



www.toastmasters.org

District 74

Tips for Contestants

2021 / 2022

Author: Senate Leeuw

Date: November 2021



DISCLAIMER

Speech contests are an important part of the Toastmasters educational program. They provide an opportunity for Toastmasters to gain speaking experience, as well as an opportunity for other Toastmasters to learn by observing proficient speakers.

This document was developed by Senate Leeuw, which is a revision from the D74 2020/2021 speech contest documents. This document contains the rules and standard procedures for conducting the Online International, Table Topics and Evaluations Speech Contests.

The following documents have been utilized as inputs from the Toastmasters International Website:

- Speech Contest Rulebook (Item 1171)
- Speech Contest Rulebook Explanation of Changes
- Online Speech Contests Best Practice 2021-2022
- www.toastmasters.org/Leadership-Central/Speech-Contests/Speech-Contest-Tutorials
- <https://www.toastmasters.org/magazine/magazine-issues/2020/apr/appear-your-best-online>

This is a working document to ensure a fair speech contest and an enjoyable event for all.

If you have questions, please contact your District Chief Judge and/or Programme Quality Director, so that we can share knowledge. Please don't go directly to World Headquarters. The Chief Judge will send queries on your behalf if advice is required.

- Chief Judge – Senate Leeuw, DTM chiefjudge@toastmasters74.org
- Programme Quality Director – Andrew Tsuru, DTM education@toastmasters74.org

Contents

This document contains:

Preparation	4
List of items needed for contest	4
<i>For All Contest Officials</i>	4
<i>For Contestants</i>	4
Contestants Preparations	5
<i>Before Contest</i>	5
<i>During Contest</i>	7
Tips for Contestants	8
Speaking Area	8
Technology guidelines	8
<i>Camera equipment</i>	8
<i>Lighting</i>	8
<i>Gestures/Movement</i>	8
<i>Sound</i>	8
<i>Background and props</i>	9
Online Presence Guidelines.....	9
<i>Setting</i>	9
<i>Appearance</i>	9
<i>Delivery</i>	9

Preparation

List of items needed for contest

The Chief Judge to confirm with the Contest Chair who will send out the forms to the contestants. The Chief Judge is responsible to send the forms for the judges, timers and ballot counters. Make sure that the forms are sent out as early as possible.

All contest material is available on the District 74 (D74) website. Use the editable version (if possible). Make sure that all officials can open the forms and sign them. A digital signature is acceptable.

For All Contest Officials

1. 2021-2022 Speech Contest Rulebook (Item 1171)
2. D74 Online Contest Best Practice (on the D74 website)

For Contestants

1. Speaker's Certification of Eligibility and Originality (Item 1183)
2. Contestant Bio Information (Item 1189)
3. Tips for Contestants (*on the D74 website*)
4. Evaluation Contestant Notes sheet (Item 1177)

Contestants Preparations

Before Contest

1. Prepare your own substantially original speech.
2. Attend the Contestants' Briefing. All contestants are expected to attend the briefing session.
 - a. If a contestant is absent from the briefing, the alternate speaker (runner up from previous contest), if present, is permitted to attend the briefing in place of the primary contestant.
 - i. If the primary contestant is not present when the person conducting the contest (Contest Chair) is introduced, the primary contestant is disqualified and the alternate officially becomes the contestant.
 - ii. Should the primary contestant arrive after the briefing but before the person conducting the contest (Contest Chair) is introduced, the primary contestant is permitted to compete, provided the primary contestant:
 - Reports to the contest chair upon his/her arrival.
 - Has all required paperwork in good order before the person conducting the contest is introduced to begin the contest.
 - Waives the opportunity of a briefing.
3. Inform the contest chair of any props you plan to use.
4. Understand the disqualification criteria:
 - a. **Originality:** if more than 25% of speech of the speech is devoted to quoting, paraphrasing, or referencing another person's content.
 - b. **Time:**
 - **International Speech:** must be from five (5) to seven (7) minutes. Contestant will be disqualified if the speech is less than four (4) minutes 30 seconds or more than seven (7) minutes 30 seconds.
 - **Table Topics:** must be from one (1) minute to two (2) minutes. A contestant will be disqualified if the speech is less than one (1) minute or more than two (2) minutes 30 seconds.
 - **Evaluations:** must be from two (2) to three (3) minutes. A contestant will be disqualified if the speech is less than one (1) minute 30 seconds or more than three (3) minutes 30 seconds.

In the event of technical failure of the signal or timing equipment, a speaker is allowed 30 seconds extra overtime before being disqualified.

- c. **Referencing another contestant's speech**
- d. **Eligibility**

Eligibility for:	International Speech	Table Topics	Evaluations
Contestant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be a paid member of a club in good standing • maintain eligibility at all levels of any contest • completed six speeches from the CC or level 1 and 2 of any paths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • However, a charter member of a club chartered less than one (1) year before the club contest is permitted to compete without having completed this requirement. • Only members who joined Toastmasters prior to the rollout of Pathways in their region can apply speeches from the Competent Communication manual to speech contest eligibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be a paid member of a club in good standing • maintain eligibility at all levels of any contest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be a paid member of a club in good standing • maintain eligibility at all levels of any contest

5. Sign and submit the Speaker's Certification of Eligibility and Originality (Item 1183) to the Contest Chair.
6. Attend the Speaker's Rehearsal and take note of the speaking area.

During Contest

1. In the one (1) minute of silence before your introduction, switch on your video and set up any and all props and visual aids.
2. After your introduction, proceed immediately to the speaking area and begin your speech.
3. Pin the timer and check the timing signals regularly during your speech. If you see a red signal, wrap it up, even if you're not finished with your speech yet.
4. Immediately following your speech, remove any props or visual aids.

NOTE:

1. If you experience technical problems before the Contest Chair announces your name inform the Contest Chair immediately (e.g. through WhatsApp) if you will be able to solve the problem before you need to start speaking.
 - If you are unable to solve the problem, you will be considered as not present for the contest.
 - If you signal you will be able to solve the problem and you are due to speak but not announced the Contest Chair will pause the contest for 2 minutes. After the 2 minutes you will be considered as not present for the contest.
2. If you lose connection during the speech and manage to come back during the allocated time you must continue at the point when you have lost connection. Shorten your speech because only 30 seconds extra overtime will be allowed before disqualification.
3. Disqualification times due to technical difficulty during the speech
 - International Speech – 8 minutes and 1 second
 - Table Topics – 3 minutes and 1 second
 - Evaluations – 4 minutes and 1 second

Tips for Contestants

NOTE:

It is essential for the contestants to test their equipment and ensure the quality of the video and audio is high.

Speaking Area

The speaking area should be the same for all contestants. All contestants should stand three (3) to five (5) feet from the camera.

Technology guidelines

Camera equipment

- Place the camera equipment eye level with the speaker, if possible.
- For the sake of an online contest, looking at the camera is considered eye contact. (This note should be shared with all contestants.)
- Ensure that the camera is mounted or secured to prevent movement during the speech.
- Contestants should avoid having someone hold the camera, as this can cause unwanted movement.

Lighting

- The main source of light be from behind the webcam, if at all possible, so as to illuminate the speaker's face and body.
- If relying on natural light, practice at the same time of day as contest will be held.
- If the contestant's face is shadowed, have them fix a light in front of them and behind the camera, even if this means someone outside of camera view holds a cell phone with flashlight on.
- Ensure that no light sources are pointing directly at the camera.

Gestures/Movement

- Contestants should have the chance to practice planned movement and gestures during the contestant briefing to ensure they will remain in frame.

Sound

- Contestants should set up their technology in a space that reduces echo and background noise as much as possible.
- Test any microphone or audio options on the platform you will be using and select the one that allows for the clearest sound.
- It is recommended that contestants avoid using a mobile device, if possible.
- If a contestant will be using a mobile device, they should test if their device is set up to capture the best possible image and if they are able to see the timer.

Background and props

- It is recommended that contestants do not use virtual backgrounds for an online contest.
- Virtual backgrounds can become easily distorted, particularly when using gestures or movement, and this distortion could distract from a contestant's speech.
- If a contestant chooses to use a virtual background, this is considered to be a prop; ensure that they tell you in advance and practice with it during your briefing.
- Rather than using virtual backgrounds, it is recommended that contestants set their speaking area in front of a neutral background with limited distractions such as a blank wall. Alternatively, a sheet could be hung to eliminate distractions in the background.
- Once contestants have set their speaking area, technology, and lighting, it is recommended that they leave everything in place until after the contest.

Online Presence Guidelines

Setting

- Set your device at a proper distance and height so your facial expressions and your upper body gestures can be well perceived. Make sure your face is positioned at the center of the screen.
- Ensure there is enough light on you. If you have a light on behind you, your face will be too dark or in the shadows.
- Most people are now meeting from their homes with other family members present. Inform the people in your vicinity beforehand that you are going to have an online meeting, so they don't accidentally make any disruptive appearance or noise.

Appearance

- Similar to giving an in-person speech, you should look fresh and professional in front of an online device.
- Dress with appropriate attire for your upper body at least. We don't care if you are barefoot, as long as your feet are outside the scope of the camera lens.
- If you wear glasses, ensure the reflection of your device screen or other light source does not block your eyes. If your audience only sees a bright shiny pair of glasses on your face instead of a bright shiny pair of eyes, how can they stay engaged?

Delivery

- When you speak, look directly at the camera, not at the people on the screen. Imagine your entire audience is sitting right behind it.
- In front of a device, your stage may be too small to move around, but you can still use gestures. Facial expressions are important, too. In fact, there are some advantages when you speak facing a computer. For example, you can zoom in and out by moving yourself closer to or further away from the camera to dramatize your online speech.
- Lastly, if you need to refer to any notes, you may place them near the camera instead of looking away from the screen for your notebook. For example, place Post-it Notes around your screen. This allows you to read from your notes without distracting the audience.