



Table Topics Master

Congratulations on taking this assignment. It will offer you an excellent opportunity to practice your Leadership and listening skills. By working on this assignment you have the opportunity to practice your leadership skills as planning, preparing, organising, time management and facilitation. And will assist the participants in this session to practice impromptu speaking and the ability to present their thoughts succinctly with very little time to practice.

Introduction to Table Topics Master:

The ability to “think and speak on your feet” is an important skill that often determines your success in a variety of work opportunities. That’s why the “Table Topics” portion of the Toastmasters club meeting was developed. Table Topics provides participants with the opportunity to practice impromptu speaking.. By answering brief Table Topics questions, they will learn how to present their thoughts clearly and convincingly, with no more than a few seconds of preparation. They will also learn to listen constructively, and to think flexibly.

The Toastmasters programme has a tradition – every member speaks at a meeting. The table topics session is that portion of the meeting that ensures this tradition. The Table Topics session ensures this tradition. The Table Topics master prepares and issues the topics; originality is desirable as much as possible. Each speaker may be given an individual subject, or a choice of subjects may be presented from which the members can draw at random.

Competent Leader Credits

You can use this assignment to get credits in your own *Competent Leadership (CL)* programme. Please ask your Vice President Education to assign you an evaluator to provide you with feedback on this leadership role. Your assigned evaluator will provide YOU with feedback on your leadership strengths in this role and offer suggestions for improvement the next time you are assigned this role.

Serving ONCE in this assignment can ONLY count towards any ONE of the following Competent Leader Projects. To receive credit for all three projects, you are required to serve as a table topics master on three different occasions – i.e. NOT at the same meeting. If you don’t have your CL manual with you then please ask the Sgt at Arms for a copy of the assignment. Each project has a slightly different evaluation focus so be sure to read through the evaluation criteria before the meeting:

ROLE	Competence	
PROJECT 1	Listening and Leadership	X
PROJECT 2	Critical Thinking	
PROJECT 3	Giving Feedback	
PROJECT 4	Time management	
PROJECT 5	Planning and Implementation	
PROJECT 6	Organise and Delegating	
PROJECT 7	Developing your facilitation skills	
PROJECT 8	Motivating People	
PROJECT 9	Mentoring	
PROJECT 10	Team Building	

Cheat Sheet





Points to remember

Before:

- Check the Task Matrix to find out who the prepared speakers, evaluators, and Toastmaster are so you can call on the other members first. Only if time permits at the end of the topics session should you call on programme participants (speakers last).
- Check with the Toastmaster to find out if a theme meeting is scheduled. If so, prepare topics to carry out that theme. If no theme is scheduled, choose a wide selection of topics. Review the Toastmaster magazine and other publications for ideas. Do not repeat the previous week's Table Topics ideas or items.
- When choosing your specific topics. Select ones that will inspire the speakers to expound on them or give their opinions, etc.
- Don't make the topics too long or complicated. Phrase them in such a way that the speaker clearly will know what you want them to talk about.
- Always prepare more topics than you plan to use, so that you can select those that seem appropriate at the time.
- Prepare a short brief on the purpose of Table Topics Sessions.

During

- The Toastmaster will introduce you and hand control of the meeting to you.
- Accept the gavel (the symbol of control of the meeting) with a handshake.
- Once the Toastmaster is seated, briefly state the purpose of the topics session.
- Set the stage for your topics programme. Keep your remarks brief but enthusiastic. Your job is to give others a chance to speak, not to give a series of mini-talks yourself.
- Encourage speakers to use the word of the day in their response.
- Keep the programme rolling, be certain everyone understands the maximum time they have for their response and how the timing lights work (if the timekeeper hasn't already done so).
- State the question briefly then call on a respondent. This serves two purposes. First, it holds everyone's attention since each one is thinking of a response should he or she be called on to speak, and second, it adds to the value of the impromptu element by giving everyone an opportunity to improve his or her "better listening and thinking" skills.
- Call on speakers at random. Avoid going around the room in the order in which people are sitting.
- Never call on a guest unless the guest has indicated that they would like to participate.
- Lead the applause when the impromptu speaker stands to deliver their speech, continue the applause until the speaker reaches the place from which they are going to speak.
- Remain standing until the speaker acknowledges you or if it is apparent that he or she has forgotten to acknowledge you and then be seated.
- Stand and lead the applause when the speaker has finished.
- Watch your total time! Even if your session started late, try to end on time to avoid the total meeting running over time. Typically, three to four table topics speeches are sufficient.
- Ask the Timekeeper for a timekeeper's report
- Summarise who participated and what they spoke about and ask the audience to vote for the best impromptu speaker (if your club does this).
- Return control of the meeting to the Toastmaster, by returning the gavel with a handshake.

Resources:

- Competent Leader Manual – Page 69
- Think fast (Catalog No 1315) a manual on Table Topics

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- Stand up and Speak I and II a Table Topics Game (Catalogue No 1316 & 1317)



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Table Topics Ideas

- A mini debate (ask the participant to debate for and against a specific topic and ask the timekeeper to indicate half the time so that the person can switch)
- Start a story and each participant should continue the story.
- Give the participant one word or phrase to discuss.
- Pose a question which they need to answer.
- You provide each participant with a very obscure (but actual) word from the dictionary, and the participant comes up with a convincing definition – words to use could be:
 - * **feme covert** (the actual meaning is a married woman)
 - * **tribology** (it means the study of interacting surfaces in relative motion)
 - * **pedology** (the study of soil, its formation, usage, classification)
 - * **grisaille** (A painting in tones of a single colour, especially grey)
- Using coins, ask the speaker to talk about something that happened in the year that was stamped on the coin, or something they were doing during that year
- Have the speaker pick a fortune cookie and use the "fortune" as the topic to talk about. Afterwards the speaker can eat the cookie!
- Cut pictures from the newspaper or magazines. Have the table topics respondent come up and pick one and tell the club what is happening in the picture
- Bring a bag of goodies – each participant pulls out an object and describes it to the audience (without them seeing it).

Possible Topics

Should dagga be Legal	Should Prostitution be Legalised
The advantages and disadvantages of Drinking Coffee	e-Tolls
Banning Plastic bags	Should smoking be banned in public places
Appointing Young MD's to run your company	Culling the mountain goats in CT
Selling postage stamps over the internet	The colour Green
"What do people think they know about your birthplace that isn't true?"	Global warming
Food theme, topics could include - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Most memorable meal * Favourite food * Least favourite food * Strangest food ever eaten 	Catch phrases such as " Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking ", " Economical with the truth " and " Send in the clowns " (See the sample wording where these topics are presented).



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* * Strangest place ever eaten

Possible Script for the Table Topics Session – using Catch Phrases as the Topic

Mr/Madam Toastmaster, fellow Toastmasters and guests

Table Topics is where we learn how to stand up and speak without much prior preparation.

Thinking and speaking “on your feet” is a valuable skill and the only way we become good at it is to practice. The way it will work is as follows, I will select the first speaker to speak on the topic of “Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking”, then when the speaker has finished I will introduce the second topic.

Each speaker will speak, Mr/Madam Timekeeper, for a minimum of 1 minute when the green light will go on, after 1 and a half minutes the amber light will go on – signalling “half way” and when 2 minutes have passed the red light will go on – the speaker should have wound up his impromptu speech by then.

The theme for today’s table topics session is “Catch Phrases” – those sayings that have entered the English language through movies, TV and the sayings of famous people.

One of the most famous English orators is Winston Churchill, prime minister of Great Britain during WWII. Funnily enough though, his first political speech made in 1897 started with the words, “**Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking**” – to continue on that topic, please welcome _____ . {Name of speaker}

{Lead the applause, wait for speaker to acknowledge you, take your seat, when the speaker has finished lead the applause}

In table topic we don’t encourage outright lying, however, I suppose we can sometimes sympathise with what Mark Twain is reported to have said,

“Truth is a mighty valuable commodity; we need to be economical with it.”

To speak to us on the topic of “**Economical with the truth**” – please help me welcome _____ . {Name of speaker}

{Lead the applause, wait for speaker to acknowledge you, take your seat, when the speaker has finished lead the applause}

The tradition of “The Show must go on” grew out of the circus. Whenever a mishap occurred, the band was told to go on playing and the cry went up “**Send in the clowns!**” – for the simple reason that panic had to be avoided and audience entertained lest they demand their money back! To speak on the topic of “**Send in the clowns**” please welcome _____ . {Name of speaker}

{Lead the applause, wait for speaker to acknowledge you, take your seat, when the speaker has finished lead the applause}

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Mr Timekeeper please can we have the time report. In summary our speakers where _____ who spoke about _____ and _____ who spoke about.. Please vote for the person you thought was the best speaker during this session.

Mr Toastmaster, this concludes my task and I hand control of the meeting back to you.