



# **District 6 Toastmasters Club Programming Idea Cookbook**

**Updated December 2008 by Jackie L. Doehling  
Compiled of input from many creative Toastmasters throughout District 6!**



# Table of Contents

Forward .....	7
The Mission of Toastmasters International.....	7
The Mission of the District .....	7
The Mission of the Club.....	7
A Toastmaster’s Promise.....	8
Getting the Most Out of Your Club Meetings .....	8
Learn by Doing.....	8
You're Among Friends .....	9
Elements of an Effective Club.....	9
Putting Fun into Your Meeting .....	10
Audience Swap .....	10
Brighter Tomorrow .....	11
Box Social Meeting .....	11
Celebrity Wing It Day.....	11
Defense Plea .....	11
“Demosthenes” Theme .....	12
Exaggeration (Liars) Theme .....	12
Red Tape Meeting .....	12
Reincarnation Theme .....	12
Saturday Night Live! .....	13
Soap Box Meeting.....	13
Sound Off Meeting .....	13
Summer Theme .....	13
Surprise Meeting .....	13
Tonight Show.....	14
Vacations Theme .....	14
Winter Theme.....	14
General Warm-Up (Set the Mood).....	14
Table Topics A-Z.....	14
Abstinence Topics.....	14
Altered Headlines Topics.....	15

Baby Picture Topics .....	15
Backyard Invention Topics.....	15
Beauty Pageant Topics .....	15
Biggest Blunders Topics.....	15
Book Report.....	16
Buttons .....	16
Calendar Theme .....	16
Continuous Story .....	16
Counter Topics.....	16
Definitions of Unusual Words .....	16
Describe the Photograph Topics .....	17
Different Sayings .....	17
The Diplomat (Mock United Nations).....	17
Dual Personality Topics .....	17
Emotion & Situation .....	17
Emotional Topics .....	17
End of the World .....	17
Famous Person Interview .....	18
Hats.....	18
Ice Breaker Topics.....	18
“In School I . . . .” .....	18
It Was a Dark and Stormy Night... ..	18
Job Interview .....	18
Lemonade Topics.....	19
Lottery Winners.....	19
Music Time Machine .....	19
Nostalgia Topics.....	19
Objectives Topics.....	19
People's Court .....	19
A Picture is Worth 1000 Words.....	20
Point-Counterpoint.....	20
Pretend Topics.....	20
Progressive Story .....	20

Quotations.....	20
Reading Practice .....	20
Secret Desires Topics.....	20
Soap Opera Topics .....	21
Table Topics Quotes .....	21
Toastmaster Topics.....	21
Turn Around Topics .....	21
White Elephant Topics.....	21
Why Doesn't Someone . . . .....	22
Yellow Pages.....	22
Theme Meetings.....	22
Educational Themes .....	22
All the World's a Stage .....	22
Audiovisual Theme .....	22
Building Vocabulary.....	23
Debate Theme .....	23
Effective Listening Theme .....	23
Effective Communication .....	23
Electronic Media Theme.....	24
Evaluation Theme .....	24
Hobby Theme .....	24
Health Theme .....	24
Humor, How to Find and Use It.....	25
Icebreaker Theme.....	25
Interview.....	25
Investment Theme .....	25
Literary Theme .....	26
Master the Microphone .....	26
Officer Day.....	26
Officers' Duties Theme .....	26
Parliamentary Procedure Theme .....	26
Planning.....	26
Planning Workshop .....	27

Political Convention Theme (“Republocratic” Convention) .....	27
Research Theme .....	27
Wills and Estates Meeting .....	27
Motivational Themes.....	28
Assertiveness Theme.....	28
Effective Persuasion Theme .....	28
Great Peoples' Birthdays .....	28
Management Techniques.....	28
Motivation Theme .....	29
Speech Construction.....	29
Roasts .....	29
Outgoing President Roast.....	29
Roast the Moving Toastmaster .....	29
Situation Themes.....	30
Alibi Ike Theme .....	30
All Speakers Meeting.....	30
Club Anniversary Celebration .....	30
Apple for the Teacher Theme.....	30
Auction Toastmasters Meeting .....	31
Backwards Meeting .....	31
Bartender Meeting .....	31
Doomsday.....	31
Effective Communication Theme .....	32
Embarrassment .....	32
First Meeting of the New Year (Officer Installation) .....	32
Impromptu Meeting.....	32
Lawsuits Theme .....	33
Media Meeting .....	33
One Hundred Years From Now Theme .....	33
Outdoor Meeting.....	33
Panel Discussion .....	33
Parole Board.....	34
Predictions.....	34

Progressive Meeting.....	34
Small Claims Court Meeting .....	34
Recognition Meetings.....	35
Area Governor Accolade.....	35
Benefactors Theme .....	35
Companionship Theme.....	35
Family (or Spouse) Night .....	35
Honor the New CC, AC, CL, AL or DTM .....	35
Local Communication and Leadership Award .....	36
Program to Honor Fire Fighters.....	36
Program to Honor Local Politicians .....	36
Program to Honor Teachers .....	36
Program to Honor Police Officers.....	37
Public Servants Accolade.....	37
Youth Meeting.....	37
Holidays .....	37
Arbor Day Theme.....	37
Birthday Theme .....	38
Christmas Theme.....	38
Easter Theme.....	38
Ground Hog Day (February 2) Theme .....	38
Independence Day Theme.....	39
Memorial Day Theme .....	39
Diverse Holiday Theme.....	39
New Year's Theme .....	39
Thanksgiving Theme .....	39
Valentine's Theme .....	40
Final Thoughts .....	40

Thanks to all of you who have contributed ideas to this District 6 Cookbook. We appreciate your creativity and new ideas.

## **Forward**

Welcome to the District 6 Cookbook! This book will be invaluable to your club to help you plan enjoyable, educational meetings. As our founder Dr. Ralph Smedley said, "We learn best in moments of enjoyment." Experiment with your club meetings using the ideas in this cookbook. Add your own twist to them. Watch as your club members walk away saying, "I can't wait to see what happens at our next meeting!" Also, watch the reactions of your guests; they'll more than likely say, "This is a club I've got to join; they enjoy their meetings!"

As your club members develop new ideas for creative table topics, educational theme meetings or special recognition meetings, please share them with your current Lt. Governor Education & Training. We will try to update more frequently to include everyone's great new ideas! Experiment. Try something new. And above all, have many enjoyable and educational meetings in the future.

## **The Mission of Toastmasters International**

Toastmasters International is the leading organization devoted to making effective oral communication a worldwide reality. Through its member clubs, Toastmasters International helps men and women learn the arts of speaking, listening and thinking--vital skills that promote self confidence, enhance leadership potential, improve human relations and contribute to the betterment of all people. It is basic to this mission that Toastmasters International continually expands its worldwide network of clubs, thereby offering ever-greater numbers of people the opportunity to benefit from its programs.

## **The Mission of the District**

The mission of the District is to enhance the performance and extend the network of Clubs, thereby offering greater numbers of people the opportunity to benefit from Toastmasters educational program by:

- Focusing on the critical success factors as specified by the District educational and membership goals
- Insuring that each Club effectively fulfills its responsibilities to its members
- Providing effective training and leadership opportunities for Club and District officers.

## **The Mission of the Club**

The mission of a Toastmasters Club is to provide a mutually supportive and positive learning environment in which every member has the opportunity to develop communication and leadership skills, which in turn foster self-confidence and personal growth.

## A Toastmaster's Promise

Being a Toastmaster means more than simply making a commitment to self-development. Everyone who joins a Toastmasters Club is making a commitment to the Club, to its members, and to the organization as a whole.

As a member of Toastmasters International and my Club, I promise...

- To attend Club meetings regularly;
- To prepare all my speeches to the best of my ability, basing them on projects in the Communication and Leadership Program manual or the Advanced Communication and Leadership Program manuals;
- To willingly prepare for and fulfill meeting assignments;
- To provide fellow members with helpful, constructive evaluations;
- To help the Club maintain the positive, friendly environment necessary for all members to learn and grow;
- To willingly serve my Club as an officer when called upon to do so;
- To treat my fellow members and out guests with respect and courtesy;
- To bring guests to club meetings so they can see the benefits Toastmasters membership offers;
- To adhere to the guidelines and rules for all Toastmasters educational and recognition programs;
- To maintain honest and highly ethical standards during the conduct of all Toastmasters activities.

## Getting the Most Out of Your Club Meetings

Whatever your goals in life may be, your success depends on your ability to communicate. Individuals who can verbalize their ideas so that they are heard, understood and acted upon possess one of the primary qualities of leadership. By joining a Toastmasters club, you have embarked on a program that will multiply your communication and leadership skills like the more than three million people who have participated in Toastmasters. You are about to gain these same benefits, benefits that can change your life. As a Toastmaster you will learn to overcome the initial nervousness many feel when called upon to speak before an audience. You will learn how to organize and present your ideas logically and convincingly. You will improve your ability to listen to other people's ideas and evaluate them. And you will develop self-confidence that will radiate in every situation involving other people.

## Learn by Doing

The key to getting the most out of the Toastmasters' communication and leadership program is active participation. People learn best by doing. No method of skill development can match the power of actually experiencing what you are learning. That's how the Toastmasters program works, and that's what makes it so effective in helping people like you become more successful.

The Toastmasters program is not a formal course in public speaking; it is an ongoing series of experiences that will directly involve you in a variety of communication situations. The principles

you will learn are basic to any form of interpersonal communication, whether your audience consists of one person or 1,000. In addition to presenting prepared speeches, you will participate in Table Topics, an impromptu speaking exercise that will develop your ability to “think on your feet” in situations such as interviews, seminars, business meetings and conversations. You will also serve in various roles at club meetings, including Toastmaster, Table Topics leader, Evaluator, and General Evaluator. Each of these roles has a specific educational purpose and will aid you in your self-development. Another benefit of attending club meetings is the opportunity to watch other speakers and learn from them.

## You're Among Friends

Your Toastmasters club is not a classroom. It is a workshop in which you will develop your communication and leadership skills among a group of friends, people who are there for the same reason you are. It's also a laboratory where you can experiment with new ideas and techniques, and receive friendly feedback. This shared commitment to a worthwhile goal gives a Toastmasters club a special energy. Members draw strength from one another and take pride in helping one another grow and develop. This spirit of camaraderie and mutual support is one of the most satisfying benefits of a Toastmasters membership. It also makes learning fun!

As you get started, your club will provide you with a coach/mentor to help with your first few projects. Rely on this experienced Toastmaster for advice and guidance; he or she has faced the same challenges you're facing and understands how you feel. Like your coach/mentor, the other members of your club are there to help you become the communicator and leader you want to be.

You will get out of Toastmasters what you put into it. If you participate actively and apply what you learn to your business, home and social life, your opportunities for self-development will be endless and richly rewarding.

## Elements of an Effective Club

These elements of an effective club are essential to the development of individual members and effective club programming.

### **1. Club officers are responsible, dedicated and effective.**

Training session attendance, regular executive committee meetings, financial responsibility, Area Council participation, job awareness, and the responsibility to perform duties are all important.

### **2. Club programs are well-planned and well-executed.**

Plan good programs, have enjoyable meetings, use variety in meeting programs, and have meetings start and finish on time.

### **3. The club places high emphasis on educational development.**

Regular manual speeches; CC/CL, AC/AL, and DTM accomplishments; keeping accurate member progress charts; and recognizing achievements along the way as well as at the completion.

#### **4. Meetings are varied, dynamic, and enjoyable.**

Conduct theme meetings, contests, debates, special programs, Success/Leadership modules, and have guest speakers. Plan meetings fun!

#### **5. Members receive positive support and recognition.**

Positive evaluations, members support one another, and recognize member accomplishments in club bulletins.

#### **6. The club attracts and retains new members.**

Best sales tool is program excellence, good guest relations, new member orientation, new member induction, coaches or mentors, and rapid involvement of new members.

#### **7. Members are encouraged to get involved outside the club.**

Speechcraft, Youth Leadership, joint meetings with other clubs, speaker/evaluator exchanges, Area Councils and events, District Conference attendance, service as District Officer, new club sponsorship and assisting low-member clubs.

#### **8. Members are energetic and enthusiastic.**

Members have a shared commitment to a worthwhile goal, a positive attitude, and a high energy level.

#### **9. Members assess the club with the Moments of Truth**

A strong club regularly “touches base” to ensure it is a quality club serving its members in the best way possible. Use the Moments of Truth at least once a year to check how well your club is operating.

*“We learn best in moments of enjoyment.”*

*- Dr. Ralph C. Smedley, founder, Toastmasters International*

## **Putting Fun into Your Meeting**

### **Audience Swap**

After each speaker comes to the lectern, the Toastmaster announces who the “audience” will be for that speech. For example:

- A speaker on environmental responsibility can address an audience of oil refinery owners.
- An anti-gun speaker can address the NRA.
- A pro-choice speaker can address an audience of conservative leaders.

The audience is supposed to act the role assigned to it, and heckling is encouraged. The speeches are evaluated on how well the speakers adjust to the hostile audiences, and if they convinced their particular group.

## Brighter Tomorrow

**Theme Setting:** Think happy! Tomorrow will be better. The whole meeting is an optimistic note.

**Table Topics:** For a brighter tomorrow, how should we handle these problems?

- Disagreements with each other
- Strife between nations
- Family problems, divorce, etc.
- National problems; pollution, unemployment, crime
- Individual problems, tensions, outlook on life

**Speeches:** Have talks on improving quality of life. Today, compared with yesterday. Ideas and slogans on having an optimistic outlook. Inspirational people and philosophies.

## Box Social Meeting

The spouses or guests bring decorated boxes containing fancy lunches for two. Prizes are given for the best decorated boxes. Members bid on boxes during an auction conducted by one or two creative auctioneers. Successful bidders share lunches with the spouses/guests that prepared them. For a little extra spice, secretly pre-arrange with the members that a \$1.00 bid is really only a \$.25 bid. Watch the reactions when the bids get up into the \$20.00 range or higher. This makes a great videotape program. Have each couple introduce themselves on camera. Then take shots during the bidding, paying particular attention to reactions to the high bids. Play back the tape during the meal.

## Celebrity Wing It Day

Draw for meeting roles and the celebrities to impersonate in those roles at the beginning of the meeting. (for example, Toastmaster = Johnny Carson, Invocator = Mother Teresa, Ah counter = Edwin Newman). Vote for the best impersonator.

## Defense Plea

**Theme Setting:** Plan a courtroom, with judge, lawyers and the appropriate setting.

**Table Topics:** Pose “legal” situations (caught running stop sign, mistake on tax return, threw rock at a bird but it went through window, etc.). The “culprits” give a two minute defense plea for their actions.

**Speeches:** Have a mock trial, with the defense and prosecution briefly stating positions. The “culprit” takes the stand on behalf of themselves and pleads extenuating circumstances.

*“A kind word is never lost.”*  
*-Unknown*

## “Demosthenes” Theme

**Theme Setting:** Meeting based on famous Greek orator Demosthenes. Speaker could wrap sheet around for toga and wear a laurel wreath on head. Each speaker is given jelly beans, real beans, or other such objects to hold in their mouth while speaking. Speeches may be flowery and oratorical in manner of the Greek style.

**Table Topics:** Is the lectern stronger than the sword? Or, do actions speak louder than words? Has the old style of oratory vanished? Who still uses it? Has TV influenced our speaking style? Evaluate the styles of well-known speakers (Billy Graham, Susan B. Anthony, Jesse Jackson, Maya Angelou, Martin Luther King etc.).

**Speeches:** Have lofty, elaborate speeches, with beans, marbles, etc. in the mouth (please be safe!) Possibly also have a serious speech or two on the use of dramatics in speaking.

## Exaggeration (Liars) Theme

To prevent Topics participants from having too much preparation time, give each of them a special subject for their lies (Hole-In-One, Ten Strikes, My Aunt Elsie, Smart Investments, The Great Windstorm. etc.). Speeches should be humorous longer versions on the same kind of subjects. Select the Liar of the meeting and give an appropriate special award. For extra fun, have the minutes and the Treasurer's report fit the theme for the evening.

## Red Tape Meeting

For this one, type the Table Topics and seal them in pre-numbered envelopes. Pass out the envelopes in advance with instructions not to open them until called on to do so. Call the numbers out of sequence and give a complicated envelope exchange instructions before the speaker can open one to respond to the question. This gets funny when the Topics leader is hard pressed to remember who still has unopened envelopes.

At least one speech should be a humorous lampoon of the bureaucratic red tape we have all experienced at some time or another. Try something closer to home; have some member explain to a prospective member what the dues will be if he/she joins at this meeting.

## Reincarnation Theme

**Theme Setting:** Speakers and others could impersonate well-known people of the past as their incarnate ancestors.

**Table Topics:** Why I do (do not) believe in reincarnation. Why I did it that way when I was (Custer, Napoleon, Hitler, Cleopatra, Margaret Thatcher, Rosa Parks, etc.).

**Speeches:** Each speaker relates his/her life as the impersonated ancestor. Pick especially interesting episodes, such as the French Revolution, Gettysburg, Titanic sinking, Montgomery bus boycott, etc. as the setting.

## Saturday Night Live!

Reenact the long-standing television show by having each member portray a character and perform exaggerated or satirical skits as the SNL actors do. They can be the Blues Brothers, news anchors, the Whiners, or any character on the current show.

## Soap Box Meeting

Have members get on a “Soap Box” to sell ideas or items assigned by the Topics leader. The “soap box” can be an imaginary one, but the speakers will respond more in “soap box” oratory style if made to stand on a real box. Speeches should be assigned to members who in the past have indicated strong feelings on particular subjects. Encourage them to let loose.

## Sound Off Meeting

Every member prepares a short speech on a controversial subject and after delivering it calls on some other member to give a short rebuttal. Then the speaker is allowed one minute to rebut the rebuttal. Sound confusing? The idea is that each member gives only one speech and one rebuttal of some other member’s speech. Skip Table Topics since the rebuttals fulfill the impromptu aspects of Topics. If you have a large club, you may want to do this in two nights with 50% of the members speaking each time. Note: Timing is important and should be adhered to.

*“The world needs more warm hearts and fewer hot heads.”*  
- unknown

## Summer Theme

Decorate the room with lots of summertime props: members can bring beach towels, sunglasses, sun hats, etc. The Toastmaster can serve lemonade. Table Topics can center on summer vacation getaway ideas, etc.

## Surprise Meeting

This one works well for reduced summer meetings when attendance is intermittent. Don't make any assignments. As each member arrives, have them draw for the role they will fill for the meeting including president if you wish. This meeting can provide a good lesson in the value of preparedness for both the speakers and the audience. Some interesting news articles could be provided for the speakers.

## **Tonight Show**

The Toastmaster can be Jay Leno and begin the meeting with a monologue after being enthusiastically introduced by the Sergeant at Arms in an upbeat manner. Members on the agenda can introduce themselves as an entertainment personality they want to portray. “Jay” can interview them about current or upcoming movies, TV appearances, etc. when they give their reports/perform their duty.

## **Vacations Theme**

Really use your imagination for this one. Speeches may be fantasy, dream vacations or reviews of unexpected and satisfying vacations. Table Topics can be vacations of the future: trip to the moon, asteroid cruise, climbing Everest with a Rocket Belt, etc.

## **Winter Theme**

Decorate the meeting room with lots of winter props such as snow shovels, fake snow, mittens, coats, etc. The members can bundle up in their winter finest. The Toastmaster can serve hot chocolate. Table Topics can center on what I would rather be doing now or fun things to do in the coldest of winters.

## **General Warm-Up (Set the Mood)**

Start your meeting with self introductions, and have every member respond to a theme or answer a question. This will serve as a warm-up period for every member and will get the essentials of a good meeting into action.

## **Table Topics A-Z**

The following Topics can help you have lively, entertaining and fun Table Topics.

## **Abstinence Topics**

This has nothing to do with alcoholic beverages. The Topics participants are to abstain from answering the Topic, no matter how attractive it might be to them. They should talk instead about why they will not discuss the Topic and why they believe no one else should discuss it either. This can be a big success and hilarious if the Topics leader knows the members well enough to entice them with subjects that they would otherwise discuss at the drop of a hat.

## Altered Headlines Topics

Cut out newspaper article headlines and with a black felt tip pen personalize them to pertain to members. Seal them in individual envelopes. Pass them out with instructions not to open them until called upon to speak. When called, speakers open their envelope and relate the story that they feel pertains to the member it was personalized for. Some of the funniest news stories result when a member gets a headline that names him or her as the subject.

## Baby Picture Topics

Have each member bring a baby picture in the 1-4 year range. Place them all in a large envelope so they can't be seen. Speakers will remove only one picture from the envelope and discuss for two minutes the life of the member to whom they believe it belongs.

## Backyard Invention Topics

Each Topic starts with the phrase "You have invented a(n) \_\_\_\_." The Topics participant's task is to explain the invention to the patent office. The clever Topics leader will select items that are not only needed badly, but will also stimulate the imagination of the participant. Perhaps a much-needed invention will be initiated by this session.

*Maturity is the capacity of knowing you are right, without the compulsion to try to prove it.*  
- unknown

## Beauty Pageant Topics

Place questions in a bag and have the Topics leader be a beauty pageant host. The Topics participant selects a question and reads it silently, and then the leader reads it aloud. The participant answers the question just like a pageant contestant would. Members vote for best response that addressed the question instead of avoiding or dancing around it.

## Biggest Blunders Topics

Some of the best humor comes from stories in which the teller is the goat. In this Topics session, the participants are asked to "tell" on themselves. To maintain the spontaneity of Table Topics, give each participant a particular field that his/her biggest blunder must relate to. For example, someone may be asked to tell about the biggest blunder as a driver, another as a car buyer, a lover, or an interviewee for employment. An appropriate award for the best Topics would be a big lemon.

## Book Report

Each Topics participant is given the title of some obscure book and asked to give a two-minute book review. The Topics leader then gives a brief description of the real book.

## Buttons

Bring a container of lapel buttons--serious, comical, etc. Have Topics participants select a button and explain the word or phrase on the button, or tell a story using the word or phrase.

## Calendar Theme

At the end of the year, take an old calendar and use the captions/pictures for the theme (for example, cats, plants, birds, humor). Each participant can talk about the picture they have. For example, if each month had a different bird, include the name of the bird, where they live, etc. Make it educational as well as fun.

## Continuous Story

Begin a story and ask Topics participants to continue it. The last line used by each participant is the first one used by the next participant.

*"The human voice is our hardest faculty. It begins at birth and functions beautifully, right up till we stand up to speak in public."*

- Unknown

## Counter Topics

The Topics leader has a sack of unusual items from around the house that were grabbed from the kitchen, bathroom or other counter. Each participant is given a different item to talk about. If the object is not known, the participant makes up something.

## Definitions of Unusual Words

The Topics leader presents unusual or difficult words to each participant, with the assignment to define the meaning. If the participant does not know the correct meaning to the word, he or she should make one up. Following each participant's definition, the Topics leader gives the correct definition.

## Describe the Photograph Topics

The Topics leader gives each participant a different photograph of a place or thing, and has them tell about the picture.

## Different Sayings

Provide each participant with a saying and ask them to explain where it originated and what the phrase means. Examples are “a stitch in time saves nine” or “the straw that broke the camel’s back.”

## The Diplomat (Mock United Nations)

Each Topics participant is assigned a country to represent as a delegate to the U. N. Security Council. An international incident is outlined with sketchy details by the Topics leader; for example, a nuclear bomb missing, a plane load of hostages flying over the U.S. etc. Each participant then represents their country in a predictable response.

## Dual Personality Topics

The Topics leader chooses two Topics participants and assigns them opposite personalities; for example, Adam & Eve, JFK & Jackie, Bill & Hillary Clinton, etc. Each participant then gives their respective points of view on their relationship.

## Emotion & Situation

The Topics leader holds two bags. One contains slips of paper with different emotions (joy, fear, love, excitement, etc.) and the other bag contains situations (going to the dentist, winning the lottery, reunions, etc.). Topics participants pick one slip from each bag, and then reenact the Topics.

## Emotional Topics

Choose a particular mood such as happy, sad, disgusted, or angry. Have the responder reply to a regular type of question demonstrating the mood.

## End of the World

Topics participants answer one of the following questions:

1. You have just received word that the world will end in 24 hours. How would you spend this last day?
2. How do you think the world will finally end? Is it worthwhile to spend so much on space exploration so our descendants can leave Earth in case of such a disaster?

## Famous Person Interview

The Topics leader writes the names of famous people on slips of paper (JFK, Hillary Clinton, Martin Luther King, Madonna, etc.). The Topics leader then has Topics participants draw a slip of paper and impersonate the personality. The Topics leader then interviews the personality with questions pertaining to their life.

## Hats

The Topics leader collects many different hats and brings them to the meeting. Each participant gets a hat to wear while role playing the character that would have worn that individual hat; for example, a derby, baseball hat, football helmet, clown hat, etc.).

*“There are no atheists on turbulent airplanes.”*  
- Erica Jong

## Ice Breaker Topics

Ask questions to get Topics participants to introduce themselves to the group. This Topics is good for joint meetings with other clubs, or on special occasions when there are many guests in attendance. It helps, of course, in getting others to know you; and sometimes in getting to know yourself.

## “In School I . . . .”

The Topics leader asks the Topics participants questions relating to their school days. Examples: first teacher crush, the first kiss, your first sweetheart, your first or worst punishment, your favorite or worst subject, etc.

## It Was a Dark and Stormy Night..

Set the mood by reading an opening paragraph to a story. Prepare slips of paper with descriptive words (locations, objects, people, animals, etc.). Topics participants pick a word and continue the story using the word.

## Job Interview

The Topics leader calls on two members. One is the job applicant and the other is the interviewer. The Topics leader indicates what the job opening will be. Examples: street dancer, mime actor, psychologist, nanny, etc. The more unusual the job opening, the funnier the interview becomes.

## Lemonade Topics

A popular thought in recent years has been “If the world hands you a lemon, make lemonade.” The Topics leader should invent lemons for each speaker, personalized if possible, and then ask them to explain their reactions to receiving the lemon and what positive action they would take to turn the lemon into lemonade. For example, “You have just lost your job after 10 years with the company; what do you do?” A participant might then idealize that it was just the opportunity to start up a new business.

## Lottery Winners

All Topics participants win lotteries, but for different amounts of money. The first participant wins \$1 million, the next \$10 and the next \$500. What will they do with the money?

## Music Time Machine

Take old records or tapes to the meeting and play a portion of a song. Ask each participant what memories the song brings back. Another twist is showing an album or CD cover and asking Topics participants for their memories or why they would never buy that album/CD.

## Nostalgia Topics

The Topics leader presents each Topics participant with a reminder of something out of the past. Speakers respond by relating their fond or nostalgic memories triggered by the reminder word or phrase. Some examples are soft mud, popcorn, black jelly beans, first grade teacher, shiny pennies, etc.

## Objectives Topics

This is a good Topic for New Year’s or Toastmasters month. Have each speaker discuss his/her Toastmasters objectives for the year in terms of manual speeches, new members and guests, Area Council attendance, etc. If “Objectives” is the meeting theme, then one or two speeches can be assigned to relate the details of the Management by Objectives approach.

## People's Court

The Topics leader calls two members forward. One is the plaintiff and the other is the defendant. The Topics leader is the judge and reads the charges against the defendant. The plaintiff speaks first, the defendant last. Each has one to two minutes. The other members serve as the jury, and vote guilty or not guilty. The more ridiculous the charge, the more fun the session.

## A Picture is Worth 1000 Words

Ask each participant to tell a story after looking at a picture from a newspaper, magazine or post card.

*“When I was born, I was so surprised that I didn’t talk for a year and a half.”*  
- Gracie Allen

## Point-Counterpoint

Ask a Topics participant to express a viewpoint about Topics. Then ask another Topics participant to express an opposing viewpoint about the same Topics, whether or not he or she actually shares that viewpoint. This makes for interesting mini-debates!

## Pretend Topics

Choose a flower, animal, fruit or object, and have responders tell why they chose to become that flower, animal, etc. You can use the specific names of the general Topics (flowers = tulip, dandelion, violet, orchid).

## Progressive Story

The Topics leader begins telling a story, and then asks the next Topics participant to continue the story. After 1-2 minutes, the Topics leader stops that person and calls on another to continue. The story continues until all Topics participants have contributed to the story. A central theme could be determined from the start.

## Quotations

Read quotations from people, famous or not, and ask Topics participants to explain how they feel about the quotations. They can act in character or be themselves.

## Reading Practice

Use your *Toastmaster* magazine by assigning numbers to sections of articles, then numbering off Topics participants. Call on a number and that person will read the assigned section in the magazine and discuss its significance. Great way to share the magazine!

## Secret Desires Topics

Prepare envelopes containing slips, each with a different participant’s name in it. Number the envelopes on the outside. Instruct the participants to take an envelope but not open it until their

number is called. When the number is called, the speaker opens the envelope, reads the name, but does not disclose it. Topics participants then describe what the secret desires are of the individual without disclosing the name. All members are furnished ballots on which they guess whose desires were described by each Topics participant.

## Soap Opera Topics

This is one of the versions of the progressive story Topics. The Topics leader sets the stage for today's episode of "Life in the Suburbs" and then selects Topics participants to continue the story. Add variety by having every third speaker give a spot commercial for products named by the Topics leader.

## Table Topics Quotes

For Table Topics select a famous quote or slogan. Request the responder to tell who said it and why they think the quote was made. For example: To be or not to be; Give me liberty or give me death; Mother, please let me do it myself; Filled to the rim with Brim.

## Toastmaster Topics

Ask each participant a question about Toastmasters. Examples: "How did you become a Toastmaster?" "How did you feel presenting your icebreaker?" "Why did you join?" "Why did you renew?" Also, you can have them select a duty and explain how it has contributed to their Toastmasters experience.

## Turn Around Topics

It may never happen, but if your club has an unprepared, though previously assigned Topics leader, don't give him or her the opportunity to throw together some hasty Topics. Let them be the recipient of what they would foist on you. Turn the tables on the "culprit." Have him/her stand at the lectern and respond to all the hastily prepared Topics that the members can give, each taking a turn. A few questions should relate to unpreparedness. Best Topics award is given for the best question submitted.

## White Elephant Topics

Members bring articles that are no longer useful to them but that do have some value. One member acts as auctioneer, but as each item is offered, the contributing member makes a 1-2 minute sales pitch in its behalf. Therein lies the educational value. If the sale is well-planned, the Club will benefit monetarily. Present the most useless item to the winning "sales pitcher". Variations include having each person be their own auctioneer, having \$1.00 equal \$0.10, and holding an auction annually so some items become classics.

*“To teach another is to learn yourself.”*  
- Unknown

### **Why Doesn't Someone . . .**

This is a chance to get things off your chest, ask probing questions, raise buried objections. Some possible “Why doesn't someone” Topics. Why doesn't someone:

- Start a Toastmaster library with loaner books?
- Sell an inexpensive electric car?
- Build an easel that collapses to suitcase size?
- Solve the deficit crisis?

### **Yellow Pages**

Have Topics participants randomly turn to a page in the Yellow Pages, point to a spot without looking and then sell whatever item they're pointing at.

### **Theme Meetings**

The following themes can enhance your club meetings by adding variety, fun and learning opportunities for members. Theme meetings help the Toastmaster and Topics leader of the day prepare comments and questions that center on a common idea.

### **Educational Themes**

#### **All the World's a Stage**

Schedule a meeting at a local school, library or meeting hall with a raised stage. Members will gain confidence by speaking in a new environment.

#### **Audiovisual Theme**

In preparation for the audiovisual theme, the club may wish to order the Toastmaster Audiovisual Handbook from the Toastmasters International catalog. If possible, get experienced audiovisual people to handle the presentations. This may mean inviting someone from outside the club for the featured presentation. Some local schools or community agencies have audiovisual departments and might supply a main speaker. The following Topics are appropriate:

- How to prepare and use flip charts
- How to prepare and use slides
- How to prepare and use overhead projectors
- Movies, chalk-talk, and other visual presentations

Special emphasis might be placed on flip charts, since most Toastmaster programs are readily adaptable to these. If possible, the club should acquire an easel, and encourage its members to use flip charts as often as they can.

## Building Vocabulary

In addition to the ongoing vocabulary building program (word of the week/day, grammarian's report) which every club should be conducting, why not have a special vocabulary theme? For example:

**Table Topics:** Ask each Topics participant for the meaning of an unusual word (permit others to challenge the definitions given).

**Speeches:**

- How to read a dictionary (pronunciation marks, root words, etc.)
- The history of our language
- The use of slang and colloquialisms
- Politically correct/incorrect terms

*"It is better to be prepared for an opportunity and not have one than to have an opportunity and not be prepared."*

- Whitney Young, Jr.

## Debate Theme

In preparation for this theme, the club could order the Debate Handbook and have one member give a descriptive talk on it. The debate may be held within the club, but is more interesting if you challenge another club. Choose two 4-person teams; one Affirmative and one Negative position. The Affirmative argues for changing from a present situation (for example, be it resolved that we make Toastmasters membership free to all members). Each team has two lead speakers to state its position and two speakers to counter the other team's position. There should be at least three judges. It is best not to hold a debate type Table Topics as it might touch upon the subject of the debate and influence the outcome.

## Effective Listening Theme

Schedule Table Topics at the end of the meeting. Topics leader should prepare questions during the speeches to test the members' listening ability. Ask where, what, when, why, and how questions about the speeches. This will be especially interesting if one of the speeches is on Listening Techniques.

## Effective Communication

Effective communication concentrates on having the listener really understand what you mean. It includes such techniques as:

- How to size up your audience and tailor your speech to it

- How to simplify your message by use of non-technical terms, short graphic illustrations, simple sentences, etc.
- Holding audience attention by use of humor, dramatics, enthusiasm, emotion, and other presentation techniques of delivery
- Avoiding listener boredom by using visuals, gestures, eye contact, voice variation, etc.

The speakers should concentrate on fulfilling the specific objective of each speech, so this program will be educational. A good source book for this theme is *Speech Can Change Your Life* by Dorothy Sarniff.

## Electronic Media Theme

Simulate TV and radio experience as closely as possible. Use a tape recorder or a video camera to tape the meeting for playback and evaluation. Speakers should use prepared script and follow it closely, reading as an anchor would, without distractions or interruptions. Other speakers could be meteorologists, sportscasters etc. As an additional touch, someone who has been on radio or TV could give a straight presentation on the techniques to follow for television production.

## Evaluation Theme

In preparation for an Evaluation theme, you may wish to order the following from the Toastmasters International Catalog:

Evaluation Kit containing 25 copies each of:

- Panel Discussion
- Speaker's Profile
- Speech Evaluation Forms
- Evaluation of the Evaluator

The Evaluation theme meeting may consist of one speaker and a number of evaluators. Each evaluator may be evaluated; or the group could simply vote on the best evaluator. If possible, the program should be preceded by the Success/Leadership module, "The Art of Effective Evaluation."

## Hobby Theme

Hold a "Show and Tell" meeting for members' hobbies, avocations, or interesting projects. Whenever possible, the speakers could bring samples or pictures of their hobbies. They can also demonstrate their hobby. Speakers could point out how their hobbies tie in with communications, and they could offer an invitation to participate.

## Health Theme

Here are three suggested methods for preparing for a Health theme program:

1. Have Club members research topics of their choice and give talks on them, perhaps using a panel format.
2. Call community health agencies such as the American Cancer Society, Heart Association, etc., and request speakers.

3. Request speakers who specialize in these agencies from our District Speakers Bureau. Use the Contact Form on the D6 website and select Speakers Bureau Chair from the dropdown list.

## Humor, How to Find and Use It

The proper use of humor is one of the most valuable speaking techniques; well worth a full theme. You might have the club's most successful humorists discuss their approach to humor. If possible, get a past District Humorous speech winner to give the winning speech and have the club evaluate it. Or, invite another speaker who handles humor well. Some ways to build the club's humor consciousness:

- Appoint a humorist (joker/jester) each week
- At the beginning of each meeting have a brief joke contest, with the winner getting a traveling award
- Occasionally have a Humor Night, with all humorous speeches (speech contest)
- Try a humor discussion theme, with various forms of humor discussed and evaluated
- Allocate club funds for "Humor Handbook" in the Toastmasters Catalog

## Icebreaker Theme

Have long-time members give their icebreaker speeches again during the same meeting. This is a good way for your newer members to get to know the more experienced members. It's also good for long-time members to remember what it was like when they gave their first speech in a Toastmasters meeting.

*"Learning is finding out what you already know."*  
- Richard Bach

## Interview

**Theme Setting:** Tape recorder and pad for interviews. Various members of the club appointed as "celebrities," or people who have done something unusual to be interviewed. The interviewers would know beforehand about the people and events in order to prepare appropriate questions.

**Program:** The "celebrity" knows why the interview is taking place; the claim to fame or special event, but not the exact question, just as in a real interview. The interviewer does not know all the details of the celebrity's story, and must get them in the interview. This theme could fulfill two different advanced manual speeches "When You're the Host" or "The Talk Show" (Communicating on Television) and "Introduce the Speaker" (Specialty Speeches)

## Investment Theme

Table Topics can be real or imaginary situations related to "losing your shirt" or gaining fortunes in the market. One or two speeches should be researched studies of the different kinds of investments available. A stock broker would be a good guest speaker.

## Literary Theme

**Theme Setting:** Members review favorite authors and books.

**Program:** Speakers talk on literary subjects: great authors, best books. Each should come with examples of the works described, and be prepared to defend the choice against others if necessary.

## Master the Microphone

Provide instruction on microphone types and techniques. Then encourage all speakers to use the microphone for their speeches and duties.

## Officer Day

Ask the club officers to share their roles and responsibilities in speeches and Table Topics. This could be a panel discussion. This meeting would be good to hold one month before officer elections.

## Officers' Duties Theme

Many members are unaware of the duties of the club officers. A special meeting is a good method for informing everyone. It is especially good for the new officers, and since the teacher generally learns more than the pupil, assign the new officers the task of delivering a speech on the functions of their office and how they plan to accomplish them. Topics should be related to encouraging the members to support the officers' programs and to run for office themselves in the next election. Make this as entertaining as possible. Use a skit, a TV interview show, a whodunit, etc.

## Parliamentary Procedure Theme

The Success/Leadership module, "Parliamentary Procedure in Action," or Toastmasters International scripts on parliamentary procedure could be presented prior to this theme meeting. A panel of members who are well-versed in parliamentary procedure could enact situations and explain the rules pertaining to what they enacted after presentation. The award could go to that member who catches the most errors the panel makes.

## Planning

Several good planning texts and planning seminar materials are available. In fact, the whole educational portion of the meeting can be conducted as a seminar with two or three presentations on such topics as:

- The elements of planning
- The planning process
- Recognizing situations that require planning

Handouts should be given to the members along with a list of suggested reading material. A good follow-up for this session would be a workshop meeting with a demonstration planning session for an Area speech contest.

## Planning Workshop

In place of speeches, have a simulated committee session for planning a special event such as an Area or Division Speech Contest. Be sure to list all the things that must happen, what should be done to make them happen, who is responsible, and by what deadline. Be sure to consider backup or contingency plans for critical things that can fail (spare stop watch, spare lights, alternate invocator, etc.). This may sound basic to some of you, but many Toastmasters who have never planned anything are asked to fill roles that require it.

*“Smile at each other...and that will help you to grow up in greater love for each other.”*  
 - Mother Teresa

## Political Convention Theme (“Republocratic” Convention)

This should provide an exercise in parliamentary procedure. Assign a Convention Chair (Toastmaster), Keynote Speaker, and candidates for the “big” office. All members participate and provide pre-written resolutions. After the keynote address and political speeches, the members start to make and discuss their motions, using good parliamentary procedure.

## Research Theme

Learn how to gather material for a speech. This meeting could include such topics as:

- How to get the best service from the public library
- Using a tape recorder for interviews and notes
- Where to find and how to use encyclopedias and reference books
- Using cards and other methods of organizing notes
- Contacting research and reference agencies such as the library, government offices, and other information sources
- Analyzing research information for speech material
- Compiling your speech from notes

## Wills and Estates Meeting

Topics can be centered on what the speakers will do when they receive their inheritances. One or two speeches should present pertinent information about wills and estate planning. In particular, they should explain when and how a person should make a will. This would be a good time to invite a lawyer or a banker as a guest speaker.

## Motivational Themes

### Assertiveness Theme

**Theme Setting:** Practice being assertive and forceful, without being abusive. As a role playing aid, assume assertive nicknames, such as Pugnacious Paul or Strongarm Sue. Keep the tone light enough to avoid giving offense by anything said in the program.

**Table Topics:** Topics participants should be prepared to cite some activity of the club, community, or state that should be changed, and argue for the change. Another member can challenge the suggestion and argue against it. Both should be deliberately assertive.

**Speeches:** *Power of Positive Thinking* by Norman Vincent Peale or Ayn Rand's philosophy of assertiveness. Other talk could be about self-independence. A good source book is *The Art of Selfishness* by David Seabury.

### Effective Persuasion Theme

Persuasion requires more than speaking skill; it requires an understanding of how a specific audience will respond. A good technique is to use an assigned audience approach in which the speaker is told who the listeners are supposed to be and slants the speech to that group. Evaluate the speaker on how that audience would have received the speech. A second possibility is to present speeches about the art of persuasion; for instance:

- How to size up an audience
- Using emotional appeals
- Judging audience reaction

An excellent source book is *The Magic Power of Emotional Appeal* by Roy Garn.

### Great Peoples' Birthdays

Objects that remind people of a great person's life can be passed out in a brown paper bag. Table Topics consists of each participant discussing his or her object in relation to that person's life. At least one speech should pertain to the life of a famous person and how it might prove motivational to the membership.

*"If you want to pull the wool over someone's eyes, be sure to use the right yarn."*  
- Anonymous

### Management Techniques

For Table Topics, have Topics participants relate their reactions to different kinds of stimuli or motivation to do things in volunteer organizations such as Toastmasters, PTA, church, Scouts, etc. Ask others to compare job type motivators to volunteer task motivators.

One or two speeches should relate to methods for making people want to do things when there is no remuneration involved. These can be researched from library texts, or they can relate to personal experience. The objective should be to make members recognize approaches they can use to get others to agree to accept volunteer tasks and feel good about doing them. This kind of experience can be beneficial in job situations.

## Motivation Theme

Table Topics can be selling an object removed from a paper bagful of things. The bag is then passed on to the next Topics participant. A single technique in selling the product should be used; for example, appeal to vanity, patriotism, or raising guilt feelings. Speeches should expand on one aspect of motivation: loyalty, ego, fulfillment, praise, threat, etc. Award a prize to the one best demonstrating his or her own techniques.

## Speech Construction

Experienced speakers explain the mechanics of a good speech with different emphasis on:

- How to give a winning speech in a contest
- A statistical speech: how to organize and present information
- The persuasive speech: getting the audience on your side
- The audiovisual speech: handling flip charts, slides, and overheads
- Specialty speeches; for example, the roast, accolade, after-dinner talks, etc.

*“Teaching is reminding others that they know it just as well as you.”*

- Richard Bach

## Roasts

### Outgoing President Roast

**Theme Suggestion:** Try a complimentary “roast”. This is a good time to invite spouses and other guests.

**Table Topics:** “I’ll always remember...” (Incidents of the outgoing president’s term). These could be “planted” for the benefit of the guests.

**Speeches:** Selected members “roast” the outgoing president, in a gentle manner; always ending in a complimentary tone. This can be interesting if the president is popular enough to stand the hazing. This event could be combined with installation of new officers.

### Roast the Moving Toastmaster

Topics should be specially prepared questions regarding the speaker's impressions of the subject. "Predictions on how the club is apt to fare now that the Toastmaster is leaving". At least one of the speeches should be about the person, and can exaggerate fights with the neighbors, brushes with the law, incompetence on the job, and total helplessness until the club took him or her on as a test case. The speech should end on an expression of light hope that the person will continue to improve if he/she is lucky enough to find another club that is willing to put as much effort into their salvation. Present the person with a scroll with friendly comments and best wishes of the individual members. Of course, give the person a chance to respond to the meeting--about 30 seconds should suffice.

## Situation Themes

### Alibi Ike Theme

**Theme Setting:** The club is divided into two teams, and each team member has an opposite number (a set number such as 5 or 6). Each participant should prepare a list of "charges". There are three judges.

**Program:** A member accuses his or her opposite of the trumped-up charges, and the accused offers alibis. Then the role is reversed. The judges decide which team has the best alibis. The charges should be farcical and not close enough to any real transgressions to cause offense. (Example: "Can you explain how you amassed several million dollars while you were club treasurer?")

### All Speakers Meeting

Forego all but essential business and get right to the speeches because everyone speaks for five minutes (only). Speeches should be manual projects and members who have completed all their manuals should be assigned ice breaker speeches. Depending on the number of speakers, you may want to try some kind of selective process to determine which speeches are orally evaluated.

### Club Anniversary Celebration

Celebrate your club's anniversary! You can have an annual event such as a dinner or special meeting with guest speakers from your company or community, plus past members. Plan special meetings for your five-year increment anniversaries (10 years, 25 years, etc.) Invite District leaders, your Area Governor and Division Governor, plus past members. Have Table Topics center around past members sharing their stories and anecdotes. Invite the local media to cover the event. Speakers could compare the club of yesterday with the club of today and point out the similarities between today's members and the former members.

### Apple for the Teacher Theme

Topics can be a discussion of the traits and personalities of the members' past teachers. Some examples are: my crabbiest teacher, my favorite teacher, etc. Speeches can be complimentary or critical of today's teaching methods and education system. Encourage members to bring teachers as guests. When awards are presented, give each teacher an apple and thank them for their part in making a better community.

## Auction Toastmasters Meeting

For Table Topics, have each speaker auction some Toastmaster duty that they are willing to perform for some other member. For example, he/she can sell their service as timer to anyone willing to buy. The seller then serves in place of the buyer the next time the buyer is scheduled. By agreement, the money collected can be donated to the club treasury. At least one speech should be devoted to the history and development of auction sales. The club bulletin should announce the sale in advance with an old-fashioned auction sale notice. Invite another club for a joint meeting. It becomes even more exciting when cross purchases are made and members have to go to another club to fulfill their commitments.

*"Humor brings insight and tolerance."*  
- Agnes Repplier

## Backwards Meeting

The entire meeting is conducted backwards with a printed backwards agenda. Start with the closing comments first, awards, timer's reports, evaluations, general evaluation, speakers, Toastmaster's introductions, Table Topics, business meeting, opening. The option for Table Topics is to let the Topics participants give their Topics and then the Topics leader asks the questions.

## Bartender Meeting

The Toastmaster acts as a bartender with all of the speakers seated at one table. It is the speaker's objective to get the bartender's attention to tell their story, sad or otherwise. A referee may be appointed to keep things in order. Any speaker not heeding the referee is eliminated.

## Doomsday

**Theme Setting:** You have just discovered that the earth has just a few hours before annihilation (collision with another planet, sun disturbance, etc.).

**Table Topics:** In the few hours remaining, what would you do? Each Topics participant could answer that question, or the Topics leader could set up situations such as handling long-standing feuds, etc.

**Speeches:** How will the earth end? Each speaker could pick a way (pollution, war, famine, etc.), and describe what we might do to avert or postpone it. Good place for a philosophical talk on enjoying life while we can.

## Effective Communication Theme

Have three to five members leave the room while a specially prepared speech is delivered. Then have one member come back in and listen to a summary of the speech by one of the members that stayed in the room. Then another absent member is called in to hear the first absent member try to repeat the summary just heard. The objective, of course, is to try to maintain good transference of the message. There will be a lot of laughs as well as a good lesson in effective (or ineffective) communication.

## Embarrassment

**Theme Setting:** Learn how members deal with awkward or embarrassing situations. Limit incidents to the kind that can be handled verbally (i.e., forgetting a friend's name, spilling a drink at a party, etc.).

**Table Topics:** My most embarrassing moment was. . . Or assign an “embarrassing” moment to the Topics participant.

**Speeches:** Describe embarrassing situations and how they were handled; (Casey at the Bat, Mary Queen of Scots, Custer at the Little Big Horn, Napoleon at Waterloo, etc.), Why do we blush? What causes the discomfort of embarrassment? How do cultural mores influence our feelings?

## First Meeting of the New Year (Officer Installation)

A special program is planned for installation of new officers. New officers give a speech about their new responsibilities, goals and commitments. Topics participants are asked to make suggestions to the new officers such as: how to increase membership, how to collect dues on time, how to have winning speech contestants, etc. Be sure to invite your Area Governor!

## Impromptu Meeting

Your meeting is promoted in advance as a special meeting with special guests and other arrangements. However, when members arrive, they are given a sealed envelope that assigns them one of the normal duties of the meeting, (Topics leader, speakers, evaluators, Toastmaster, etc.). It is helpful to the unprepared speakers to provide several articles that could be developed into speeches.

## Lawsuits Theme

To sue or not to sue. This is a good topic for panel discussion. Consider the element of a lawsuit and the advisability of seeking legal help. Consider also the situations that can be taken to Conciliation Court. Invite a lawyer to speak about the profession and to give some guidelines for seeking professional help. Topics can alternate between “for” and “against” witness statements regarding some ridiculous charge against a fellow member.

## Media Meeting

For Table Topics, use radio's “Roving Reporter” approach. Hold short question & answer sessions or interviews with the speakers. Pass the mike back and forth just like the street reporters do. To add an element of make believe, have speakers describe the calamity (big fire, sinking ship, etc.) that is taking place before your eyes. If a member has a video camera, try to tape the meeting. Assigned speeches should be on subjects such as:

- How to appear on TV
- How to use a microphone
- How to write a press release

Invite the media. Ask for their comments and suggestions.

## One Hundred Years From Now Theme

Speeches and Table Topics are all based on the concept of the future. Although Table Topics is apt to be speculative, the speeches should be projections of theory based on researched facts. Symbols of future life could be placed at each table or displayed near the lectern.

## Outdoor Meeting

During the summer months, plan your meeting in the outdoors for a change of environment. Have Table Topics and speeches focus on outdoor environment. Your agenda can be a menu. Have the Toastmaster dress as a server and present the “specials” of the day, which would be the meeting components (speakers, etc.).

## Panel Discussion

**Theme Setting:** Several “experts” discuss a theme and then answer questions from the audience.

**Program:** The theme can be general; (i.e., communications). One speaker would discuss written, one oral, one visual communications. Questions from the audience can be directed to the expert who has most knowledge in that specific area. Note that the leader of the panel should be a member who can apply the experience to the specific assignment in the Communications and Leadership Manual, but the entire club should participate as a theme.

## Parole Board

**Theme Setting:** Convict comes before “Parole Board” made up of several members. They ask questions; then decide if the convict has rehabilitated on the strength of the answers.

**Table Topics:** Follow the same theme, but here each Topics participant tells how he/she got “railroaded” into the situation set up by the Table Topics leader. (Example: “The record says you stole a 1,000 pound safe and hauled it away. Is that true? “I did it in a weak moment.”) Some of the Topics could be planted to liven up the meeting.

**Speeches:** In each presentation, the convicts tell the “board” how it really happened, how they have reformed, or how they'll never get caught again. In each case, the full audience, acting as the “board” votes to free or re-incarcerate them.

## Predictions

**Theme Setting:** Have a crystal ball and other mystical signs of the fortune teller.

**Table Topics:** Topics participants make a prediction of the club’s future, the country, the world, etc. with reasons for the predictions. (“As Vice President of Membership, I predict that we will have \_\_\_\_ number of members by spring because...”).

**Speeches:** Speakers make predictions (with reasons), or talk about famous psychics like Jeanne Dixon, etc.

## Progressive Meeting

Toastmasters and spouses meet at a member's home for appetizers and Table Topics. All travel to the next member’s home for the main course and after-dinner speeches. Then all travel to the next home for dessert, evaluations and awards. Be sure that those who made their home available get special recognition during the awards ceremony.

## Small Claims Court Meeting

Topics can be “what if” situations that are personally pleaded by the plaintiff and the defendant in conciliation court. The Topics leader can appoint someone to serve as judge and the club can select the winner in each case. At least one speech should describe the kind of situations that are settled in conciliation court, the procedure for filing a suit, and the proper way to present a case in court. This session will be more meaningful if you can get a judge or lawyer to attend and then comment on the meeting and its meaningfulness and its accuracy.

*“The world is round, and the place that may seem like the end may also be only the beginning.”  
- Ivy Baker Priest*

## Recognition Meetings

### Area Governor Accolade

Invite the Area Governor as a special guest. Hand out Toastmasters International organization charts with the Area Governor's position circled in red. Ask each member to write on the back of the sheet how the club has been helped by the Area Governor. For Table Topics, have each member read his or her accolade to the Governor. Other appropriate comments should be made to let the Governor know you appreciate his/her service. At least one speech should outline the duties of the Area Governor and encourage members who are eligible to seek the position. Give the Governor a small remembrance and ask him/her to say a few words at the end of the meeting.

### Benefactors Theme

Almost everyone has a benefactor who has helped them materially or with encouragement. Perhaps two or three members would like to thank these people publicly. Arrange a meeting where the benefactors can be invited as guests, and the speakers give them the VIP treatment, including complimentary speeches acknowledging their assistance. Tape the speeches and give them to the benefactors. Table Topics can be related to the positive aspects of doing things for others.

### Companionship Theme

Everyone should bring a guest for this special meeting. It may be a spouse, a relative, or a good friend. Toastmasters should show their appreciation for their guests' friendship by making very special introductions. Speeches should relate to companionship and can include topics such as "Historical Friendships", "Friendship is a Two Way Street", or "The Priceless Values of Friendship". Table Topics can explore the meaningful values in a friendship.

### Family (or Spouse) Night

**Theme Suggestion:** Plan a special event to honor spouses or other special family members.

**Table Topics:** Each member introduces and toasts his or her guest. Invited guests could participate if they wish.

**Speeches:** Plan a talk to explain the Toastmasters organization to guests. Give speeches to honor family members or friends who have been most supportive or helpful.

### Honor the New CC, AC, CL, AL or DTM

Put up a big sign proclaiming the member's achievement. Table Topics should all relate to the subject in some way. Some should be especially laudatory, and others should be of a mild roasting nature. One of the speeches should point out what is required to achieve CC, AC, CL, AL, or DTM. It should encourage other members to strive for the ratings. Another speech (in a humorous vein) should encourage the member to raise their sights and go after bigger goals such as U.S.

President or PTA chair. Give the member an opportunity to relate his or her reaction to the meeting.

## Local Communication and Leadership Award

Make this a community affair. Select a local non-member who deserves recognition for communication and leadership expertise. The whole meeting should pertain to honoring the individual. In place of Table Topics, call for spontaneous testimonials from the group. This will work best if some Toastmasters are coached to set the stage. Invite the Mayor and other local officials. Take pictures for the local papers. Make it an annual affair.

## Program to Honor Fire Fighters

**Theme Setting:** Invite members of local fire department to attend as guests, or possibly put on a mini-meeting at their facility.

**Table Topics:** Should fire alarms be made mandatory in all homes? What can the individual homeowners do to reduce fire hazards? If your own home caught fire in the night, how would you go about evacuating your family? After the family, what would be the first thing you would save?

**Speeches:** Members or firefighters could talk about how to prevent fire in the home, how to plan an evacuation in case of fire, updating your fire insurance, etc. Demonstration of fire alarm types could be possible, also.

*"When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands and stick together."*  
- Robert Fulghum

## Program to Honor Local Politicians

**Theme Setting:** Invite a political figure to speak. In most cases some gentle ribbing might be acceptable (depending on circumstances).

**Table Topics:** Any political topics that is not too controversial. Is parliamentary procedure essential in politics? Should politicians be held responsible for upholding the policies of their voters, even when wrong?

**Speeches:** The differences between politicians and ambassadors, the responsibilities of politicians in guiding our country, pressure groups and lobbyists (good or bad), and is the two-party system good or bad?

## Program to Honor Teachers

**Theme Setting:** Invite local teachers (particularly any who have worked with Toastmasters). Ask in advance if one of them would like to say a few words. Suggest using Youth Leadership or other

ways to relate Toastmasters to youth in school. In addition to a free meal (if meeting is a dinner or lunch), a small basket of apples for the teachers might be appropriate.

**Table Topics:** Have a “spelling contest”. Should religion be supported by the public school? What about the role of the teacher in instilling morality? Are today's schools better? How can we improve schools?

**Speeches:** What is the role of television in the learning process? Should teachers be unionized? Should we take more interest in teacher's problems? Describe the changing role of the teacher as community leader.

## Program to Honor Police Officers

**Theme Setting:** Although this is an accolade program, most police officers appreciate some humor if it is not in bad taste. You could use a Sgt. Friday monotone to begin the meeting, a police whistle for the timer, and cardboard “deputy” badges for name tags to add background color. Use discretion to make sure these props are not derogatory or offensive to the police force. A local police officer could be invited to address the club and a question and answer session might be in order; with some pre-assigned questions to keep it moving.

**Speeches:** Speeches should be on a positive note, and designed to complement the police. Possible topics: Burglarproofing Your Home, Police ID Numbers for Personal Items, The 55 MPH Speed Limit, and other things police are likely to sponsor.

## Public Servants Accolade

Prepare a montage of newspaper clippings of local public servants, and display it prominently in the meeting room. Invite the public servants as guests and give them VIP treatment. For Table Topics have each speaker discuss the roles of the local public servants and their values to the community. Several speeches should relate to public service. If any of the members are public servants, they might consider humorous speeches about their associations with the invited guests.

## Youth Meeting

Invite all sons and daughters of Toastmasters. The program should be geared to youth problems and activities. Involve the guests in Table Topics which could be scheduled at the end of the meeting. The youth will respond better after they have determined that you are really addressing their problems.

## Holidays

### Arbor Day Theme

Invite a forester or logger to this one. Give them time to discuss what the duties are and make recommendations for replacing lost trees. Topics should pertain to trees and/or wooden things. At

least one speech should give the origin and meaning of Arbor Day. Along with the traveling trophies, present each winner their own personal seedling or acorn.

## Birthday Theme

**Table Topics:** How my family celebrates birthdays. My most unusual birthday present. Should employers give each person a day off for his/her birthday? Do you believe in zodiac influences? Impromptu reading of each other's "horoscopes" for the day.

**Theme Setting:** Each member could wear his or her zodiac sign, and be prepared to explain its influence.

**Speeches:** Background on zodiac and meanings. My most memorable birthday. Famous people's birthdates, and how being born at the time made them famous. What happened on the day or year of my birth, etc.

*"It is only the first step that is difficult."*  
- Marie de Vincy-Chamrond

## Christmas Theme

**Theme Setting:** This is a good time to plan a special occasion, with spouses and guests invited. Plan a specialty buffet, with samples of each family's Christmas cooking, or a giant punch bowl, with each person bringing an ingredient.

**Table Topics:** Scrooge defends his life to Marlowe. My most memorable Christmas. Explain why all the Christmas cards are still in your pocket. How my family celebrates Christmas.

**Speeches:** How the Christmas tradition began. Christmas in other lands. Is Christmas too commercial? Christmas facts and legends.

## Easter Theme

Place small plastic eggs with each members surprise assignment for the meeting at each place. Table Topics could also be placed inside plastic eggs and given to participants. Award a small Easter basket to best Topics participant. Topics can be centered on a "renewal" or rebirth theme.

## Ground Hog Day (February 2) Theme

**Table Topics:** Do you believe in the ability of the Ground Hog to predict the next 6 weeks' weather, and why (or why not)? Are our scientific long-range forecasts much better? Do you have any similar superstitions, and if so, what? How would you guess the Ground Hog story got started?

**Theme Setting:** Picture or drawing of a Ground Hog.

**Speeches:** The origin of Ground Hog Day in Punxsutawney, PA. Speeches on different superstitions; perhaps a speech on real weather forecasting.

## Independence Day Theme

Declaration of “Dependence” is passed around to all members. Benefits derived from Toastmasters are the dependency elements. Anyone not wishing to sign should stand up and defend his or her position. Other members may wish to try to convince the independent to change his or her mind. Speeches can be Declarations of Independence from jobs, home, society, etc.

## Memorial Day Theme

**Theme Setting:** Get an American flag if your club does not already have one. Open with the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

**Table Topics:** Do disarmament treaties work? Should foreign relationships be controlled or influenced by military people? What will the next war be like? How would you work for world peace? Is the United Nations effective for preventing world conflicts?

**Speeches:** Should we police the world? (Good Topics for a hawk/dove debate). Will world hunger cause war, and what should we do about it? The lessons we learned from the \_\_\_\_\_ War. What can the United States do to ease world tensions?

## Diverse Holiday Theme

For this meeting, have speeches, Table Topics and a guest speaker talk about a holiday other members may not be familiar with: Hanukkah, Rosh Hashanah, Kwanzaa, etc. Very educational and can be a great way to make everyone feel included!

## New Year's Theme

This one can be fun. Get the Topics leader to dress like the white bearded and bent man of the old year. Topics should be somewhat “crotchety” and indicative of skepticism for the New Year. The members can deride the “Old Year” for his skepticism. The Toastmaster should be one of the more optimistic members and their goal should be to motivate the club to do bigger and better things in the New Year. This would be a good time for speeches on membership and personal growth.

## Thanksgiving Theme

Speeches for the Thanksgiving meeting are reports by people in attendance at the first Thanksgiving Dinner. Another approach would have them giving the after dinner speeches for the first Thanksgiving dinner. Table Topics can be organized around the preparation of the feast. For example, explain to the Chief “what’s cooking”. Also, you could have speakers or Topics participants speak from the turkey’s point of view.

## Valentine's Theme

This is a good time for a Sweetheart party. Table Topics should include first loves, blind dates, broken hearts, etc. (without getting too personal, if sweethearts are there). Topics can be short presentations (and pinning) of corsages or boutonnieres. At least one of the speeches should be on the history and customs of Valentine's Day.

## Final Thoughts

Whatever you do in your club to promote education and growth of your members and your club, have fun and always make sure your meetings support the Mission of Toastmasters International, the District, and the Club. If you have found some tried and true methods that bring new members in and keep them coming back from more, District 6 would love to hear about it so we can update the idea cookbook on a regular basis. Likewise, if there are tips on what not to do – we can all benefit by sharing information. Please use the Contact form on the D6 website to send your suggestions to the LGET at <http://www.d6tm.org/Contact>.

District 6 Website: <http://www.d6tm.org>

Region IV Website: <http://www.regioniv.net/>

Toastmasters International Website: <http://www.toastmasters.org>