



When you are the Toastmaster of the Meeting

One of the most stimulating educational experiences you'll have as a Toastmaster takes place when you assume the chair as Toastmaster and conduct a meeting program. This assignment should not be given until you've made at least three manual speeches.

The primary duty of the Toastmaster is to act as a genial host, introducing the speakers in such a way that the audience will listen with attention and anticipation. An effective Toastmaster creates an atmosphere of interest, expectation and receptivity.

To do this, avoid long introductions, and seek variety in form.

Don't include lots of biographical details about the speaker, and don't make the speech for him or her. Don't tell a story that might embarrass the speaker. Just be friendly and enthusiastic, and help the speaker get off to a good start.

Don't use the same formula for all introductions. Vary your format. "We have with us today..." may be acceptable once. The same goes for "I take pleasure in introducing..." Don't use the same set of words more than once during the meeting. Be complimentary in a dignified way. Don't be "flowery" in your praise. Be brief. Treat every speaker as you would like a Toastmaster to treat you.

When you are presented as Toastmaster, begin with "Mr. President" or "Madam President," and after briefly thanking the presiding officer, begin by speaking a few words on the nature of the program. Whet the appetites of the members for what is to come. Then introduce the first speaker, making sure of three things.

1. Announce the subject clearly. If it's a manual speech, be sure to let the audience know which assignment will be presented by the speaker, and the goals of that particular presentation.
2. Announce the speaker's name.
3. Remain standing until the speaker has taken his or her place behind the lectern.

When the speaker has concluded, refrain from making extensive comments on what was said. A brief word of appreciate is appropriate, but a lengthy review is not. Proceed with your introduction of the next speaker. If possible, try to build up a feeling of continuity for the speeches.

At the conclusion of the program, briefly thank the speakers, and then return control of the meeting to the presiding officer. When doing this, avoid saying "I now turn the meeting over" because it isn't upside down. You can "yield control," "return control," or "surrender the gavel" without an "overturning." A simple "Mr. President" or "Madam President"

Before the meeting: Check with each speaker well in advance. Obtain the title of the speech and the manual assignment, and agree upon the time to be allotted. Then, line up your agenda and prepare the introductions. It's your responsibility to see that the speakers are on hand, and that the program is conducted as planned in the best possible way.

Prepare for presiding as carefully as you would when making a speech. Remember, it's your responsibility to make the meeting a success.