

International Speech & Evaluation Contest

Contest Chair aide memoire

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Introduction

When taking on the role of Contest Chair, it is of the utmost importance to be familiar with the Speech Contest Rulebook July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026 'Rulebook' and especially:

General Rules, page 5

International Speech Contest rules, page 18,

Evaluation Contest Rules, page 20

Eligibility, page 6 and throughout the Rulebook.

The Contest Chair's checklist pages 24-27

Please regard this aide memoire, therefore, as a support document for the Rulebook.

Paul Walsh, DTM

D91 District Chief Judge 2025-26

International Speech and Evaluation Contest - Prior to the contest

1. Get hold of contestant's details as soon as they are available:
 - a. Name, (Club if beyond a club contest), email address, mobile phone number.
2. Set up a Contestant's WhatsApp group.
3. WhatsApp the contestants a week before the contest:

'Dear Contestants,

I am delighted to be your Contest Chair on [DATE] at [CONTESTS] at [LOCATION]

We can access the room at [TIME] and the contests start at [TIME]

Contestants' Briefing for International Speech Contest will be at [TIME]

Please message me directly with your speech title by [TIME] on [DATE]

Evaluation Contestants' Briefing will be during the break, notionally, [TIME].

For all Contestants - Please find attached the speech contest rulebook and Certificate of Eligibility (C of E)

Can you please print off the C of E, complete and sign it digitally beforehand or bring a signed copy to the Contestants' Briefing.

If you are in both Contests, one C of E will suffice.

Please message me, either direct or on this group with any queries you may have.

Regards

[NAME]

Chase information, as necessary:

'Hi Contestants,

Many Thanks for your speech title, Sheila!

Saket, Mark, Lavinia, Jakub, Maria

Please send me your speech title (direct to me) as soon as you can and no later than [DATE] at [TIME]

Thanks!

Mentioning that a contestant by name has sent you the required information, gets the remainder to respond!

4. Set up a WhatsApp Group for Contest Toastmaster (CT), Contest Chair (CC) and Chief Judge (CJ).
5. Prepare a contestants' spreadsheet for your own use, comprising columns for:

Name,
 Area/ Division (If beyond club level)
 Speech title,
 Arrived at contest.
 C of Es submitted,
 Speaking order.

6. Remember to recruit a test speaker (Or delegate this task to the CT).

At the Contests

- Leave nothing to chance!
- Arrive well in time.
- Checkout room layout, speaking area, documentation.
- Constantly liaise with CT & CJ.
- Ensure contestants have turned up on time and tick them off on your contestants' spreadsheet.

International Speech Contestant's briefing.

Introduction

- Ideally, this should be 30 minutes and no later than 15 minutes before the contest starts.
- Collect any outstanding C of Es, check all of the contestants are present and give a warm welcome

'This is your formal contestants' briefing and we will draw for your speaking position at the end of the briefing. I am pleased to say we are all present.'

[As X is absent, and there is no alternate speaker, as long as X arrives before I am introduced Contest Chair is introduced, they may participate, provided.

- *They report to me, Contest Chair upon arrival,*
- *Have all required paperwork in good order (This should be OK)*
- *Waives the opportunity of a briefing]*

Eligibility

'Thank you for completing eligibility forms and we can confirm that all of you are eligible.'

Speech subject and preparation

'Your speech should fit within the overall purpose of the contest: To clearly develop and present ideas in a substantially original speech.'

25% or less of your speech may be devoted to quoting, paraphrasing, or referencing another person's content, which must be so identified during your speech.'

Speaking area

'Are we content as this as the speaking area?'

Contestant introduction

'I will introduce you as [NAME] [SPEECH TITLE] [SPEECH TITLE] [NAME] (5F)

You can remain in the room throughout the contest.'

Timing of speeches

'Your speech will be from 5 – 7 minutes.'

You will be disqualified if your speech is less than 4 minutes 30 seconds or more than 7 minutes and 30 seconds

Timers will provide you with the usual signals -

GREEN – At 5 minutes and displayed for 1 minute

YELLOW – At 6 minutes and displayed for 1 minute

RED – at 7 minutes and remain on until the conclusion of your speech 6G

Are you able to see the lights?

Introduction and commencement of speech

'When I introduce you, please proceed to the speaking position.

To ensure your microphone is working, as soon as you get to the speaking area, please say, "Thank you, Contest Chair". I will respond, "You're welcome!"

Timing will begin with your next verbal / nonverbal communication with the audience'

Use of props and devices

'As per my email, prior notification of the use of props is required, including but not limited to any sort of electronic devices, music, PPT slides, virtual backgrounds.

You need to abide by any venue restrictions, when using props.

Props must be set up and removed in the minute of silence following contestant's speeches.

A contestant may enlist someone to help them, but it is not the responsibility of the Contest Chair or any other contest official to do so.'

Protest and disqualifications

'Protests can only be lodged by yourself - contestants – and voting judges.

They are limited to eligibility, originality and reference to another contestant or another contestant's speech.

Any protest must be lodged with the Chief Judge /Contest Chair prior to the contest being adjourned.

If a protest is lodged for originality or referencing, the contestant will have the opportunity to respond to the voting judges. A majority of the judges must concur with a decision to disqualify.'

Order of speaking

'Finally, let's draw for order of speaking. Please hold onto your card until I have confirmed all of the speaking positions'

As Contest Chair, ensure you have written the speaking order on your contestants' spreadsheet (Easily forgotten!) and post the speaking order on Judges' WhatsApp Group as soon as drawn.

Opening of International Speech Contest.

Divide your opening into a 'Light-hearted beginning', followed by an 'Official' Opening.

Light-hearted opening

It will be according to your style and some pointers are:

- Excite the audience with the history of the club/area/division in the history and success in the International speech contest.
- Draw upon your own experience of being involved / present at contests.
- Look to put everyone at their ease.
- Engage everyone by talking about how we run a contest and that we need functionaries and contestants.
- ‘Functionaries are volunteers, from our club/area/division and from elsewhere - We are very grateful.’
- ‘Participating in contests is a great part of the TI experience.’
- Finally, remind the audience of how they have a key role in to-night’s contest:
 - By listening and enjoying our contestants’ speeches
 - By being ‘Quiet as church mice’, at the end of contestants’ speeches, when judges are marking their ballots
 - And by showing their hearty support for speakers when they take the floor and when they have finished their speech.
- And then ask:

‘And how will you show your hearty support for our speakers to-night?’

(Which of course is a warmup)

‘Official’ introduction

‘Let’s now look at the contest. In the International Speech Contest, the purpose of the speech is straightforward - **To clearly develop and present ideas in a substantially original speech**, from 5 to 7 minutes.

‘A contestant is disqualified if a speech is less than 4 minutes and 30 seconds, or more than 7 minutes and 30 seconds.’

‘To give some guidance, one of our timers will display a

Green light at 5 minutes, which remains on for 1 minutes

Yellow light at 6 minutes, which remains on for 1 minute

Red light at 7 minutes, which remains on until the conclusion of the speech.’

‘You can sit back and enjoy the contest as protests can only be made by contestants and voting judges, prior to the adjournment of the contest, based on originality, reference to another contestant or speech. We have already confirmed that all contestants are eligible to compete.

The speaking area has been agreed as.....

I can confirm that the contestants have been briefed.

I guess you would like to know the speaking order.

The speaking order is....’

Chief Judge have the functionaries and judges been briefed?’

‘I can confirm that judges and functionaries have been briefed.’

‘The contest can commence!’

Body of International Speech Contest

The contest now is straightforward:

'Our 1st contestant is [NAME] with a speech entitled [SPEECH TITLE]

With a speech entitled [SPEECH TITLE], [NAME]'

'Thank you, Contest Chair'

'You're welcome!'

- At the end of the speech - Lead applause, no comment on the speech.

'Timer, can we have 1 minute please for judges to consider the speech'

- After 1 minute:
- Repeat the process for following contestants
- Our next contestant is.....until..... Our final contestant is.....
- At the end of the final contestant's speech.....

Lead applause, no comment on the speech.

'Timer, can we have 1 minute please for judges to consider the speech and then a period of silence for judges to complete their ballots and for ballot counters to collect the ballots.'.....

IT IS IMPORTANT TO MAINTAIN SILENCE.

When all of the ballots have been collected....

'.... It looks like the ballots have now been collected and the ballot counters and Chief Judge will now leave the contest room and collate the ballots.'

'Let's have a round of applause'

- Commend the contestants for the excellent speeches and the audience for behaving themselves! (Being silent and raucous in the right places!)

'We will now have an interval and let's reconvene in [TIME], subject to the Chief Judge and ballot counters completing their counting and finalising the results'

Interval

During the Interval,

- Have a good long breath and relax for a moment or two!
- Check in with the CJ, CT.
- If there is a protest to consider, you will need to tell the Contest Host, CT, Evaluation Contestants and audience that the interval will be extended. There is no need to be specific as to why.

Evaluation Contest

- When the counting and finalising of results is complete, the judge and contestants' briefings may commence.
- Some Chief Judges and Contest Chairs will combine their respective briefings, having an International Speech Contest and Evaluation Contest briefing at the beginning of the evening.
- My preference is to have separate briefings. I feel it provides clarity and minimises the risk of confusion. It is possible, however, to summarise some elements, if it follows a International Speech Contest, such as 'Protests and 'Disqualifications, assuming we have the same speakers!

Evaluation Contest Briefing

Introduction

- Collect any outstanding C of Es, check all of the contestants are present and give a warm welcome

'This is your formal contestants' briefing and we will draw for your speaking position at the end of the briefing. I am pleased to say we are all present.'

[As X is absent, and there is no alternate speaker, as long as X arrives before I am introduced Contest Chair is introduced, they may participate, provided.

- *They report to me, Contest Chair upon arrival,*
- *Have all required paperwork in good order (This should be OK)*
- *Waives the opportunity of a briefing]*

Eligibility

'Thank you for completing eligibility forms and we can confirm that all of you are eligible.'

Evaluation Contest Process

- **Evaluation Contest Process -**
 1. At the beginning of the contest, a 5 – 7-minute test speech will be presented.
 - A. The test speech will be either a contest type speech or a project speech from the Toastmasters Pathways learning experience.
 - B. If you choose to make preparatory notes during the test speech, you must use the Evaluation Contestant notes sheet (item 1177). More than 1 sheet may be used.
 - C. I will introduce the test speaker by announcing the speaker's name, speech title, speech title and the speaker's name
 - D. Neither the test speaker's project nor any speaker objectives will be made known to yourselves, chief judge, voting judges, tiebreaking judge or audience.
 2. At the conclusion of the test speech, the Sergeant-at-Arms will escort you from the room and take you to a place where you have 5 minutes to prepare your evaluation using the Evaluation Contestant notes sheet.
 - A. Timing and preparation supervision will be under the control of the **Sergeant at Arms**
 - B. You must not use either digital or other devices during the contest to gain an unfair advantage.
 3. After 5 minutes have elapsed, no further preparation is allowed, and you must hand your copy of the Evaluation Contest Notes sheet to the Sergeant-at-Arms. The Evaluation Contest Notes sheet will be handed back to you as you are introduced to present your evaluation.
- Once you have given your evaluation, you can remain in the contest room

Contestant Introduction

- . I will introduce you by announcing your name twice [NAME] [NAME]

*You will walk to the front of the room and to ensure your microphone is working, as soon as you get to the speaking area, please say, '**Thank you, Contest Chair**'.*

*I will respond, '**You're welcome!**' and hand the stage to you.*

Timing will begin with your next verbal / nonverbal communication with the audience'

Speech timing

'Your speech is between 2 – 3minutes.

GREEN signal is displayed at – 2 minutes, **YELLOW** signal at 2 minute 30 seconds, **RED** signal displayed at 3 minutes and remains on until the completion of the speech.

You will be disqualified if a speech is less than 1 minute and 30 seconds or more than 3 minutes and 30 seconds.

Are you able to see the lights?

Speech Content

'As for all contest speeches, it must be created by the contestant and substantially original – 25% or less of the speech may be devoted to quoting, paraphrasing, or referencing another person's content. Any quoted, paraphrased or referenced content must be identified during the speech presentation.

Contestants must not reference another contestant, or a speech presented by another contestant.'

Speaking area

'Are we content with this as the speaking area?'

Protest and disqualifications

'Protests can only be lodged by yourself - contestants – and voting judges.

They are limited to eligibility, originality and reference to another contestant or another contestant's speech.

Any protest must be lodged with the Chief Judge /Contest Chair prior to the contest being adjourned.

If a protest is lodged for originality or referencing, the contestant will have the opportunity to respond to the voting judges. A majority of the judges must concur with a decision to disqualify.'

Order of speaking

'Finally, let's draw for order of speaking. Please hold onto your card until I have confirmed all of the speaking positions.'

As Contest Chair, ensure you have written the speaking order on your contestants' spreadsheet (Easily forgotten!) and post the speaking order on Judges' WhatsApp Group as soon as drawn.

Evaluation Contest Opening

Official Opening

As the audience is now engaged in the contests, the Contest Chair can commence with an 'Official Opening'

'Welcome back and it is now time for our Evaluation Contest,

Speech timing

At the beginning of the contest, we will have a 5 – 7-minute test speech, which. will be either a contest type speech or a project speech from the Toastmasters Pathways learning experience

Neither the test speaker's project nor any objectives will be known.

Contestants may make preparatory notes during the test speech.

At the conclusion of the test speech, the Sergeant-at Arms will escort contestants from the room to a place where they have 5 minutes to prepare their evaluation using the Evaluation Contestant notes sheet. They must not use either digital or other devices during the contest to gain an unfair advantage.

After 5 minutes have elapsed, contestants hand their Evaluation Contest notes to the Sergeant-at-Arms. They will be handed back to them as they are introduced to present their evaluation.

Once they have given their evaluation, contestants remain in the contest room

'A speech is between 2 – 3 minutes.

GREEN signal is displayed at 2-minutes seconds, ***YELLOW*** signal at 2 minute 30 seconds, ***RED*** signal displayed at 3 minutes and remains on until the completion of the speech.

A contestant is disqualified if a speech is less than 1 minute 30 seconds or more than 3 minutes and 30 seconds.

When I have given the floor to a contestant, timing will begin with their next verbal / nonverbal communication with the audience.'

Contest, Protests, Speaking Area

'The rules for speech content, protests and disqualifications and the speaking area are as they were for our first contest.'

Briefing confirmation and speaking order

'I can confirm that the contestants have been briefed.'

I guess you would like to know the speaking order?

'The speaking order is....

'Chief Judge' have the functionaries and judges been briefed?'

'I can confirm that judges and functionaries have been briefed.'

'The contest can commence!'

Body of the Evaluation Contest

Test Speech

It commences with the test speech, introduced as:

[Name] [Speech Title] [Speech Title] [Name].

Evaluation Preparation

After the test speech and contestants have been escorted from the contest room, there is 5 minutes or so before the evaluation contest speeches.

This can be used for:

- Club / Area/ Division notes and promotion of events / initiatives
- Table Topics

Evaluation Contest Speeches

A Sergeant at Arms escort contestants one by one, to the contest room entrance, as per the speaking order and they are introduced by the Contest Chair

'Our first/next/last contestant is [NAME] [NAME]

The contestant walks to the speaking area, and contestant and Contest Chair shake hands

'Thank you, Contest Chair'

'You're welcome!'

- At the end of the speech - Lead applause, no comment on the speech.

'Timer, can we have 1 minute please for judges to consider the speech'

- After 1 minute:
- Repeat the process for following contestants
- Our next contestant is.....until..... Our final contestant is.....
- At the end of the final contestant's speech.....
- Lead applause, no comment on the speech.

'Timer, can we have 1 minute please for judges to consider the speech and then a period of silence for judges to complete their ballots and for ballot counters to collect the ballots.'.....

IT IS IMPORTANT TO MAINTAIN SILENCE.

- When all of the ballots have been collected....

'.... It looks like the ballots have now been collected and the ballot counters and Chief Judge will now leave the contest room and collate the ballots.'

'Let's have a round of applause'

- Commend the contestants for the excellent speeches and the audience once more for behaving themselves! (Being silent and raucous in the right places!)

Contestant Interview and distribution of certificates of participation

- During the period when the Chief Judge and ballot counters are counting votes, there is an opportunity to interview contestants and give them their certificates of participation.

Content of conversation can be:

- From the contestant profile (Hobbies, Interests, Interesting facts)
- About their club if it is beyond a club contest
- The benefits of being a contestant
- At the end of the conversation, present their certificate of participation.

- Usually, the Chief Judge returns with the results just prior to the end of contestants' interviews but always have something in reserve, such as Evaluation, information on the next contest or conference, notices from area, division, district.

Presentation of Awards

- As soon as you see the Chief Judge enter the contest room, complete interviews and move towards presentation of awards.

'We now have the results!'

Contest Chair and Chief Judge (And a Guest of Honour if present) are the 'Presentation Team.'

'Chief Judge, can you please tell us the results of the Evaluation Contest in reverse order.

Chief Judge: 'No / X qualifications, Results'..'

- Results are announced in reverse order and award recipients come up in turn to receive their award and acclaim

'And results for the International Speech Contest'

Chief Judge: 'No / X qualifications, Results'..'

Results are announced in reverse order and award recipients come up in turn to receive their award and acclaim.

'No / X qualifications, Results'..'

- At end of presentation of awards, express thanks, great contest, etc and handover to Contest Host.
- After the contests, please ensure that notification of results is copied/ photographed and passed on by the Chief Judge to the Contest Host for passing onto the next level of contest.

END