

TOASTMASTERS

OPEN HOUSE

Planning & Hosting Guide

“Experience → Discover → Participate → Connect → Join”

Prepared for Club Officers, Event Coordinators & Meeting Organisers

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1. Purpose of an Open House

A Toastmasters Open House is an opportunity for a club to open its doors to prospective members, guests, friends, colleagues and members of the community.

The purpose is not simply to explain what Toastmasters is. It is to allow people to experience Toastmasters in a welcoming, engaging and enjoyable environment.

A successful Open House should help guests:

- Understand what Toastmasters is and how it works
- Experience the Toastmasters meeting environment
- Participate in a safe and supportive speaking activity
- Hear real stories from members
- Understand the benefits of membership
- Know how they can become involved or join the club

The guiding principle should be:

Experience → Discover → Participate → Connect → Join

2. Objectives of the Open House

Before planning the event, the club should agree on clear objectives. Possible objectives include:

- Introduce Toastmasters to people who have never attended a meeting
- Attract prospective members to the club
- Increase awareness of the club within the community
- Showcase the benefits of Toastmasters
- Give guests an opportunity to participate in a speaking activity
- Reconnect with former members or inactive members
- Create a pipeline of potential new members

The club should establish measurable targets, such as:

- Number of guests invited
- Number of guests attending
- Number of guests participating
- Number of membership enquiries

- Number of guests attending a subsequent meeting
- Number of new members recruited

3. Recommended Open House Format

An Open House can be conducted as a special meeting or as a standalone event. A recommended duration is 90 minutes to 2 hours.

Suggested Agenda

Time	Activity	Suggested Lead
0:00–0:10	Registration & Networking	Membership Team
0:10–0:15	Welcome & Opening	Toastmaster of the Day
0:15–0:20	Icebreaker / Audience Engagement	Facilitator
0:20–0:30	What is Toastmasters?	Club President / VPM
0:30–0:45	Prepared Speech Demonstration	Experienced Member
0:45–0:55	Speech Evaluation Demonstration	Evaluator
0:55–1:10	Table Topics – Guest Participation	Topicsmaster
1:10–1:20	Pathways & Member Journey	VPE
1:20–1:30	Member Testimonial	Selected Member
1:30–1:40	How to Join / Membership Benefits	VPM
1:40–1:50	Questions & Answers	Club Team
1:50–2:00	Call to Action & Closing	Club President

The agenda can be shortened depending on the event format.

4. Make the Event Experiential

The biggest mistake an Open House can make is becoming a long presentation about Toastmasters. Guests should experience Toastmasters, not just hear about it. Include demonstrations of:

Prepared Speaking

Have an experienced member deliver a strong speech that demonstrates what members can achieve through Toastmasters. The speech should ideally be:

- Engaging

- Relatable
- Appropriate for a general audience
- Between 5 and 7 minutes

Evaluation

A short evaluation demonstrates one of the unique aspects of Toastmasters — the culture of constructive feedback.

Explain briefly that evaluations help members identify what they are doing well and where they can improve.

Table Topics

This should be one of the most interactive parts of the Open House. Invite guests to participate, but make participation optional and low-pressure. Use simple questions such as:

- “What is one goal you would like to achieve this year?”
- “Who has influenced your life the most?”
- “If you could travel anywhere, where would you go?”
- “What is one skill you wish you had learned earlier?”

Give speakers approximately 1–2 minutes.

The objective is not to test guests. It is to show them that they can speak in a supportive environment even when they are not fully prepared.

5. Tell the Toastmasters Story

The presentation about Toastmasters should be short and engaging. Avoid filling the presentation with too much history or organisational information. Focus on:

What is Toastmasters?

Explain that Toastmasters is a supportive environment where people develop communication and leadership skills through practice, participation and feedback.

What happens at a meeting?

Briefly explain:

- Prepared speeches
- Evaluations
- Table Topics

- Meeting roles
- Opportunities to practise
- The supportive club environment

What can members gain?

Highlight benefits such as:

- Greater confidence
- Improved public speaking
- Better communication
- Stronger presentation skills
- Leadership experience
- Constructive feedback
- Opportunities to meet and learn from others

6. Use Member Testimonials

One of the most powerful parts of an Open House is hearing directly from members. Select one or two members who can share genuine experiences. Ask them to answer:

Stage	Questions
Before Toastmasters	What made you decide to join? What were you nervous or uncertain about?
During Toastmasters	What did you discover? What challenges did you overcome?
After Toastmasters	What has changed? How has Toastmasters helped you personally or professionally?

The testimonial should feel like a story rather than a sales pitch.

7. Create a Welcoming Environment

The guest experience starts before the formal programme begins. Assign members to welcome guests as they arrive. Consider having:

- A registration desk
- Name tags
- Welcome signage
- Refreshments
- Members available for informal conversation

- Information about the club
- Membership information

Every guest should ideally have a member assigned to help them feel comfortable.

Avoid allowing guests to sit alone without anyone engaging them.

8. Promote the Open House

Promotion should begin early. Use multiple channels:

- WhatsApp
- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Instagram
- Email
- Personal invitations
- Club networks
- Workplace networks
- Community organisations

Personal invitations are particularly important. Instead of simply posting “Join us for our Open House,” encourage members to personally invite people who may benefit from Toastmasters.

Potential audiences include:

- Professionals
- Students
- Entrepreneurs
- Business owners
- Community leaders
- Young professionals
- People preparing for presentations
- People interested in personal development
- Anyone wanting to improve their confidence and communication

9. Assign an Open House Team

A successful Open House should not depend on one person. Recommended roles include:

Role	Responsibility
Event Coordinator	Responsible for overall planning and coordination
Programme Coordinator	Develops the agenda and confirms speakers and role players
Membership Team	Handles guest registration, questions and follow-up
Public Relations / Marketing	Promotes the event and manages publicity
Hospitality Team	Welcomes guests, manages refreshments and creates a welcoming environment
Technical Team	Manages Zoom, microphones, presentations, sound and other technical requirements where applicable
Follow-Up Team	Contacts guests after the event and invites them to attend another meeting

10. Guest Registration

Collect only information that is useful for follow-up. Suggested information:

- Name
- Phone number
- Email address
- How they heard about the event
- Whether they would like more information about Toastmasters
- Whether they would like to attend another meeting

If registration is digital, consider using a simple online form.

11. The Call to Action

The event should end with a clear next step. Do not leave guests wondering: “What do I do now?”

The closing should explain:

1. When the next club meeting will take place
2. Where the meeting will take place
3. How guests can attend
4. Who they can speak to about membership

5. How they can join

A strong closing message could be:

You have experienced Toastmasters today. Now we invite you to take the next step.

Come to our next meeting, participate again, meet our members and discover what Toastmasters can do for you.

12. Follow-Up After the Open House

The Open House does not end when the guests leave. Follow-up should take place within a few days. Thank guests for attending and provide:

- The next meeting date
- Meeting location or online link
- Membership information
- Contact details for the club
- An invitation to attend again

Where appropriate, personally contact guests who showed particular interest.

The goal is to move guests through the journey:

Guest → Returning Guest → Prospective Member → Member

13. Suggested Timeline

4–6 Weeks Before

- Agree on the date and venue
- Set objectives
- Establish the organising team
- Develop the programme
- Identify speakers and role players
- Begin promotion

2–3 Weeks Before

- Confirm all programme participants
- Intensify invitations

- Prepare promotional materials
- Confirm refreshments and equipment
- Set up registration

1 Week Before

- Confirm attendance
- Send reminders
- Reconfirm speakers and meeting roles
- Test presentations and technology
- Brief the welcoming team

Day of Event

- Arrive early
- Set up registration
- Prepare the venue
- Brief the team
- Welcome guests
- Capture guest information
- Deliver an energetic and engaging programme

Within 48–72 Hours After

- Thank guests
- Share relevant information
- Invite them to the next meeting
- Follow up with prospective members
- Review the event results

14. Measuring Success

After the Open House, the organising team should conduct a short review. Consider:

Measure	Result
Guests invited	
Guests registered	
Guests attended	
Guests who participated	
Membership enquiries	
Guests attending another meeting	
New members recruited	

Also ask:

- What worked well?
- What could be improved?

The objective is not simply to have a well-attended event.

The ultimate measure of success is whether the Open House created meaningful connections and moved people closer to becoming active Toastmasters members.

15. Open House Checklist

Planning

- ☐ Set the date and venue
- ☐ Establish the organising team
- ☐ Define objectives and targets
- ☐ Prepare the programme
- ☐ Assign all meeting roles

Promotion

- ☐ Create promotional material
- ☐ Share on social media
- ☐ Send invitations
- ☐ Encourage members to invite guests personally
- ☐ Send reminders

Guest Experience

- ☐ Prepare registration
- ☐ Prepare name tags
- ☐ Arrange refreshments
- ☐ Assign members to welcome guests
- ☐ Prepare membership information

Programme

- ☐ Confirm Toastmaster of the Day
- ☐ Confirm prepared speaker
- ☐ Confirm evaluator
- ☐ Confirm Topicsmaster
- ☐ Prepare Table Topics
- ☐ Prepare Toastmasters presentation
- ☐ Prepare member testimonial
- ☐ Prepare membership information
- ☐ Prepare closing call to action

Follow-Up

- ☐ Thank guests
- ☐ Send next meeting details
- ☐ Contact prospective members
- ☐ Track guests who return
- ☐ Review results with the organising team

Conclusion

A Toastmasters Open House should be more than an event designed to recruit members.

It should be an opportunity for people to see, hear and experience the value of Toastmasters for themselves.

When guests walk away thinking:

“I can see myself becoming better at this.”

the Open House has achieved its purpose.

The most successful Open Houses combine a warm welcome, an engaging programme, real member stories, guest participation and a clear invitation to take the next step.