

Best Practices



A handful of helpful tips

Each Toastmasters club is unique. Club themes are as varied as the club members themselves – some focus on a hobby or pastime, some are organized to meet a specific company’s training needs and some provide a place for members to practice their English. But despite their differences, most successful clubs have this in common: They run tightly organized club meetings in which everyone has a clear sense of structure and purpose.

Following is a short list of best practices that successful Toastmasters clubs have developed over the years. These help impart a sense of structure and purpose to your club meetings.

- **Be timely.** This should be obvious, especially to clubs that meet during their company’s lunch break or before work in the morning. One of the hallmarks of Toastmasters’ success is the ability to deliver quality speaking opportunities, conduct club business and provide useful feedback within a time frame that works for busy people. You can only achieve this by starting meetings on time, keeping them moving forward, and not allowing them to run over time.
- **Prepare the room.** A well-prepared meeting place helps convey a feeling of order and organization. At every club meeting, it is the job of the club’s sergeant at arms to arrange the seating, display the club banner, set up the lectern and prepare namecards or nametags for each club member and guest. If the sergeant at arms is unavailable and has not arranged a replacement, it is important for the other club officers to find a replacement for the meeting.
- **Maintain the guestbook.** This is a valuable resource and a crucial piece of the membership puzzle. Have the guestbook prominently displayed and ready to sign at the beginning of every meeting. Don’t be shy about insisting that everyone signs it!
- **Follow club protocol.** Over time, each club develops its own set of protocols—where to stand when speaking, how to greet each speaker, what to do when speeches run long, etc. Maintaining these traditions provides a valuable sense of fairness, character and continuity. Take the time to teach them to new members.
- **Keep the focus.** While Toastmasters provides many social networking opportunities, the club’s primary purpose is to teach communication and leadership skills. Focusing on the educational program will result in happier club members and higher club membership.

To some, strict adherence to standards and procedures may seem limiting, but in fact it’s the sense of structure, punctuality and organization that keeps many Toastmasters clubs alive and thriving for many years.