

Toastmaster Contest Role for Chair

The contest chair is responsible for briefing contestants, for determining speaking order, for explaining the contest to the audience and for introducing the contestants. To the extent possible, the briefing should be held at least half an hour prior to the contest start. Contestants should be given the opportunity to practice in the speaking area and with sound equipment, if available. Ensure you have a copy of the current year's rulebook present when conducting the briefing. Review this in advance to become familiar with the rule. Note any changes from previous years.



When briefing contestants:

- Explain the timing. Ensure contestants know where the timing light is located and that they are comfortable with the location. If contestants feel it is not easily visible, the timing light should be moved.
- Ask if any contestant needs an audible signal due to a visual impairment (you may not be able to tell that someone has a significant enough impairment to prevent them from seeing the lights).
- If a sound system is available, explain the procedure for wiring the contestants for sound (normally done during the minute of silence). Ask contestants whether they want to use the microphone. Contestants must also be given the opportunity to practice with the mic if they wish.
- Explain the speaking area to contestants. It is not necessary to define a speaking area but you may do so if you wish. The contestants must be given the opportunity to become comfortable with the speaking area. If the speaking area is restricted, advise the Chief Judge of this so that judges can be briefed accordingly.
- Explain who can lodge a protest based on originality (judges and contestants only). A protest must be filed with the Chief Judge prior to any announcement of winners.
- Ask contestants if they have agreed to be Division Governor or any other **elected** District office for the upcoming year. If the answer is yes, that contestant becomes ineligible.
- Obtain the certificate of eligibility and originality from each contestant.
- Ensure you know how to properly pronounce each speaker's name and how they want to be introduced (e.g. Susan or Sue, Michael or Mike, etc.).
- For the International Speech contest, verify the title of each contestant's speech. Do not rely on the eligibility form as sometimes a speaker changes the title and forgets to change the form.
- Suggest to speakers that they remove their name badges or any other item that could be distracting to the audience. This is not mandatory and it should be worded as a suggestion only.

- Ask contestants to come part way to the speaking area during the minute of silence so there is less of a delay with each speaker. For Table Topics, the Sgt-at-Arms should bring the next contestant into the room during the minute of silence.
- Remind contestants that you will remain standing until acknowledged by them. (If a few minutes have elapsed and you have not been acknowledged, you may sit down.) Also remind them to remain in the speaking area after their speech until you have shaken their hand.
- For the International Speech contest, find out if any contestant has props for which they need assistance. Arrange with the Sgt-at-Arms to help the contestant, if necessary, and ensure the Sgt-at-Arms knows where the props are to be placed in the speaking area. Props should be set up during the minute of silence. If more time is needed, it should be provided. The speaker should not be introduced until all his or her props are in place.
- Advise speakers if there will be interviews after. If you are doing interviews, collect the biographical data from each speaker. Keep interviews short. It is not necessary to interview speakers. This is normally done as a way to fill time for the Chief Judge and counters to determine the winners. You can just ask each contestant to come forward to receive the certificate of participation. At that time, you should ask them what club they belong to.
- Draw for speaking order. If a contestant is absent from the briefing, he or she will receive the remaining speaking position after other contestants have drawn. Once the contest chair is introduced, the contestant is disqualified. If the contestant arrives before the contest chair starts and all paperwork is in order, the contestant may compete in the order drawn. If the contestant does not arrive by the time of the contest, all other speakers with a higher number would move up the one position.