

## Table Topics Master

<b>Allocated minutes</b>	<b>1:00</b>	<b>1:30</b>	<b>2:00</b>
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### Purpose

Your role is to facilitate the impromptu speech portion of the meeting. It is to provide opportunity for those in the audience without a role, to have a go.

Table Topics is the name Toastmasters gives to Impromptu Speaking: the ability to speak 'off the cuff', without preparation and without notes, on a topic you have just been given. This is a regular part of a Toastmasters meeting, and everyone who does not have a (major) speaking role at the meeting should get the opportunity to participate in "table topics", or impromptu speaking.

The topic needs to be of a general nature - and be mindful of time. Not something that takes 3 minutes to explain. We want to allow the opportunity for as many participants to have a go as is possible.

### Before the meeting/ Pre-meeting prep

#### Choosing Questions

- Look at easy-Speak to see what the theme is, you can use the theme to come up with questions or choose you own questions
- Try to keep things broad and relevant, and easy to speak to.
- Try something different if you like using a 'talk about this prop' question, or 'questions from a hat'. Have a bit of fun with it if you like but remember, it's about the participants, not about you

### During the meeting

#### Choosing Participants

- During the break, confirm with the Timer the timing of the table topic (usually red light at 1:30 or 2:00 mins) and how many speakers we can aim for, ideal being 4-5 participants, minimum 3.

- ❑ If we have any guests (possible members), ask if they'd like to participate in table topics during the break... totally up to them, no pressure! Give them the option to answer a question, or just come on stage to introduce themselves. If they've accepted, make sure they're aware of the timing light at the back
- ❑ Find those members who haven't got a role. If everyone is assigned, then target those who have completed their roles and had a small role, such as introducer, grammarian, Sgt at Arms etc. Avoid those who are yet to finish their roles.

### **While on Stage**

- ❑ If there are guests present, briefly describe what a table topic is
- ❑ Keep the questions/activity short so you can get as many speakers up to talk
- ❑ Ask an experienced member to be the first table topic speaker for newer members and visitors to understand/know how it works.
- ❑ Confirm with audience and timer the timing for each speech (green light at X, yellow at Y, red at Z) Standard time is 2 minutes with green on 1.00, orange on 1.30 and red at 2.00,  
Usually at Boaters we do 1:00, 1:15, 1:30 to allow more time for people to have a go.
- ❑ When you deliver the question, deliver the question twice, then announce the name of the Table Topic speaker. This gives a brief moment for the audience to think about an answer before they know who the speaker will be.

## **Some challenging table topics ideas**

### **Fortune Cookies**

Buy a bag of fortune cookies. Each Table Topics speaker breaks the cookie and speaks for their allotted time on the contents of the fortune cookie. Each Cookie has a proverb or a suggestion of something good happening to the person breaking the cookie open. They then eat the cookies.

### **Look - no gestures!**

Describe how to do something without the use of hand gestures.

### **Pick a prop**

Pick a prop and do something creative around/using the prop. Use common household or kitchen items.

### **Yesterday's News**

Read out yesterday's horoscope and ask the speaker to say whether it turned out to be true or not!

### **Pick a number**

Choose a number and say how it relates to you, your life, your work etc.

### **Let's debate it!**

Split the audience into two teams. Speakers debate either for or against the topic. Those who have not spoken vote for the winning team based on the strength of the arguments.

### **Pick a picture**

Speakers are given a picture title, and asked to describe the picture and their motivation for taking it, without having the picture to refer to.

### **The topic is "tables"**

Speakers talk about various types of tables - tax tables, multiplication tables, kitchen tables, turning the tables, coffee tables etc

### **Give The 411**

We have all heard that when describing an event, we should give the basic facts - who, what, when, where, why and how. For example, given the question "Describe your most memorable sporting event," you could respond with what (soccer world cup), when (last summer), where (a party at my best friend's house), why (my first soccer party), and how (rented a big screen TV). By the time you fully described all those parts, you've given a concise 1-2 minute response.

### **Divide & Conquer**

Organization is important because prevents communication from turning into word soup. Clear divisions are essential to an orderly arrangement. Some of the classic two or three way divisions are: past, present, future; that was then, this is now; low, medium, high; cost, benefit; financial cost, social cost; civil law, moral law; problem, solution;

thesis, antithesis; thesis, antithesis, synthesis; us, them; ideal, real; what we want, what we can get; mind, body. The list can go on forever. So, pick a division as quickly as possible and stick to that one.

### **Narrow the Focus**

Sometimes the topic is just too big to tackle as a whole. Take this example, "Describe your most memorable birthday?" Some related, narrower, topics are most memorable party or gift or card or date. To begin, acknowledge the original question and then use a bridge device to get to your narrower version. For example, "There are a lot of things that make a birthday memorable. My most memorable gift was..."

### **Divert Attention**

This is the quintessential politician's response. Take, for example, a very controversial subject: "What is your stance on abortion?" Divert attention to a related question. "My personal views are not as relevant as why this is a divisive issue." Then talk about the related question. Sometimes, you may want to avoid the original topic entirely. You could respond, "Your question is very important, however, today I am much more interested in education." And there is always, "A very good question which reminds me of ..."

### **Tell a Lie**

What happens when you have no experience at all with the subject of the question? You can give up and sit down or use the question as an opportunity to stretch your imagination. If you are given the question, "What is the biggest fish you have caught?," and you have never been fishing, you could just make up a fishing trip. Or notify your audience that you are letting your imagination run wild, "I've never caught a fish, but I imagine that ... " Be descriptive and detailed.

### **Ramble On**

Sometimes, you can discover something very interesting about the topic at hand by using a brainstorming or stream of consciousness approach. Start by restating the question. Then make the first comment that comes into your mind. Then say the next thing that you are reminded of. As you approach the end of your time, restate the best point you made the original question.

### **Elaborate**

Sometimes the subject isn't the problem, it's the time. One sure-fire way to put more interest in your speech and to extend the time is to give more elaborate descriptions. Instead of "the bird" try "the green and yellow bird that took delight in singing at the first sign of dawn."