

## **CREATIVE CLUB MEETINGS**

We all know the format of the normal club meeting, but conducting an identical meeting week after week is boring and predictable. This document compiles ideas for making meetings interesting and lively by using variety and creativity. By keeping basic meeting structure and tasks and using variations on the traditional, we keep out of the proverbial rut. Within this structure the only limits are the imagination of the Toastmaster or the meeting planner. Most meetings can include the normal activities of evaluations, table topics, timer, ah counter, grammarian, etc. without dampening the interest.

(Special credit is given to the various TM clubs' Internet postings from which many of the ideas are drawn.)

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SPICE IT UP  
ARGUMENTATIVELY SPEAKING  
PLAY IT BACKWARD  
PICK A THEME  
TABLE TOPICS MEETING  
BREAK THE ICE AGAIN  
HOT SEAT SPEAKER  
BOOK REVIEW MEETING  
STAGE A DEBATE  
PLAY IT AHEAD  
SPEAKER/EVALUATOR EXCHANGE  
EXCHANGE SPEAKERS  
MAKE SOME NOISE  
EDUCATION  
SHAKE IT UP  
GOOD LISTENING  
ELECTION OF OFFICERS  
MICROPHONE MEETING  
VIDEO TAPE MEETINGS  
GOURMET'S DELIGHT MEETING  
CELEBRITY NIGHT MEETING  
TOASTMASTERS ROAST MEETING  
COURTROOM CAPER MEETING  
LAFF NIGHT  
JOKE-A-THON  
HOBBY OR TALENT MEETING  
ROLE PLAYING

TIPS N TECHNIQUES MEETING  
SEMINAR  
CIVIC PROGRAM  
BOSS MEETING  
TALK SHOW NIGHT  
PLAN A PARTY MEETING  
THE SKIT  
GRAB BAG MEETING  
EVALUATION VARIETY  
SUCCESS LEADERSHIP MEETINGS  
COSTUME MEETING  
MORTUARY MEETING  
THREE RING CIRCUS MEETING:  
GUEST MEETING  
ANNIVERSARY MEETING  
BRAINSTORMING MEETING  
FEATURE POETRY OR AN AUTHOR  
GHOST STORY MEETING  
ADVANCED MANUAL MEETINGS  
WORKSHOPS  
MEMBERSHIP BUILDING  
MOMENTS OF TRUTH  
COMMUNITY ACTION MEETING  
SPEECHCRAFT  
CONTESTS  
EVALUATION WORKSHOP  
OFFICER TRAINING

**SPICE IT UP:** "Spice" up the meeting with actual spice samples, asking speakers to combine them in creative ways and describe the taste/smell experience.

**ARGUMENTATIVELY SPEAKING:** Appoint or get volunteers to be judge, witnesses, prosecutor, and defender. Create a mini court and give the TM Cast a bizarre case to wrestle with (the more far-fetched the "crime", the more fun this one is). Allow the prosecution to present its opening statement (1-2 minutes). Then the defense presents its opening statement (1 –2 minutes). Then the prosecution presents a witness with Q & A (1-2 minutes) followed by the Defense (1-2 minutes). Closing arguments with Prosecution goes first, followed by the Defense (1 – 2 minutes each) The Judge then rules (2 – 4 minutes). Have the members not involved sit on the jury and after the judge has ruled (if there is enough time) present their decision.

**PLAY IT BACKWARD:** Plan in advance or just spring it on the club if you're brave. Literally turn your agenda on its head and proceed from the end to the beginning. It's a refreshing brain-cleanser; you won't have many brain cells left afterward. The key for a really wild meeting is to get the participants to replicate what the evaluators say they observed. For example ..." TM Jones, It was a great speech but I have never heard you use so many ahs and uhms. Speaker Jones would then try to inject those ums and ahs into the presentation.

**PICK A THEME:** Every meeting can be a theme meeting. A theme provides a thread to tie parts of the program together. Speeches, table topics, evaluation, opening, closing, etc., can be included in the theme presentations. When selecting the theme, strive for originality. A broad theme allows the presentation of several pre-assigned high interest speeches. Topics around which theme meetings can be built are: historic events, patriotic occasions, business activities, civic affairs, personal topics, international issues, Cinco de Mayo, Halloween, rainbows, harvest, an ocean cruise. Add theme related decorations for fun. A simplified approach to the theme meeting is to provide only theme-oriented questions for discussion during the table topics portion, with theme related comments by the Toastmaster during meeting transitions.

**TABLE TOPICS MEETING:** Toastmaster can ask for full-length speeches in response to Table Topics questions; call on evaluators at random--everyone must listen equally well to every speaker, as they don't know which one they'll evaluate. A variation is to have the Toastmaster start a story and the remaining speakers continue it (each timed at 1 – 2 minutes) and the final speaker or the Toastmaster conclude it. Another possibility is to have ask the first speaker to select from a list of authors, then read the opening line from a story or novel.

**BREAK THE ICE AGAIN:** Assign old and new members to give talks about themselves. This is a good opportunity for members to know more about their fellow members. This could be the first speech in another Basic Manual for those who have achieved their CC, and are working on their AC; members should understand that they can achieve multiple CCs, ACs, and DTMs, working on more than one manual at a time. This can be varied to have all (or many) members give a shorter Ice Breaker.

**HOT SEAT SPEAKER:** The hot seat speaker serves as an alternate, in case a scheduled speaker doesn't show. It is suggested the club select the Hot Seat from next meeting's speakers; this way they're already preparing their speech.

**BOOK REVIEW MEETING:** Everyone at the meeting presents a short speech on one topic for an all book review meeting. The object would be to get everybody in attendance up to the lectern for a short (1-3 minute) speech. The assigned topic would be to review a book the member read, liked, hated, would recommend, would not recommend, be burned, etc..

**STAGE A DEBATE:** At the previous meeting present the debate topic, select participants and determine the debate process (hint: order the Debate manual from TI; catalog number 104). For extra fun, challenge another club(s) to a debate. (Also see Debate Table Topics)

**PLAY IT AHEAD:** Promote speakers' name and subject material in your meeting publicity: "Natalie Jaworsky will speak on tips for managing multiple priorities at the ABC Toastmasters Club meeting next Tuesday."

**SPEAKER/EVALUATOR EXCHANGE:** Arrange to exchange members and or have a joint meeting with a nearby Club. For example your club sends a speaker and evaluator to a nearby club; they send a speaker and evaluator to your club. In each case the speaker is evaluated by an evaluator from a different club. Both clubs get a new speaker and a fresh evaluation. The speakers and evaluators involved have the opportunity to speak in a different setting without leaving the Toastmasters' environment.

For variety invite a speaker from another non-neighbor club. D26 can assist ... contact [Nick Samoylov](mailto:nsamoylov@hotmail.com) at 720-280-6662 or email at nsamoylov@hotmail.com for more information.

**MAKE SOME NOISE:** Stage a distracting meeting; download sounds to play randoming --crying babies, construction work, back-row conversations, cell phones. It'll make you appreciate that "positive and mutually supportive environment"!

**EDUCATION:** Stage an all-education meeting focusing on modules from the Successful Club, Better Speaker, and Leadership Excellence Series. Choose modules not recently presented in your Club.

**SHAKE IT UP:** Change location for a special meeting; choose somewhere off-the-wall or an elegant or rustic setting. Caution: publicize the change several times so that first-timers don't show up at your regular place and miss the meeting!

**GOOD LISTENING:** Assign a new role of Master Listener. This person listens attentively to everything and at meeting's end gives a pop quiz on the meeting's content.

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS:** Devote the entire meeting to electing the club's officers - - nominating speeches, campaign speeches, and the actual voting. Create spirit with candidates campaign posters, balloons, flyers, other gimmicks - - whatever it takes to present candidates. Toastmaster members present can be involved in presenting nominating and seconding speeches, and campaign speeches. Some of this can be done in jest, but also have serious content concerning campaign promises, goals, etc.

**MICROPHONE MEETING:** We may be called upon to speak or perform using a microphone. If your clubroom does not normally provide microphone capability, occasionally plan a meeting in a different location or have someone bring in a sound system, and require everyone to use the microphone during their presentation. An educational feature discussing microphone use would be a great opening event.

**VIDEO TAPE MEETINGS:** Most of us in preparing our speeches do not practice in an environment where we can see ourselves as we appear to the audience. The cliché "a picture is worth a thousand words" is a truism. Video taping table topic presentations provides more people to be taped in a meeting. Make sure that a monitor is available at that meeting to playback the tape that same night; self or member evaluations are an important part of this exercise. Members can be very self-conscious and embarrassed over their presentation, so it is important to consider this when conducting the meeting.

**GOURMET'S DELIGHT MEETING:** Plan a progressive dinner at member's homes with table topics at one, speeches at another, evaluations at another, etc. Compliment each stop and segment of the program with fine food and fellowship.

**CELEBRITY NIGHT MEETING:** Invite a well-known member of the community or company to speak before the club. Alert the news media and invite lots of guests.

**TOASTMASTERS ROAST MEETING:** Choose a "toastmaster" to lead a lively meeting by "roasting" one of the long time members or invite a District officer for his or her "chance at the spotlight", roasting done, medium, or rare.

**COURTROOM CAPER MEETING:** Choose a member to be the defendant, real or imagined, and assign a crime to them. One of the members portrays the character on trial. The meeting can be fun if the charges are something funny. For example, they could be the charge of stealing the cookies from the cookie jar; Santa Claus damaging a roof and causing a disturbance; or Goldy Locks' antics. Assign members to be the judge, plaintiff, lawyers, and witnesses, and conduct a mock trial. Vote for or against acquittal. The charges against the accused and the description of the scenario are handed out a week

or two before the meeting. The two prepared speeches are the opening arguments by the prosecutor and defense attorney. Table topics is the testimony of the witnesses.

**LAFF NIGHT:** Hold a best one-liner or best joke telling contest. Conduct the whole meeting just for laughs. Use props and have funny skits. This could be a good meeting to hold the Tale Tales or Humorous Speech Contest.

**JOKE-A-THON:** Members come prepared with several jokes and share them during table topics session.

**HOBBY OR TALENT MEETING:** Members give talks and demonstrations about their hobbies or interests. As an alternative meeting, selected members can demonstrate their entertainment capabilities.

**ROLE PLAYING:** The group acts out a situation; usually no script, and no set dialogue. Two or more members make up parts and develop a story situation on a designated idea.

**THE PANEL** (consisting of moderator and panel members)  
A formal panel of 4 to 5 members is introduced by the moderator. Members rise to speak on a single topic or phases of a topic. In an informal panel, discussion on a topic is channeled by the moderator and all remain seated. Use advanced manual "The Discussion Leader."

**INTERNATIONAL INTEREST PROGRAM:** Table topics and prepared speeches can be developed about the culture, economy, and history of the countries of members' origin or of countries they have visited. If advance notice is given, members may bring memorabilia such as miniature flags, travel posters, souvenirs from their own travels.

**TIPS 'N TECHNIQUES MEETING:** A Toastmasters meeting is more complete with an educational speech. Plan a "How to" speech (3-5 minutes) at your next meeting. Topics may include club procedures, officer duties, committee functions, publicity, protocol, duties of members, by-laws, new member orientation, community programs, speechcraft, youth leadership, reading program, speakers bureau, etc.

**SEMINAR:** Invite an authoritative professional to present a talk on a topic related to his expertise. Provide for a question and answer period following the presentation. Advertise this special event to the community.

**CIVIC PROGRAM:** Have a special theme related to some city, state or national event. Invite available city, county, or state officials to present information concerning the event. This could be used during election time.

**BOSS MEETING:** Show the "Boss" your professional group. Good opportunity for the group to "show its best" and get the message across about the importance of the Toastmasters Program.

**TALK SHOW NIGHT:** Choose a host to interview speakers and evaluators. Don't forget to include lots of commercials. Meeting can be patterned after popular TV shows.

**PLAN A PARTY MEETING:** Whatever your fancy, have your meeting around the pool, at the beach, at a clubhouse, at a luau. Have fun!

**THE SKIT:** A short, rehearsed, dramatic presentation by two or more can be given during the course of the program to train or entertain.

**GRAB BAG MEETING:** Take some pressure off with impromptu assignments drawn out of a bag. Each member takes a chance on drawing a lucky assignment. Speakers for the evening could be assigned previously and not be a part of the grab bag assignments.

**EVALUATION VARIETY:** Try something different in evaluations, such as the following methods: (1) Panel evaluations - three or four people on a panel each look at one aspect of all the speeches. For example, one may focus on content, one on delivery, another on use of language; or one may focus on openings, one of the speech body, one on conclusions, etc.; (2) Open Forum - Each speaker is evaluated, not by a single person, or by a panel, but by as many in attendance as may wish to comment (good for speech contestants); (3) Dialogue - The evaluator has a two way conversation with the speaker, asking questions about the speech and suggesting alternatives (can include self-evaluation comments); (4) Video Tape Evaluations - Used with the Television Advanced Manual - Have the evaluator not hear the speech when originally given, but only a video taped version of the speech; then evaluate the video presentation.

**SUCCESS LEADERSHIP MEETINGS:** Use the Success Leadership modules as a basis for the meeting or for parts of the meeting for several weeks. This is good way to use the skills of the experienced Toastmasters in the club, provide the information in the modules to the club members, and receive credit for a Success Leadership Module.

**COSTUME MEETING:** Dress up to represent a variety of careers, hobbies, historical personalities or anything else--se for table topics subject and as speech material. An alternative to this is to feature items containing or featuring interesting images or messages --hats, T-shirts, scarves, coffee cups, a favorite bumper sticker, etc.

**MORTUARY MEETING:** Have eulogies for table topics. Concentrate on either well known personalities or the members of the club. Have a part of the meeting set aside for members to interview another member to get material for the eulogy.

**THREE RING CIRCUS MEETING:** Table Topics, Speeches, Evaluation. Have a night at the circus with a "barker", props, and lots of clowning. Invite family and friends. Have balloons for the kiddies.

**GUEST MEETING:** Plan a special demonstration meeting for prospective members. Use advertising and word of mouth to bring in the guests, and provide a program that explains the Toastmasters program.

**ANNIVERSARY MEETING:** Celebrate your club anniversary each year by having a special recognition event. Present awards for best speaker, best table topics, and best evaluator for the greatest number of times during the year. Present your Toastmaster of the Year award, best attendance award, club officer recognitions, mentor of the year, etc. Recognize past club presidents and members that are present. Make sure invitations are sent to as many prior members as can be determined. Find out from TI what your anniversary date is if that information has been lost. This meeting is a must at five-year intervals.

**BRAINSTORMING MEETING:** After each of the elections, have a brainstorming session to plan the next terms club activities: set goals for manual completions; plan membership campaigns; plan educational programs and club events.

**Feature poetry or an author:** Have a Poetry Meeting where everyone who wants to read poems brings one or two of their favorites. The previous meeting could have featured a member who is into poetry or a local poet. You can then have everyone write and read an original poem. Check out the Internet for samples of formula poetry from acclaimed poets that can be written by everyone (An "I am \_\_\_\_\_" poem, for example). Rotate the reading/reciting during the time allotment for the speakers giving all a change to read. A variation is to spotlight one author or poet such as **Shakespeare or Longfellow, etc.** Where the speakers and Table Topics are from the selected author.

**Ghost Story Meeting:** For Halloween for any special occasion, it's a fun way to get people to try story telling. Poetry can be at this meeting by using spooky Edgar Allen Poe or Robert Service poems. The library and Internet are possible sources of stories.

**Advanced Manual Meetings:** Sometimes programming the longer advanced manuals into a meeting are problematic. It's worth the effort as they provide an excellent meeting format. A team presentation from the advanced manuals *Technical Presentations* or *Professional Salesperson* can be used in place of all of the speaking positions. The Toastmaster and topic master can use the same topic as the team presentation uses for a unified program around a common theme.

**Workshops:** The workshop projects in *The Discussion Leader* and *Professional Speaker* manuals make an excellent meeting. They incorporate one or more speakers and also have one or more exercises like round robin discussion or buzz session. These exercises give everyone a chance to participate so they make a good alternative to table topics. For new workshop presenters, the Success Leadership modules are a good place to gain experience before starting from scratch.

**Membership Building:** A variation of the theme meeting is make "membership building" with speeches focusing on the importance of building membership. Topics within this theme may be programs that have worked for other clubs, the elements of a good club program or tips on inviting guests. Table topics can be a round robin discussion or role playing inviting new members. Be sure to include the manual speeches by inviting speeches on broad membership topics. The motivational speech can be "Make It Persuasive" from the "Basic

Manual" or "Manage and Motivate" from *Speeches by Managers*. Ideas from other clubs can be "A Fact-Finding Report" from *Speaking to Inform*. The round robin discussion can be "Round Robin" from *The Discussion Leader*.

**Moments of Truth.** For a club to be successful, it needs a good educational program and a good membership program. The *Moments of Truth Successful Club* manual provides a comprehensive plan for a such a program. "The Training the Sales Force" from *The Professional Salesperson* provides a good format for teaching members how to recruit. The round robin discussion can center around where to look for possible new guests.

**Community Action Meeting** The idea is to encourage members to be come active in their community. Identify "hot" issues in your county or town and explore the information available. Many of the issues generate reports prepared by the county or town staff. Chose a relevant topic with two sides. Obtain a copy of any reports, search the Internet or Google information. Have someone present the majority view while someone else presents the minority view. Table topics could discuss the chosen issue.

**Speechcraft:** Speechcraft is Toastmasters number one membership tool. It is an eight week course which covers the basics of speaking. Experienced members of our club or guests give how-to speeches. The Speechcraft participants have the opportunity to give their first one to three speeches. While this can be given outside of the club, it's most effective as a membership tool when given at club meetings. The only draw back to Speechcraft is it's not only Toastmasters most effective membership tool; it's Toastmasters most popular membership tool. So it is possible that more than one club may attempt to use it at the same time; therefore when planning a Speechcraft session it's a good idea to coordinate with neighboring clubs.

**Success/Leadership Module.** Toastmasters International has several modules in seminar format on topics such as evaluation, listening, leadership and creative thinking that can fill one or more meetings. The modules have scripts can be paraphrased or modified to fit a meeting format. They also contain exercises that compliment the scripts. These modules can be used to achieve the Advanced Leadership Gold level. A module can be broken into pieces and/or a

series of modules can be presented and can be presented much like a Speechcraft. This allows you to have a membership event without competing with other clubs who may be offering Speechcraft at the same time.

**Contests:** Contests Create interest and improve skills. Twice a year, we have International and Regional contests. In the spring, the Internal Speech and Evaluation Contest is held and in the fall, the Humorous Speech and Table Topics Contest. While these are great learning experiences, a club isn't limited only to these contests.

Your club, in collaboration with other clubs, can organize and conduct a mini-contest; however, in order to avoid confusion it is suggested that you not use "Contest" in naming the event. For instance you could hold a Tall Tales Extravaganza. If your club is adventuresome, host a Controversial Topics Event/competition.

To be successful and gain maximum participation, first, sell it to your own club membership. If interest merits, you might coordinate with the Area Governor and involve the whole area or possibly the whole Division. These events are an opportunity for members to speak in a different environment but still be within the Toastmasters environment. Gatherings such as these provide one of the few times we speak, gain evaluating feedback and have a chance to rework a speech.

**Evaluation Workshop:** For the prepared speeches have one or more of the speakers use "evaluation" for their topic. If there is more than one speaker using evaluation as their topic, there needs to be coordination to avoid overlap. Some possible topics are:

- Evaluation is **your** opinion and the choices of words affects the listeners' reaction
- Balance of praise and suggestions
- See the articles at <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/3558/eval.htm>.

For table topics, have each participant evaluate one of the speakers. to encourage people to look at the speech in different ways. Copy blank evaluation pages for other projects. Place a speakers name on each page so each speaker receives the same number of evaluations. There should be one person who has the speaker's manual and do the official evaluation. The official evaluators can participate as part of

table topics or as part of the normal evaluation section of the meeting. The official evaluators should be scheduled ahead of time so they can contact the speakers and check for any special objectives.

**Officer Training:** Officer training is important. Scheduling evening training sessions may be difficult for some officers to attend. If your club has several experienced members, present a training session in one of your club meetings. This could be used to fulfill a speaking requirement by using "The Team Technical Presentation" from the *Technical Presentations* advance manual.

Caution: This doesn't count toward training in the Distinguished Club Plan (unless approved by the District). However, it does serve the more important objective of re-acquainting the club officers with their duties. This, also, introduces your newer members to the club officer and their roles and make it more likely that they will volunteer to be an officer at your next elections.