scrolling through Base Camp with glee.

Then COVID-19 numbers began to rise again. Areas of the country went into isolation. Public gatherings were banned. We suspended club meetings, waiting for the numbers to come back under control. A week swiftly became a month.

Our club stood at a crossroads. We had only conducted five in-person meetings since chartering. We were aware of our members' general discomfort with online presentations, as there had been poor response to the idea of holding a club Humorous Speech Contest online. So, in place of a club event, I was nominated to represent the club at the Area-level contest, and I admit I loathed the experience. Trying to be deliberately funny is generally excruciating, but attempting to do it while staring at an emotionless webcam was a new form of torture.

However, the Club Executive Committee was acutely aware of the hard truth. Our club mission was to improve the public speaking skills of attorneys and apprentices in a safe and supportive environment. Now, the question wasn't just whether we would lose momentum, but whether our club would fall apart before we properly started.

So regarding the possibility of online meetings, we asked ourselves, *If not now, when?* Then we set about the task of shifting to an online meeting format.



Shenali Dias

The first step was to minimize—through practice and training—the many things we knew could go wrong. The Executive Committee ran online sessions several days before meetings to help members set their laptops in the optimal position for their speeches. I found that my own trial-and-error experiences helped me share advice so that others' introduction to online meetings might be less painful than mine. For example, I found that when presenting online from a small space, it's helpful to have some objects on the floor behind me so I don't get carried away, bounce off the wall behind me, and forget my speech in surprise.

Each club officer led a three-member team, which turned out to be extremely beneficial. These teams gave members a

touchpoint and someone they could turn to for any issue. It helped remove the impersonal feel of online club activities.

Then came the development of an unexpected phenomenon. The feelings of disengagement with the audience that troubled me during the Area contest started to fade when I realized that after all my speeches, I was bombarded with WhatsApp messages of encouragement, praise, and constructive feedback from club members. The meetings may have been online but that did not stop our warm and supportive members from reaching out.

Of course, it was not always smooth sailing. I still recall how Club President Chamath Fernando would track the weather forecasts for our initial meetings and ask the Executive Committee to be prepared to step up at any moment in the event of a poor connection. To date, some meetings still turn into séances (*Are you there? Can you hear us?*) Nevertheless, our club's online meetings are thriving.

Every step of the way, we received the unstinting support of our sponsoring club, HNB Toastmasters Club, in Colombo, and members of the wider Toastmasters community, as well as the Bar Association of Sri Lanka. COVID-19 changed our lives and the way we approached Toastmasters, but it also helped us realize how people can come together to form a community.

You may be in uncharted waters but as long as all hands are on deck, you can always stay afloat. ■

SHENALI DIAS is Secretary of the Bar Association of Sri Lanka Toastmasters Club. She is an attorney-at-law and a junior counsel in the Law Chambers of Dr. Harsha Cabral, P. C., specializing in commercial and intellectual property litigation.



The Elusive Speech Topic

Four tips for finding the subject of your next great speech.

BY BILL BROWN, DTM

Sometimes the hardest step is the first one. I can write a speech just fine, but what do I speak on? Picking a topic can frequently be difficult. Where can we find the inspiration for a speech?

At times it's simple. Some of our Pathways projects define it for us. For instance, the project entitled "Understanding Your Communication Style" tells us to deliver a speech "about your communication style and its impact on your professional and/or personal relationships." That is pretty straightforward. But most projects aren't that specific. Where do you get your ideas? Here are four suggestions.

First, review why you joined Toastmasters in the first place. For me it was to test out various subjects as potential professional topics. I made a list of all my ideas, lined them up with the upcoming projects, and worked on each one in order.

What about you? Is there something in your reason for joining that suggests a speech topic? If you joined to become a better speaker for your job, are there job-related topics you can talk about?

Second, sometimes daily life suggests topics. We have two cats. And each one has its own way of communicating what it wants. My wife wrote a speech once on how cats communicate. She had a fun time writing it, and I think it is still her favorite speech.

The longer you are in Toastmasters, the more you are going to recognize a potential topic when it happens. Unfortunately, it rarely happens when you

are brainstorming on your next speech. It always seems to happen when you are out living life. When you have one of those "that would make a great speech" moments, make a quick note. If you don't write it down, you likely won't remember it.

Third, if you have ever been to an International Speech Contest, you have heard a number of inspirational personal stories that talk about lessons learned. Personal stories are a great source of ideas for speeches. I recommend that you start a list of personal stories and what they have taught you. Many of them won't be a topic for an entire speech, but they are great examples that you can use in a longer presentation.

The longer you are in Toastmasters, the more you are going to recognize a potential topic when it happens.

Stories are an excellent way to illustrate your points. They do a better job of connecting with your listeners than just about any other method.

There is an art to constructing a great story. If you select several for your club speeches, you will gain experience working and reworking your stories for maximum effectiveness. In fact, in Level 1 of Pathways, there is a project where you give a speech, get feedback, then rework that speech, incorporating the feedback. This might be an ideal place to tell a personal story.

And who knows, that speech may turn into a contest speech. Go for it. That is how you learn.

My fourth suggestion is a bit of a challenge. There is a saying—the best way to learn something is to teach it. That is because it forces you to learn it in detail. Is there a topic that you want to learn?

My wife and I just moved to a new home. Our front yard has several flower beds. Our backyard has a raised bed for vegetables. There is one problem. I can't grow anything. I like to joke that my last name is Brown for a reason. Yet I am in a situation where that needs to change. And we like the idea of growing some of our own veggies.

I found out that our local university offers a community-oriented class on gardening. I am now taking the class to, hopefully, learn how to keep plants alive for at least a week. There is a lot to learn, so perhaps I will speak on one of the topics. It would certainly force me to master at least one small area of the material.

Speech topics are everywhere. Coming up with ideas isn't the real problem in speech writing. It is recognizing them when they present themselves. And they rarely do that when you are thinking about them. Develop the skill of recognizing a great topic when you see it. Then your only problem will be which one to pick. That is a great problem to have. **T**

Bill Brown, DTM, is a speech delivery coach in Gillette, Wyoming. He is a member of Energy Capital Toastmasters in Gillette. Learn more at www.billbrownspeechcoach.com.

Counting on the Ah-Counter

The most effective functionaries go beyond “Gotcha!” in monitoring filler words and sounds.

BY KATE MCCLARE, DTM

Your speech is going great. The words are flowing, your voice rising and falling in all the right places. Suddenly, like a faucet that’s run dry—nothing! Your mind goes blank. *Oh no! What was I saying?*

You hear yourself emitting the two most feared sounds in a Toastmaster’s world:

“Um . . . uh . . .”

Those dreaded filler sounds: meaningless utterances blurted out to plug an unwanted silence. Merely embarrassing for the speaker, they can irritate and turn off the audience if you use them excessively (which some Toastmasters define as “one more than never”).

That makes the Ah-Counter one of the most valuable roles in any Toastmasters meeting. Clubs have some intriguing ways of taking the role beyond scorekeeper, using it as an opportunity to improve both speaking and listening skills. That’s what the role’s purpose has always been, after all.

The Ah-Counter Role

“The purpose of the Ah-Counter is to note any overused words or filler sounds used as a crutch by anyone who speaks during the meeting,” states the official Toastmasters description. The assigned functionary doesn’t just track filler sounds like *ah* and *um* but also listens for empty words like *so* and *well* and excessive use of *and* and *but*.

That’s a crucial distinction, says Sherry Washburn of Dayton Road Toastmasters in Ames, Iowa. “It’s important to remember that some of those fillers, such as *and*, *but*, and *so*, can be used properly without being filler words,” she says. “Be sure you count them only when they are being used as fillers.” Instead of automatically marking your notes when you hear what you think

is a filler word, listen for the context and decide whether it really is out of place.

How do you tell if a filler really is just a filler? Ask yourself if it adds anything of value or if the sentence would be diminished if it were removed.

For example, if you can cut out *basically* and not miss it, mark it as filler.

Making the Role Count

It’s important to deliver the [Ah-Counter report](#) in a positive, supportive way—just like any other evaluation. Maungakiekie Club in Auckland, New Zealand, combines the Ah-Counter and Grammarian roles into one, says member Mike Diggins, DTM. “I encourage [the functionary] to say they will stop counting after so many uses of a word and to look for those who used fillers much less than they did previously.”

It’s important to deliver the Ah-Counter report in a positive, supportive way—just like any other evaluation.

The Court of Blarney Toastmasters in Newmarket, Ontario, Canada, counts the total number of filler words by member and “those who use none are complimented,” says club member Jim Chapman.

Saved by the Bell—or Shamed?

Some clubs sound a bell or a clicker when a speaker utters a filler word; other clubs find bells and clickers distracting and intimidating. Clubs that used them pre-pandemic say they are effective because they provide immediate feedback. “It sounds harsh, but it isn’t,” says Terry Spencer, a member of

Davie Toastmasters in Davie, Florida. “Telling someone they said an *um* 45 minutes ago is worthless.” But there’s a method to making it work right, he cautions. “We don’t ding visitors or new members until they have given their Ice Breaker. We also tell the counter to be aggressive but if the speaker is new, to call off the dings if they are too frequent—particularly if they are leaving the person flustered.”

The move to online meetings has made some clubs stop using the bell or clicker, as the sound would force the Ah-Counter to take over the featured speaker spot on everyone’s screen. Instead, clubs are sending private chat messages to the speaker when they are finished or using visual cues during the speech such as holding up a sign or clicking on one of the reaction emojis at the bottom of the Zoom screen.

Catching What Counts

No matter how you catch and report those filler words and sounds, the Ah-Counter can be intimidating to new or shy members. It’s important to remember why the role matters.

“If a meeting is running over and time is short, we have the Ah-Counter list each person’s highest-used crutch word instead of listing them all,” says Marianne Ferrara, DTM, a member of Mercer’s Best Toastmasters in Lawrenceville, New Jersey. “We tell members if they can concentrate on reducing or eliminating even that one word, it can make a big difference.” **T**

Kate McClare, DTM, is President of Miami Advanced Toastmasters in Miami, Florida. She believes that every time the Ah-Counter rings the bell, a Toastmaster gets their wings.





Official Notice of Vote

Vote for the Board of Directors Candidates.

Your Officer and Director Candidates for the 2021-2022 Board of Directors

Toastmasters members will have the opportunity to vote for the International Officer and Director candidates of your choice.

The International Leadership Committee nominated International Officer candidates for the positions of International President-Elect,

First Vice President, and Second Vice President. International Director candidates were nominated for Regions 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, and 13. The Committee's selections are presented in accordance with the [Bylaws of Toastmasters International, Article VIII.](#)

Officer Candidates

To view details of each officer nominee's qualifications, please visit the Toastmasters International website at: www.toastmasters.org/OfficerCandidates



INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT-ELECT
Matt Kinsey, DTM



FIRST VICE PRESIDENT
Morag Mathieson, DTM



SECOND VICE PRESIDENT
Radhi Spear, DTM



SECOND VICE PRESIDENT
David Templeman, DTM

Director Candidates

To view details of each director nominee's qualifications, please visit the Toastmasters International website at: www.toastmasters.org/DirectorCandidates

From Region 1

Louisa Davis, DTM
E. Tyree Johnson, DTM

From Region 3

Michael J. Holian, DTM

From Region 5

Farzana Chohan, DTM
Monnica B. Rose, DTM

From Region 7

Elmer Hill, DTM
Dana G. Richard, DTM

From Region 9

Ronald Servant, DTM
Jeff Sobel, DTM

From Region 11

Nazeer Gazaq Alqasem, DTM
Rozy Rana, DTM
Ali Shahbaz Ali Shah, DTM

From Region 13

Thannimalai Letchumanan, DTM
Gauri Seshadri, DTM

It is the right and duty of all clubs to participate in the vote, either through their representatives or by proxy. Delegates may make additional nominations for International Officer and Director candidates.

Quotes of Note on How to Lead Others

The Toastmasters new program year begins next month! As new club leaders prepare to take on their roles and duties, consider these quotes on the nature, challenges, and value of leadership.



“You don’t lead by pointing and telling people some place to go.

You lead by going to that place and making a case.”

—Ken Kesey, American novelist

“The art of leadership is saying no, not saying yes.

It is very easy to say yes.”

—Tony Blair, former prime minister of the United Kingdom

“It is better to lead from behind and to put others in front, especially when you celebrate victory when nice things occur. You take the front line when there is danger. Then people will appreciate your leadership.”

—Nelson Mandela, former South African president and anti-apartheid hero

“The ability to learn is the most important quality a leader can have.”

—Padmasree Warrior, Indian American businessperson and technology executive



“Becoming a leader is synonymous with becoming yourself. It is precisely that simple and it is also that difficult.”

—Warren Bennis, American author

“Leadership is hard to define, and good leadership even harder. But if you can get people to follow you to the ends of the earth, you are a great leader.”

—Indra Nooyi, Indian American business executive and former chairperson and CEO of PepsiCo

“To handle yourself, use your head; to handle others, use your heart.”

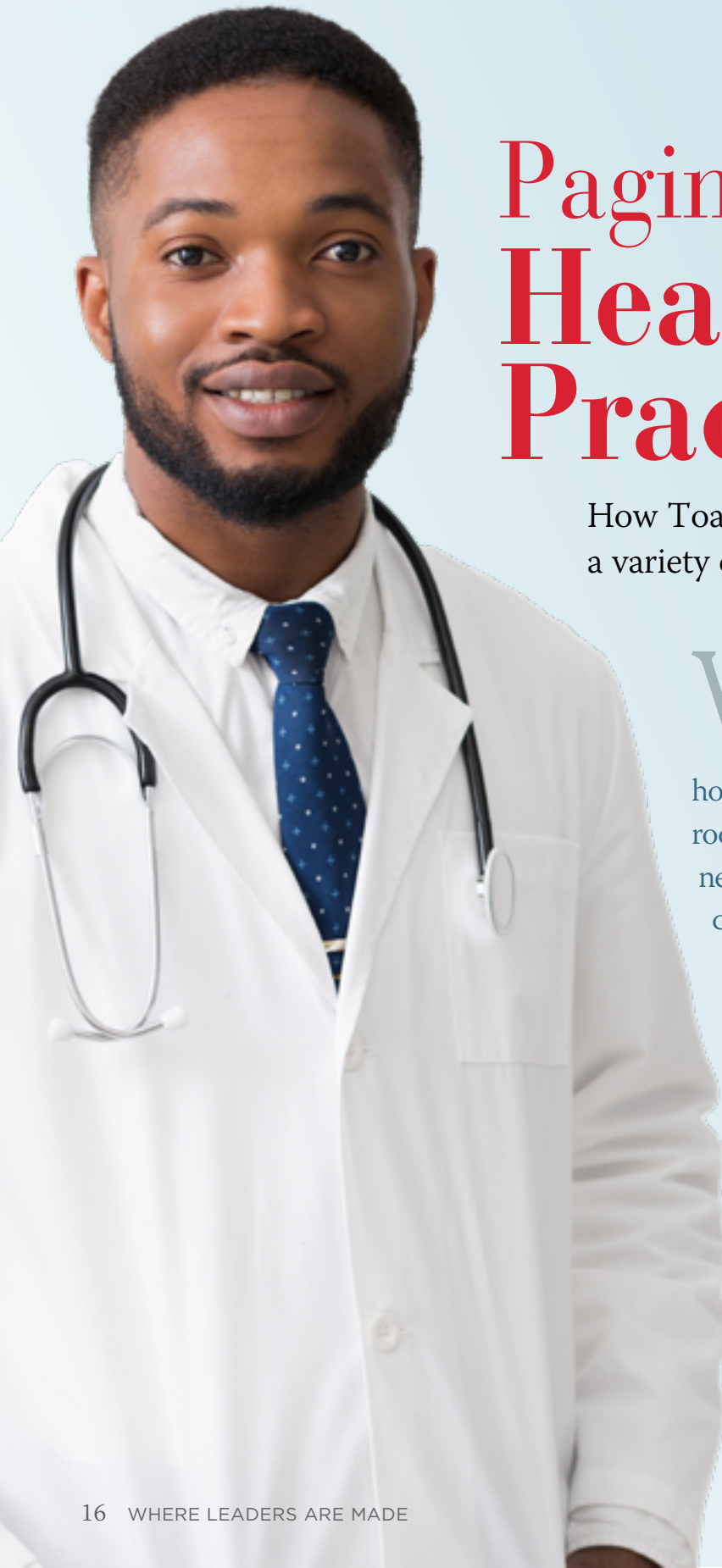
—Eleanor Roosevelt, United States first lady and social activist

“It’s okay to admit what you don’t know. It’s okay to ask for help. And it’s more than okay to listen to the people you lead—in fact, it’s essential.”

—Mary Barra, American businessperson and CEO of General Motors

“Humility is a great quality of leadership which derives respect and not just fear or hatred.”

—Yousef Munayyer, Palestinian American writer



Paging All Health-Care Practitioners!

BY EMILY SACHS

How Toastmasters communication skills help a variety of medical professionals.

When COVID-19 suddenly gripped New York City in March 2020, all eyes were on its overwhelmed hospitals. Inside a Brooklyn emergency room serving one of the most impacted neighborhoods, beds with critically ill patients cascaded into the hallways. Still more were lined up on stretchers waiting to be admitted.

Many staff were out sick and there was a shortage of equipment to protect those still able to work, like Dr. Shlomo Noskow, an emergency room physician who rationed his only N95 mask to make it last for days at a time. In respites at home between 12-hour shifts of what Noskow describes as “constant damage control” and extraordinary loss, he did what many across the world also did: He thought about unfinished goals.

As the nightly “clappy hour” of grateful New Yorkers thanking health-care workers began to wane in June, Noskow was hearing applause in a new form, over Zoom, and for a new reason: He had become a Toastmaster.

“Toastmasters was one of those things I’d been meaning to get serious about,” says Noskow, an advocate for education reform in his free time. “I want to be able to speak more confidently, more spontaneously, and just be able to be more fluid and more polished.”

Noskow, a member of Long Island University-Brooklyn Toastmasters, is part of a small contingent of Toastmasters working in medicine. Globally, about 5% of Toastmasters members report working in the health-care field. With such demanding and important professions, how can doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals benefit from Toastmasters? In many ways, as it turns out.

“I wanted to be able to speak more confidently, more spontaneously, and just be able to be more fluid and more polished.”

—DR. SHLOMO NOSKOW

The following Toastmasters demonstrate that lessons learned from delivering speeches and volunteering for leadership and mentorship roles have not only made them better in their jobs—but more aspirational individuals overall. From earning additional degrees and advancing policy change to pursuing second-act careers and passion projects, Toastmasters could be the best-kept secret in the proverbial medicine cabinet.

Critical Communication

Studies show that poor communication in medical care is the single biggest contributor to unnecessary errors, deaths, and lawsuits. Something as simple as mishearing similar-sounding medications or assuming an acronym is universally understood can have critical repercussions. Noskow says this was an oft-repeated lesson in medical school.

Being clear and concise and delivering a distinct and memorable point are hallmarks of the Toastmasters program. But Noskow says the biggest difference that Toastmasters has made in his job is that he has become a better listener.

“We have to try to connect with a patient really quickly and that’s a skill if you can listen to what they’re saying. That’s something we do in Toastmasters,” he says, noting this is especially



Dr. Shlomo Noskow (right) and a resident.

true with practice via Table Topics® and speech evaluations.

Table Topics inspired Dr. Suman Das, DTM, to join Toastmasters in 2015. A fellow physician and Toastmaster invited Das to a club meeting; he joined the next week. Das, who retired this year after 36 years as a plastic surgeon, also found that his ability to listen was enhanced by his Toastmasters training.

“Many people have a habit of interrupting. They won’t let other people finish. They interject. For me, it is so important to listen to my patients. To not interrupt when he or she is giving information. And that’s an art,” says Das, a member of Reaching Beyond Advanced Toastmasters, in Jackson, Mississippi.

Das’ medical career has spanned five countries and included a decade as a medical school professor. If he had found Toastmasters earlier, he says, he would have been a more effective lecturer, pausing more in his delivery and relying less on slides. This desire to teach and influence young people led him to design and execute a High Performance Leadership project in early 2020 to teach local high school students the mechanics of good speeches.

A Story to Tell

Cynthia Long, Ph.D., a pediatric surgical nurse in St. Petersburg, Florida, had already been a volunteer grief counselor for several years following the death of her husband when she sought out a Toastmasters club in 2014 to sharpen her storytelling. Within six months of joining, she had finished her first 10 speeches and felt called to further pursue her growing interest in communications. She soon found herself back in the classroom after 22 years away.

In December 2020, she earned her Ph.D. in communications with a focus on end-of-life dialogue. Toastmasters not only gave her an edge in the classroom, where professors noticed her comfort with public speaking, but her research gave Long an endless supply of speech topics.

Long accomplished this while continuing to serve as a club leader for St. Pete Beach Toastmasters and serving as a clinical leader in the operating room,



Dr. Suman Das, DTM

where she cares for her hospital’s youngest plastic surgery patients being treated for anything from cleft palates to jaw reconstructions.

“Toastmasters really develops you, not just in your public speaking but as a person. It develops your philosophies and passions and ideas. You’re able to formulate this to an audience because you’ve thought about these things and you’ve spoken about these things,” Long says. “It’s a hugely profound way to get to know yourself. No therapist could ever help me as much as Toastmasters has.”

Noskow, the New York doctor, is also hoping to use storytelling to help others. A product of ultra-Orthodox Jewish schools in Brooklyn and Israel, he had little exposure to anything but strict religious studies after age 12. By 21, with limited knowledge of classroom math, science, or English, he found he lacked marketable skills

“Toastmasters really develops you, not just in your public speaking but as a person. It develops your philosophies and passions and ideas.”

—CYNTHIA LONG, PH.D.



Cynthia Long, Ph.D.

for employment. He credits a love of learning, intense determination, and a subscription to *The Economist* for his remarkable ascension up the already steep path to becoming a physician.

His ultimate goal now is to be a more effective advocate and eliminate for others the educational handicaps he experienced. Among the specialized speaking acumen he hopes to develop are podcast appearances, panel discussions, and press conferences, all of which also happen to be Pathways speech projects.

Making the Time

Many Toastmasters find it difficult to carve out time to dedicate to local clubs. Health-care workers have the additional challenge of unpredictable schedules, depending on their specific medical field. Noskow says Toastmasters has been an easy fit since emergency medicine has more flexibility and he can ensure he doesn't have conflicts with club meetings. The current online format has been especially convenient, he says.

"I've seen how well spoken and experienced members of my club are and it makes me want to stick with it. Everyone's been so helpful, I'm learning so much," Noskow says. "I can tell I'm just so much more comfortable speaking freely. I'm less self-conscious."

Das, the doctor from Mississippi, was so determined to earn his Distinguished Toastmaster award that he was a member of three clubs at one point and would wake before dawn to prepare his speeches. His next goal, besides earning his second DTM this year, is to try stand-up comedy. A local bar has promised him mic time when public gatherings are safe again. In the meantime, he serves as club Jokemaster and is working through the Engaging Humor path in Pathways. This year, he also starts a term as president of the Rotary Club of North Jackson, Mississippi, greatly expanding his stage as a speaker.

Deva-Marie Beck, DTM, Ph.D., of Quebec, Canada, came to Toastmasters as an established keynote speaker and nursing advocate. After working for 30 years as a critical care nurse in the United States, she founded the Nightingale Initiative for Global Health in 2006. The organization is a health and nurse advocacy group furthering the work of one of the most famous nurses in history, Florence Nightingale of England. In 2013, Beck befriended Wayne Kines, DTM, a longtime Toastmaster responsible for chartering over 20 clubs in northern New York and eastern Ontario, Canada. The two eventually married and Toastmasters became a shared pursuit.

Beck has spoken around the world to groups as large as 3,000. Her focus is on developing others into great presenters and leaders, both through Toastmasters and her health advocacy work.

"You get to a level where you want to mentor protégés rather than be mentored yourself," she says. "People struggling to give their Ice Breaker can have fantastic breakthroughs. To see them become people they didn't realize they were meant to be—it's really wonderful to be able to do that."

Global Impact

Through her work, Beck urges nurses to be more informed, active citizens and to use their unique roles to create local, national, and international sustainable development change as

designated by the United Nations. Nurses are especially key because they are consistently ranked the most trusted profession. Doctors aren't far behind.

The pandemic has pulled back the metaphorical curtain on health-care workers. Health professionals have become prime-time and front-page media figures, leading press conferences, being quoted in the news, and rightfully taking a seat at the table to contribute to discussions about COVID-19, as well as public health, mental health, and health-care delivery disparities. Nurses' faces have gone global on social media and their shortage has put a spotlight on the profession.

So why aren't more health-care professionals taking part in Toastmasters? Long, the Florida nurse, believes that people commit to the things they feel most comfortable with, and getting



Deva-Marie Beck, DTM, Ph.D.

better as a speaker means actively courting discomfort. Reputations may also play a part. Beck, the Canadian Toastmaster, says nurses are typically, by nature, introverts who entered the profession because it is usually one-on-one work with patients. And doctors, who are considered experts in their field, sometimes may balk at admitting they have room for improvement. Beck is undeterred. As the world begins to open up again after the pandemic, she plans to focus her efforts

on nursing students and harnessing their social media acumen to transform themselves into global health advocates. Encouraging them to become Toastmasters will be a part of her mission to put nurses front and center.

"We are definitely a silo. We interact with each other from one shift to the next. All the way up to the global level, we usually only speak to each other," Beck says. "We don't speak to the world—yet. And what we have to say is pretty important."

Emily Sachs is President of Long Island University-Brooklyn Toastmasters in Brooklyn, New York. A former newspaper reporter, she now works in financial regulatory compliance. She would have made an excellent health-care professional were it not for the science part.

Keep Your Club Healthy

Ask these five questions to make sure your club is meeting members' needs.

BY JANET FUCHEK

On the road to good health, an apple a day keeps the doctor away, or so says the old adage. In the world of Toastmasters, the golden apple to keep a club healthy is an inviting atmosphere with opportunities for leadership, communication, and growth.

Never has that been more evident than during this pandemic, with social isolation making the need for connection more apparent, and the move to online and hybrid meetings allowing for a new way of looking at the health of a club. If you're feeling the need to revitalize and reengage your members, then maybe it's time for a club check-up.

Here are some questions to ask as you assess the health of your club.

Have You Evaluated Your Format?

The three tenets of a healthy club are making sure members are engaged, progressing through their goals, and most importantly, attending meetings. There is not a specific "medicine" for assessing success. Just like people, each club has different ways of measuring success. Some clubs have a professional meeting tone, other clubs have a more relaxed vibe. Neither is wrong, but the health of your club may rest in finding the right prescription.

Lynn Goodacre of the Thunderbird Toastmasters Club, in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, is a coach specializing in relationships and effective



Thunderbird Toastmasters Club of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

communication. She knows the value of a nurturing environment, and as Club President, she tries to provide both structure and stimulation to inspire the membership.

“If a club is functioning well, members are learning, growing, and challenging themselves to try new things, so the Toastmasters experience is engaging long-term.”

—LYNN GOODACRE

Goodacre recommends meetings incorporate practical aspects, like using Table Topics® to practice handling interview questions, along with opportunities for creativity, such as having a fun quiz on meeting content at the close. She also suggests a new-member orientation process, where new members receive an introduction to club agendas, meeting roles, and an overview of Pathways.

Do You Have a Strong Mentoring Program?

In the same way that a buddy system can help people achieve health goals, mentors and coaches help members and clubs be

the best they can be. Pairing up with someone can inspire you, hold you accountable, and help you feel part of a team.

When mentors and mentees create their buddy system, it is a mutually beneficial partnership. If a mentor can explain and demonstrate an area for improvement, they often improve their own skill sets. Additionally, a mentee may see something the mentor does from a different vantage point and share their thoughts.

“If a club is functioning well, members are learning, growing, and challenging themselves to try new things, so the Toastmasters experience is engaging long-term,” says Goodacre, whose club has achieved President’s Distinguished for 23 years. “Once someone has been in a club for a while, they may find that guiding other members is the main thing that keeps their love for Toastmasters alive.”

Are Leadership Opportunities Encouraged?

Goals and milestones assist in creating healthy lifestyles and the feeling of accomplishment, such as hitting a personal record in weightlifting or running distance. In Toastmasters, keeping goals top of mind will benefit those looking for fulfillment. Leadership opportunities are often a good benchmark.

Matheus Mourao, of Sao Paulo, Brazil, is District 111 Public Relations Manager,



Infostorm Toastmasters, Hyderabad Prakriti of Hyderabad, Telangana, India

and says he appreciates the leadership opportunities in Toastmasters. “Outside Toastmasters, I’m more like a specialist and less like a leader, but in Toastmasters, I’m developing my role as a digital marketing leader, which has enabled me to break through some barriers at my job.”

Encourage everyone to run for office, and don’t let the same people rotate through the club officer roles. Everyone should understand the skills that leadership positions help develop. By learning what goes on behind the scenes, members gain a vested interest in the club.

Nadia Gilkes, DTM, Vice President Education (VPE) for Jackpot Speakers and Vice President Public Relations (VPPR) for Educationally Speaking, both in Las Vegas, Nevada, says her clubs encourage members to attend board meetings to see how decisions are made. “It’s a great opportunity for members who may be thinking about leadership to see what it takes to run the club,” she says.

Adnan Dodmani, a member of Infostorm Toastmasters, Hyderabad Prakriti, in Hyderabad, Telangana, India, recommends leaders try matching people with club officer roles that suit their background and interests. For instance, if someone is an accountant, they might enjoy being Club Treasurer, or if someone is in marketing, they might like the VPPR role. “When you assign the work that

members crave, it is done efficiently with enthusiasm and helps them grow in their respective field,” he says. “When you show them that the club loves them, they will return the club the love it deserves.”

Are You Regularly Recognizing Your Members?

Just as hitting a personal health record and sharing the news with your accountability buddy or on a fitness app creates an opportunity for celebration and recognition, social media platforms help connect and recognize club members. As a digital marketing specialist, Mourao, of Brazil, considers the online platform a place to connect, inform, and engage club members.

His club, Avenida Paulista Toastmasters, has representatives take photos at each meeting and display achievements on a Facebook carousel post. They post photos of members and their stories on Instagram and videos of how members overcame public speaking challenges on YouTube.

Gilkes recommends regular contact and transparency with members. As VPE, she reaches out to every member once a quarter to ensure they’re reaching their goals. Her clubs conduct a *Moments of Truth* project at least once a year to incorporate member suggestions, such as highlighting special occasions for strong member recognition.

Infostorm Toastmasters, Hyderabad Prakriti club, has a member recognition system that includes the circulation of a digital poster showcasing a member’s achievement on a WhatsApp group that reaches club members, the District, and alumni. The poster is shared during club meetings and in their newsletter. Social media posts, as well as certificates, trophies, and prizes, are other ways to recognize members’ achievements.

Are You Open to New Meeting Ideas?

As you evaluate the health of your club, don’t be afraid to try something new. Sometimes what worked in the past doesn’t work months or years later.

When District 111 in Brazil wanted to increase member involvement, it began offering a variety of new events, like debate contests. “A debate helps people respect another point of view, helps them listen better to others, be more engaged in meetings, and develop better arguments,” Mourao explains.

Gilkes recommends clubs carve a niche in the market to maintain membership. “Most clubs have a different personality,” she explains. “You really have to know what your identity as a club is. You have to find a way that sets you apart. What makes people want to come to your club?”

A healthy club isn’t something that just happens. Take its pulse, watch its heartbeat, and adjust accordingly. Go back to the basics on some aspects, and don’t be afraid to try something new with others. With the advent of online meetings across the globe, it’s easy to pop into another meeting for a fresh perspective and some good medicine. **■**

Janet Fuchek is a member of Westfort Toastmasters Club in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada, and six other clubs. She welcomes hearing from Toastmasters around the world at jetsetjanet1@hotmail.com.



How to Build a Speech

Structure, stories, and word choice are all key to crafting a compelling presentation.

BY RUTH NASRULLAH

There was a time when flowery, dense language was the standard for public speaking—18th-century North America, for instance. Here is the beginning of George Washington’s 1796 farewell speech:

The period for a new election of a citizen to administer the executive government of the United States being not far distant, and the time actually arrived when your thoughts must be employed in designating the person who is to be clothed with that important trust, it appears to me proper, especially as it may conduce to a more distinct expression ...

And that excerpt is far from the conclusion of just that first sentence. Imagine using language like that in a Toastmasters meeting!

Analyze why the opening of this august speech wouldn’t work today and two major problems quickly become apparent. First, it could have been cut down at least by half; and second, even after 20 seconds, the audience still doesn’t know much about the speaker’s purpose.

Fortunately for modern-day speakers, the Toastmasters educational program emphasizes the skill of speechwriting. Here are a few guidelines to mastering the art and technique of writing speeches.

My Kingdom for a Subject!

Need a speech topic? First identify your purpose. What do you want to do? Inform? Persuade? Inspire? Educate? Next, home in

on a subject. You can select something most people can relate to—or most people in your audience can relate to—or something arcane that will require a little bit of research.

Step three: Start brainstorming.

What about your Ultimate Frisbee team? Your cat’s finicky ways? Your child’s piano recital? Your childhood dream of becoming president and what became of it? Holiday traditions in your country or region? Vanilla or chocolate? Cake or pie?

A word of caution: It may go without saying, but when it comes to controversial topics such as religion or politics, make sure you know the club policies governing such subjects—and the audience’s sensibilities.

Elena Paweta, DTM, is a member of Poland’s First Toastmasters club, based in Warsaw. She is also an organizer of TEDx events, programs in local communities that feature a diversity of speakers across several disciplines who address a variety of subjects. This gives her particular insight into crafting and refining speech topics.

“As we advance and become more experienced and confident, we can cover topics that may influence others,” Paweta says. “We can use this amazing tool [public speaking] to change people’s lives for the better.”

Deceptively Simple: The Structure

Ramona J. Smith is the 2018 World Champion of Public Speaking. [Watch her winning speech](#) and you'll get a clue to what helps make it great: a solid, simple outline. She enters the stage and crouches down in a boxer's stance, throwing punches in the air. She explains that we may get knocked down in life, but if we persevere we will be "still standing," a phrase she repeats throughout, for emphasis. She then goes on to describe three events in her life that she had to fight through (extending the metaphor) and expands on each.

And how does she conclude the speech? With the phrase she offered in the beginning: "still standing." It's simple, yet so powerful.

World Champion Ramona J. Smith says the key to writing a great speech is to keep it simple. "I start with the skeleton, then start to throw meat on the bones."

To supplement that structure, Smith makes the speech come alive with vocal variety, exuberant body language (shadow-boxing), and even a prop (a towel thrown to the ground).

Smith, President of the Cy-Fair Super Speakers Club in Cypress, Texas, says the key to writing a great speech is to keep it simple. "I start with the skeleton, then start to throw meat on the bones," she says.

She writes speeches in three parts—introduction, body, and conclusion. In the body she identifies three points, just as in her championship speech. "Then I flesh out those three points, add transitions between each and then a call to action between the third point and the conclusion."

Smith has another key piece of advice: Call on fellow Toastmasters for help. "Look in your club for writers," she says. "There's an English teacher or writer in every club—see if they can help you."

Act Out—But in a Good Way

Toastmaster Wayne Lebowitz, a retired jeweler from Somerville, Massachusetts, always knew he wanted to be an actor. Although he ultimately found his career in the family business, he brings theatrical sensibilities to public speaking.

Writing a speech is like writing a script, he says. Start with an attention-grabbing device. For instance:

"How many of you have hunted a bear? Okay, I see by the lack of hands raised that none of you have. Let me tell you about bear hunting." Using the bear motif, he demonstrates another approach: "I just found out that there are only three bears left in Somerville, Massachusetts. That's three more than I thought we had."

Lebowitz emphasizes that people remember stories. "I realize when I give a speech, I've got to entertain them. Otherwise, whatever my message is, it's lost."

He suggests the same format that Ramona J. Smith uses. "The body of your speech should consist of three bullet points," he says. "And have a story to back up each point." Lebowitz recommends closing the speech by reiterating those bullet points and tying together the closing and opening.

At a recent meeting of his club, Somerville Toastmasters, the first speaker gave a speech about a work situation by providing three points in the beginning, then elaborating on them, and returning to them again at the end.

Because she used vocal variety and good details, the simple structure worked.

Show Me

"Show, don't tell" is advice often offered to writers whose work needs a little spark. The concept can also apply to speechwriting. Paint a picture for your audience with the language you use.

Jing Humphreys, DTM, a member of the Earlybirds Club in Butler, Pennsylvania, is a believer in the power of word choice.

"I like vivid word descriptions," she says.

"Like you can feel it happening in front of you because of the choice of words the speaker uses."



Need a speech topic? First identify your purpose. What do you want to do? Inform? Persuade? Inspire? Educate?

Despite working in a highly technical field where there isn't as much room for creativity with language, outside of work she is a proponent of conjuring up dramatic images to move the audience. (Example: "a big, vast ocean so clear you can almost see the bottom of it.") This is also the message

she imparts as a mentor and an evaluator: To tell a story, use powerful imagery, and don't be afraid to provoke strong feelings in your audience.

"I just evaluated one of my club members," she says. "I told him 'Scare me and then save me.' The audience needs to know why am I listening to you—why is this important to me?"

Don't forget that you need to know your audience. If the venue is in a country with a nuanced culture and/or a culture that has significant differences from your own, make sure you've done your homework so you avoid potentially offensive gaffes. If you want to add jokes, try them out on others first to be sure your humor isn't tone-deaf.

Include the Visual

Visual aids can be a powerful addition, and in some cases a necessary one, to a presentation. Technical presentations generally require the speaker to provide graphics, charts, schematics, etc., in order to fully explain the topic. Non-technical presentations, too, can gain a boost from props or visual aids.

Check that all your references are correct. Did Queen Elizabeth really give the Gettysburg Address or was your mind wandering when you wrote that?

A word about PowerPoint: Don't read from the slides. The slides should supplement your words. In most cases, you can use words for the narrative, and the projector screen for ideas that are best conveyed graphically. The words you speak and the images you show should complement each other.

I am not a fan of PowerPoint, so when I did the "Get Comfortable With Visual Aids" project in Toastmasters' old *Competent Communication* manual, I opted for a wig mannequin and demonstrated different ways Muslim women wear head scarves. It gave me the opportunity to personalize my speech and present something tangible, and it supported my discussion of why Muslim women wear head scarves.

Not So Fast!

Transitional statements help the audience easily follow you from one section of your speech to the next, or from one idea to another.

There is a wide range of transitions that serve different functions. Some keep the audience focused on the topic or time frame you are discussing; some provide examples of a particular subject area, reinforcing a point and introducing examples seamlessly. Here are just a few common transitions:

1. To tie your introduction to your first point in the body of the speech:

- Let me give you an example ...
 - To get started, let's examine ...
 - First, I'm going to discuss ...
2. To move from one point within the body to the next:
- In the same way, this item tends to melt in the heat ...
 - Let me show you something equally troubling ...
 - This is similar to the kind of speech we're studying ...
3. To begin the conclusion to your speech:
- All in all, this educational journey was ...
 - Looking back, I'm glad that I ...
 - To sum up, these three reasons are why ...

If your speech feels or sounds awkward as you move through the main points, lead the listener with transitions, like those listed above. When in doubt, try reading that section aloud to someone else; if they are unclear about the connection between two ideas or two statements, look for a proper transition.

The Final Steps

Always do a final review of your writing before turning your attention to rehearsing. A few essential areas to look over:

- ▶ Double-check your grammar and pronunciation. This may seem like a no-brainer, but don't assume you have it right. A great classic reference book to aid with this is *The Elements of Grammar* by Margaret Shertzer. Many other useful books—and grammar-related websites—exist as well, including *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, *Write Right!* by Jan Venolia, grammarbook.com, and www.quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl.
- ▶ Examine your writing for continuity of theme; make sure you aren't wandering from your main point. Remove or revise anything that takes your speech off track.
- ▶ Make sure everything makes logical sense. Sometimes you get so deep into your subject that you mention ideas only you can understand.
- ▶ Check that all your references are correct. Did Queen Elizabeth really give the Gettysburg Address or was your mind wandering when you wrote that?
- ▶ Don't go overboard with quotes. They can be used to enhance a speech, but make sure the quote you use is pithy, brief, and very relevant. Be sure you're citing the correct author of the quote (pro tip: Look somewhere besides social media to verify the source).

When you've done all you can do to polish the writing of your speech, you will feel confident and ready. The Toastmasters guidelines for speechwriting will prepare you well.

Ruth Nasrullah is a member of Pearland Toastmasters Club in Pearland, Texas, where she serves as Club Secretary. She is a Houston-based freelance journalist and has been a Toastmaster since 2006. Read more of her work at www.ruthnasrullah.com.

Speak the Language, Speak the Culture

Public speaking in a multilingual world.

BY SONJA BONIN

We are a multilingual bunch here at the International Lunchtime Toastmasters in Zurich, Switzerland—which seems only appropriate for a country with four official national languages (German, French, Italian, and Romansh) and a city where one in three people carries a foreign passport. At our club, we strive to practice English, German, and French at every meeting, and for many of our members and guests, not one of those is their native language!

As a Toastmaster, you may have experienced similar situations. Perhaps you live abroad, or your home club might have members who aren't native speakers; or maybe you've signed up for a club specifically to practice your second or third language. You are reading this article in English, but statistically, there's a two-to-one chance that English is not your first language. In a globalized world where many of us are communicating and collaborating across borders and cultures, proficiency in a second language can be a stepping-stone in your career and can open many doors while traveling. Bilinguals have also proven to be better in social and cognitive tasks, showing greater empathy, recovering more quickly from brain injury, and staving off dementia significantly longer than monolinguals.

Still, besides all the fun and benefits, speaking in a non-native language can be intimidating, especially when you are just starting out. So I asked some proficient public speakers for advice.

Take the Leap

For many speakers, going from speaking a non-native language conversationally to giving a whole speech can feel quite daunting. "It seems like so much more effort," says Selina Man Karlsson of International Lunchtime Toastmasters in Switzerland. She can manage Table Topics®, she says, however, when putting together a speech, there are many more pieces to the puzzle. "But I know that once I accomplish it, it will feel like a personal victory." To ease into it, she suggests you recycle an idea or translate a speech you've given before, in order to feel more confident. And perhaps you can find a mentor who speaks both languages. Most importantly, Man Karlsson says, because Toastmasters is such a safe and supportive environment, it's the perfect training ground.

Public Speaking as a Mental Workout

Another happy multilingual is Beatriz Macedo of Oporto Toastmasters Club in Porto, Portugal. "I love learning languages," she says. "It's like a gym for the brain, something challenging that keeps me on top of my mental capacities." Beside her native Portuguese, Macedo is fluent in English, Spanish, French, and Italian. She is also learning German and Mandarin Chinese. The former was a practical decision because German might benefit her career as a metallurgical engineer for a German company. She says she chose to learn Chinese precisely because it is so

different from English and the Romance languages she already speaks.

Macedo uses Toastmasters speech contests to practice languages she doesn't speak frequently, and she's won contests at the District level in English and Italian. "I think the audience is a bit more forgiving with a non-native speaker," she says. "But you definitely have to prepare much longer and better than in your first language."

Immerse Yourself in Your Target Language

When Macedo plans a speech in one of her non-native languages, she prepares much more thoroughly than she would otherwise. "You want to get to a place where you aren't translating what you want to say but thinking in the foreign language." She starts the process by jogging her memory. "I switch to reading in my target language every day, watching movies and the news in it, and talking to native speakers." She looks up words, synonyms, and even whole phrases, and discusses usage of certain expressions or metaphors in online forums. She recommends listening to native speakers talk, for instance on YouTube, to help with pronunciation. "I immerse myself in my target language before I start writing my speech. That way, I will not translate it, but write it in my target language."

Next, the preparation. "In my more fluent languages, I usually jot down some bullet points and rehearse in a more improvisational style, almost like Table Topics—just 10 Table Topics in a row,"



she says. In her less fluent languages, she memorizes more, because it's not as easy to find a quick work-around if you forget a word or jumble up a sentence. "If I'm speaking in front of a Portuguese audience, I might be able to cheat a little and simply inject a word or two in Portuguese. But with a mixed audience or abroad, that won't work."

Consider Culture

You must take into account that your audience, even if you're speaking the same language, might differ in cultural background. For instance, Macedo believes that speakers of Romance languages gesture more and are more lively in tone than Northern Europeans. On the other hand, there are subtle differences from language to language too. So, when she prepares a speech in Italian, she says she needs to memorize and rehearse the respective gestures alongside the words of her speech.

The further you get from your native culture, the more pronounced the differences. Macedo experienced this first-hand when she spent time living in South Korea. "When I talk about school milk, every Portuguese of my generation will share the

same memory. The South Koreans were flabbergasted that I would want to drink milk every day!" Another example: What is "a piece of cake" (meaning: super easy) for English speakers is "chicken soup" for the Portuguese. And a joke or a wink can work well in one culture but feel inappropriate in another.

"I love learning languages. It's like a gym for the brain."

—BEATRIZ MACEDO

It's therefore a good idea to double-check your speech for culture-specific metaphors, examples, or expressions and give it a test run with a member of your target audience. Is your message clear and easy to grasp? Does what you say and how you say it contribute to your message or distract from it?

If you present to varying audiences, you may want to adjust your speech for each audience. For instance, a baseball reference works fine in the U.S., but in German-speaking countries, soccer is the

sport that most people are familiar with. "Speaking the language is not enough. You have to speak the culture too," says Macedo. "It's like the seasoning for a dish. If you use nutmeg instead of cinnamon, it won't taste so good."

Talking to a Non-Native Audience

On the flip side, all is not that easy for native speakers either! Talking to a non-native audience can be tricky, especially for native English speakers. Since English has become such a widespread lingua franca, it's easy to neglect cultural sensitivities. You are also prone to forget that processing a foreign language is always a bit more difficult than listening to your mother tongue, no matter how fluent you are.

"Most native English speakers think they are communicating, where in fact, they aren't," says John Zimmer, a professional speaker and speaking coach from Canada who has worked for the United Nations and has been living in the French-speaking part of Switzerland for more than 20 years. His experience has taught him to speak "a different English" when he's talking to non-native speakers.

FUN WITH FOREIGN LANGUAGES

There are plenty of opportunities to painlessly sneak some foreign language into your day:

- ▶ **Set your cellphone, GPS, or even video games to the foreign language.** Start tuning your ear to regularly hear the words and cadence of the language.
- ▶ **Listen and watch people speaking the language.** YouTube is one of the best language teachers in the world. Watch how native speakers use facial expressions and move their mouths. Try listening with subtitles and then without. Toastmaster Siegfried Haack, DTM, has a series of French videos titled “[31 Stories in 31 Days](#).”
- ▶ **Listen to songs.** Look up the words, learn the song, and sing away! You will get a great exercise in pronunciation and vocabulary as well as learn a new song.
- ▶ **Find more structured programs** if that’s what you prefer. [Frantastique](#) is a subscription email program that sends you a daily, customized lesson with immediate personalized corrections and explanations. And they’re offering readers a free month! There is also the excellent program [LingQ](#), designed by the polyglot Steve Kaufman.
- ▶ **Organize a language exchange session** with a fellow Toastmaster who speaks the language. Set up an online or live session, then switch languages every 10 minutes so both of you can practice speaking and listening.
- ▶ **Watch a French or Canadian television series.** As you become familiar with the characters, their way of speaking, and their stock phrases, you will progress in your understanding. For a generation of French students, their best English teacher was the 1990s TV show “Friends!” The website [FluentU](#) has short, fun videos and even TV shows. It does require a fee to subscribe.
- ▶ **Finally, don’t feel the need to apologize for your accent.** Everyone has an accent when they speak a foreign language, and that is an integral part of who you are. Remember that when you are trying to communicate with someone, most likely they are not making a list of errors you make. They are concentrating on the pleasure of your interaction.

Read these tips and more in Carol Bausor’s [February 2020 article](#).

Tune In!

Learn more about acquiring a new language in this exclusive [Toastmasters Podcast episode](#), where Carol explores how we expand our communication and increase proficiency in a foreign language.

Carol Bausor is the founder of ILTC, a language training company in France. She teaches and runs workshops and events on feeling confident when speaking a foreign language. Learn more at www.lespeakshow.com.

“Back in Canada, I speak faster, and I use more slang and colloquialisms; I also allow for fewer pauses.” Here are some of his tips for English speakers talking to a non-native audience:

- ▶ Talk slowly, enunciate well, and use more pauses.
- ▶ Avoid jargon, filler words (such as “like” or “actually”), and colloquialisms (“We’d’ve come” is far more difficult to process than “We would have come”; don’t say “we need to up our game”—instead, say “we need to improve.”).
- ▶ Beware of phrasal verbs, where the meaning is different than the combined meanings of the individual words, such as “I’ll see to it” or “he turned me down.”
- ▶ Use the active voice over the passive voice and the affirmative over the negative (say “often” instead of “not uncommon”).
- ▶ Use short words and short sentences and avoid unnecessary flourishes. Zimmer’s recommendation is “Value clarity over creativity.”

Luckily, all these rules serve any speaker well under any circumstances. And “taking your non-native audience into consideration will force you to think more rigorously about your message and how to express it,” Zimmer says.

Whether you speak in a foreign language or speak your first language to an audience of non-native speakers, the challenge will enhance your performance as a public speaker in the long run. Just remember: Think the language, speak the culture, and put some extra effort into your preparation. You’ll earn even more credibility as a citizen of the world. 📺

Sonja Bonin works as a writer, editor, and translator in Zurich, Switzerland. She’s a member of Zurich Toastmasters Club and the International Lunchtime Toastmasters, both in Zurich.

Breaking Language Barriers

Top 10 tips for communicating with anyone in the world.

BY DEAN FOSTER

Even if you're not crossing oceans, time zones, or into new cultures, communication can be tough. Just think about how hard it is to communicate with your most intimate contacts: your significant other, your kids, your friends. In international business, when we add the pressure of work and deadlines, as well as language and cultural differences, communication gets even more complicated.

With all that in the mix, it's not hard for communication to break down. To help ease those stresses, here are the top 10 tips for more successful communication with anyone in the world. After all, good communication is key for good business.

10 Take your time.

Slow down. Pause. Give space. And don't talk too fast. Especially when you're communicating via telephone, remember to use conscious speech, slow down, and break your sentences into short, definable sections. Also be sure to give your listener time to translate and digest your words as you go.

9 Ask the other speaker to slow down too.

If the person you're speaking to is talking too fast or their accent is getting in the way, ask them to slow down. Making it about yourself is always a good trick and a way to avoid offense. Say something like, "I'm from Texas so I probably have a strange accent. I'll slow down and hope that makes it easier for you to understand me. Since you're from Hyderabad, your accent is not easy for me, either. Why don't we both slow down a little, so we can understand each other better?"

8 Keep it simple.

Don't use big words. Two-syllable words are better than three-syllable

words, and one-syllable words are better than two-syllable words. Don't say, "Do this in an efficacious way." Just say, "Do this quickly."

7 Don't be afraid to ask for help.

If the person you're speaking with uses a word you don't understand, let them know. While "global English" may be the world's form of communication, it changes from country to country. If your Indian colleague says, "Do the needful," and you have no idea what that means, tell them. Spoiler alert! It means "take the next step to make things happen."

6 Avoid "Baseball English."

Unless your colleagues are familiar with sports terminology—and baseball terminology specifically—they probably won't understand what you mean when you say things like: *Let's hit a home run or please pinch-hit for me at the meeting.* Avoid any confusion by keeping baseball English in the dugout.

5 Get rid of double negatives.

You don't know what a double negative is, do you? That question is confusing. Phrasing statements or questions in "double negatives" will result in an invalid response in many cultures.

4 Talk to more than one person.

People often "imply" meaning, so the words in your business email or conversation may not represent all, or even the most important information you need. Whenever possible, try to cultivate multiple sources of information to get the complete picture.

3 Start out formally.

In most cultures, people expect a degree of formality at the beginning of


communication. Each culture has its own culture-specific way of indicating this formality ("Herr" and "Frau" in Germany, the reversal of family and given names in China, and the use of "san" in Japan for men and women, for example.) Become familiar with these familiarity tokens, and don't jump to "first names" until you receive a cue from your new colleague to do so.

2 Pay attention to the nonverbal.

If you have the luxury of being face-to-face, tune into nonverbal behaviors. Facial expressions, proximity, physicality, and hand gestures all carry a lot of meaning. Be sure to remember that body movement or nonverbal behavior may have a completely different meaning in another culture. For instance, the U.S. "okay" sign (making a circle by touching the tip of the first finger to the tip of the thumb) is very vulgar in Brazil.

1 Be respectful, be interested, and be humble.

Ask people about their cultures, admit that you are learning, and don't force or project your cultural ways on them. Remember, we all have a lot to learn and teach each other. No matter what, you are always a guest in a foreign land.

This article was published previously in the April 2016 Toastmaster magazine. 

Dean Foster is an expert on culture in business and frequently lectures at various universities and conferences. He is the author of many books including *Bargaining Across Borders* and the *Global Etiquette Guide* series. He is the director of his own firm, *DFA Intercultural Global Solutions*. Learn more at www.deanfosterglobal.com.



Penmanship

If you wrote a letter by hand, would the recipient think a chicken had stepped in ink and walked across the page?

BY JOHN CADLEY

I took notes for this column and I can't read them, which is ironic since the topic is handwriting, otherwise known as penmanship, and the lost art thereof. Apparently, I've proved my own point. For instance, I can't tell if I've written "small" or "smell," and I would not want to make the mistake of saying someone's handwriting smelled, even if the actual content stinks.

Be that as it may, I think I can decipher enough of my jottings to present a cogent discussion on the disappearing practice of putting pen to paper and writing something longer than a phone number. One such example would be called a "letter"—i.e., words written upon a sheet of paper in a style called "cursive," which involves the forming of letters, words, and sentences with one's own hand using some form of writing implement, such as a pen, meant for another person to read easily and clearly. Does any of that sound familiar? If you are of a "certain age" I'm sure it does.

If, however, you were formed by the digital age, you may think I'm older than stone tools. Or you would be like my 27-year-old son, who saw a handwritten missive on my desk and asked what it was. I told him it was a letter from a friend. "Why didn't she send an email?" he asked. "Because she believes that communicating with her own hand creates more of a personal, meaningful connection with the recipient." Perplexed, my son then inquired, "Why didn't she just use FaceTime?" At that point I said to him, as the great musician Louis Armstrong said about the meaning of jazz, "If you have to ask, you'll never know."

But really—do they teach penmanship in school anymore? Do the students still sit and write *The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog* one thousand times until every oval fits precisely within the lines, every loop descends perfectly below it, and

Before the advent of typewriters and word processors, good penmanship was, of course, essential.

every child screams with writer's cramp? My research, to the extent that I can make it out, says yes and no. Penmanship is taught but not emphasized. In other words, you must know how to write your name so you can sign the contracts and loan applications that burden you with the crushing legal and financial obligations of a truly respectable member of society. Beyond that—say, if you want to write a whole sentence or even a paragraph—well, I suppose you can pursue that as a hobby.

Before the advent of typewriters and word processors, good penmanship was, of course, essential. Without it you could get into some serious trouble. Thomas Jefferson composed the American Declaration of Independence, but it was Timothy Matlack, a beer brewer from Pennsylvania with legendary handwriting skills, who transcribed it to the page. Had the document been scrawled by a lesser hand, King George III might have read "We hold these truths to be self-evident" as "We hold these tooths to be self-evident," in which case the colonists

would have received not their freedom but several options for comprehensive dental insurance.

Likewise, from time immemorial physicians have been notorious for their illegible handwriting, and occasionally even for their poor spelling. This is attributed to their voluminous note-taking during medical school and their packed schedules once in practice. Who can remember how to spell *epididymitis*, much less write it legibly, when there are two sore throats, one ear infection, a bruised sitz bone, a mysterious rash, and a pharmaceutical salesperson hawking a new drug for wart removal waiting to see you—all before lunch? The one exception is prescriptions, which doctors take great care to write precisely and clearly. No clinician wants a patient to leave the pharmacy with a bottle labeled **Take 2 capsules 3 hours before ded**. They are all too aware that medications are far less effective after ded than before.

If you've given up on handwriting, I encourage you to give it another chance. Research says it makes you smarter, you don't need batteries, it's reassuringly personal in our impersonal age, and you will certainly make an impression. Plus, you will never have to suffer the agony of a devastating technical error. Just imagine if the Declaration of Independence had been written in Microsoft Word and somebody had accidentally hit "Delete." **T**

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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