

Virtual Contest Chair Briefings

This is a script for the Contest Chair to brief the Contestants, Sergeants-at-Arms, and the Toastmaster. Note that some sections of this script are specific to certain contest types and may not apply to your contest; therefore, they can be skipped. Please refer to the online document entitled [Virtual Contest Guidelines](https://www.tmd55.org/planning-documents.html) located at the bottom of <https://www.tmd55.org/planning-documents.html> for a complete overview of online contest.

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INSTRUCTIONS

The [List of items to have for briefings](#) is self-explanatory. Be sure you connect with the Chief Judge to see who is bringing what in terms of folders for the contest officials.

The [Briefings Checklist](#) is a list of items to be addressed at the contest site prior to the start of the briefings so that you and the Chief Judge can effectively conduct your briefings. Plan to arrive **early enough** to take care of those items in addition to other Contest Chair tasks you need to address.

The [Sergeant-at-Arms briefing script](#) and the [Contestant briefing script](#) are intended to be read verbatim. Also, ask the Contest Toastmaster ALL of the [Contest Toastmaster pre-contest questions](#). Yellow-highlighted italicized elements enclosed in “< ... >” are instructions and are not intended to be read. **IMPORTANT: Do NOT delay the Contestant briefing if a contestant is absent.**

AFTER YOU COMPLETE THE BRIEFINGS AND QUESTIONS, provide the Chief Judge the completed Speaker's Certification of Eligibility and Originality forms via email. For District

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contests, give the District Videographer the completed Video Release forms, and notify the videographer about any contestant who does not want their speech recorded.

LIST OF ITEMS TO HAVE FOR BRIEFINGS

Ideally forms will be provided online to contestants at least one week ahead of time but should be available for any last-minute needs as well.

1. Speaker's Certification of Eligibility and Originality forms
 - a. Blank forms (1183)
 - b. Any completed forms sent by the contestants prior to the contest
2. Speech Contestant Profile forms
 - a. Blank forms (1189)
 - b. Any completed forms sent by the contestants prior to the contest
3. **(District contests only)** Video Release forms
 - a. Blank forms available on [Toastmasters.org](https://www.toastmasters.org)
 - b. Any completed forms sent by the contestants prior to the contest
4. A list showing which completed forms you have and which forms you lack
5. Numbered slips of paper or other randomizer for determining speaking order
6. Speech Contest Rulebooks (1171) **BE SURE YOU HAVE THE CURRENT ONE**
7. Contest Agenda(s)
8. Contact list with the name, phone number, and email of all contestants, sergeants-at-arms, and the Contact Toastmaster
9. Ensure contestants have multiple working writing utensils
10. A copy of this document

NOTE: It is assumed that the Chief Judge will provide the online forms needed for voting judges, the tiebreaking judge, ballot counters and timers. If you are bringing them, include the following:

1. An online folder prepared for each voting judge that contains all the necessary Judges Guides and Ballots, one ballot per contest
 - a. International Speech (1172)
 - b. Humorous Speech (1191)
 - c. Tall Tales (1181)
 - d. Evaluation (1179)
 - e. Table Topics (1180)

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2. A folder prepared for the tiebreaking judge that contains all the necessary Judges Guides and Ballots, one ballot per contest
 - a. Tie Breaking International Speech (1188)
 - b. Tie Breaking Humorous Speech (1191A)
 - c. Tie Breaking Tall Tales (1181A)
 - d. Tie Breaking Evaluation (1179A)
 - e. Tie Breaking Table Topics (1180A)
3. Blank Judges Certification of Eligibility and Code of Ethics Forms (1170)
4. (Optional) Notification of Winners forms (1182), one per contest. These can be completed after the contest adjourns using the fillable PDF form
5. Counter's Tally Sheets (1176), three per contest
6. Time Record Sheets (1175), one per contest for each timer
7. Blank [Contest Winner Announcement Script forms](#), (or Item 1168 Results Form) one for each Club, Area, or Division contest, along with an envelope to put the filled-out forms in

BRIEFINGS CHECKLIST

- Give the Chief Judge the online forms and folders
- Give the Chief Judge the blank online Winner Certificates to complete should you want to hand those out when the winners are announced
- Define the speaking area (zoom space) and communicate that to the Chief Judge
- Confirm with the Chief Judge that the timing signals are visible to all contestants
- Ensure the Chief Judge knows which breakout room is assigned for Judge briefings
- Ask the Chief Judge if there is anything else they need
- Define the staging area where contestants are to proceed in the moment of silence before their speeches and stay until they are introduced
- For the Evaluation contest,** the Zoom Master will provide a breakout room separate from the main contest room where the contestants will prepare their evaluations and wait prior to their turn to speak

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- For the Table Topics contest, the Zoom Master will provide a break out room separate from the main contest room where the contestants will wait prior to their turn to speak
- Give all contest officials a two-minute warning prior to the briefings start time

Briefing order will be:

- Sergeant-at-Arms briefing
- Contestant briefing
- Contest Toastmaster pre-contest questions

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BRIEFING

Thank you for participating as a sergeant-at-arms (SAA) in this contest and for attending the briefing.

SAA – for the **EVALUATION CONTEST**

We will have one Sergeant-at-Arms (Chat Monitor SAA) who assists the Zoom Master to monitor chats and other distractions like unmuting (which should not be going on during speeches.) The other Sergeant-at-Arms monitors the evaluation contestants in their breakout room or holding area for a five-minute preparation time called the “Prep Room” SAA. After the preparation time is over, that SAA will ensure that contestants do not use their notes, stays with the contestants in the holding area and stages them back into the contest room. Decide now among yourselves who will be “Chat Monitor” SAA, and who will be “Prep Room” SAA.

<To the “Chat Monitor” SAAs

Label yourself SAA. Monitor the chat during the contestant speeches and times of silence. Do not allow anyone to have public chat while contestants are speaking. People can chat or enter and exit main room during the times of silence.

<To the “the “Prep Room” SAA:

When the Toastmaster says, “Will one of the sergeants-at-arms and one of the timers please escort all of the contestants to their break-out room for the five-minute preparation time?” please go with the contestants to the holding area where they will prepare their evaluations.

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<To the Prep Room SAA (You may want to *print out* his/her script below)>

You are the presiding officer over the preparation of the evaluations. When the last contestant is situated, state:

<Prep Room SAA script to be read verbatim to the evaluation contestants>

(Table topics is run similar to Evaluations but there are no notes to manage from contestants.)

“This is where you will prepare your evaluations. Please note that, according to the newest Rulebook: “contestants may not use digital or other devices during the contest to gain an unfair advantage.” If you have inadvertently carried a digital device with you, please discontinue its use. **<Give them a moment to comply.>** Thank you. The procedure will be as follows:

- You may start preparing as soon as I ask the timer to start the stopwatch
- Please work in silence for the five-minute period
- The timer will signal me when five minutes have elapsed
- At that time, I will ask you to put your notes down, move your hands away from them and look up until it is your time to go back to the main room. At that time you can use your notes again.
- When the first contestant is called into the contest room, the rest of you will remain in this holding area with me until it is your turn

Are there any questions? If not, Timer, please start the watch for the five-minute preparation period”

<End of Prep Room SAA script>

After the last contestant retrieves their notes, your tasks as “Prep Time” SAA are complete.

<To the “Prep Room SAA>:

When the five-minute preparation time is over, stay with the contestants in the holding area. When the **“Chat Monitor”** SAA signals you to send another contestant, ask the next contestant to enter the contest room. When the **“Chat Monitor”** SAA signals you for the last contestant, you may escort that contestant to the contest room and then stay in the contest room.

<To the “Chat Monitor” SAA>:

In addition to monitoring chat and “guarding” the door, you will assist in the flow of contestants into the contest room. When a contestant speech has ended, signal the **“Prep Time SAA** to

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send the next contestant. When the contestant arrives in the main room, ask him/her to proceed to the staging area.

Do you have any questions? If not, this concludes the SAA briefing for the Evaluation Contest.

SAA – INTERNATIONAL, HUMOROUS, or TALL TALES CONTESTS

We will have one Sergeant-at-Arms (Chat Monitor SAA) who assists the Zoom Master to monitor chats and other distractions (which should not be going on during speeches.) The other SAA is a backup for these contests.

<To the “Chat Monitor” SAAs

Label yourself SAA. Monitor the chat during the contestant speeches and times of silence. Do not allow anyone to have public chat while contestants are speaking. People can chat before or after contest and at breaks and enter or exit main room during the times of silence.

Do you have any questions? If not, this concludes the briefing for the International Speech, Humorous Speech, or Tall Tales contests.

CONTESTANT BRIEFING

Attendees:

- All Contestants
- The Contest Toastmaster
- (Optional) Sergeants-at-Arms to review props/monitoring
- (Optional) a Timer to show signals

Bring:

- Speaker’s Certification of Eligibility and Originality forms (completed and blank)
- Speech Contestant Profile forms (completed and blank)
- (Evaluation contests only) Evaluation Contestant Notes sheet (Item 1177) copies.
- (District contests only) Video Release forms (completed and blank)
- “Draw for order”/randomizer supplies
- Current Rulebook(s)

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- Pens
- Agenda(s)

Location – *Amount of space and what portion of body showing in the individual contestant Zoom spaces should be agreed upon prior to the contest and adhered to and explained for all contestants. Contestants should have had time to practice with lighting, camera, and body language at some time prior to the contest.*

Thank you for participating in the speech contest and for attending the briefing. This briefing will be performed in sections.

FORMS

First, I need to ensure that I have all completed forms. If I do not have your signed Speaker's Certification of Eligibility and Originality form, please fill one out **now** and return it to me.

<Provide forms as needed and ensure they are returned when completed.>

Do I have all the forms?

<When you have collected all the Certification forms>

You have certified your eligibility by signing this form. If you are a contestant in the International Speech, Humorous Speech, or Tall Tales contest, you have also certified that your speech meets the originality requirements stated in the rulebook.

If I do not have your completed Speech Contestant Profile form, please fill one out now and return it to me. If you are in the International Speech, Humorous Speech, or Tall Tales contest, please be sure to provide your speech title. The information you provide about yourself could be used during your Contestant interview, so be sure you are comfortable with that information being discussed publicly. Do not include any sensitive or otherwise inappropriate information.

<Provide forms as needed and ensure they are returned when completed.>

Do I have all the forms?

<When you have collected all the Profiles, forward them to the Contest Toastmaster>

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PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEORECORDING

We will now discuss photography and video recording. No one will be allowed to take a photograph while you are speaking.

<For Club, Area, and Division contests>

Your speech may be recorded only with your permission and my permission. If you want to record your speech, please raise your hand.

<Confirm which speeches they want recorded and who will record (Zoom Master or other).>

Those of you who requested their speech to be recorded, do you give your permission?

<Verbally confirm whose speeches will be recorded and which Zoom camera is being used. Document this information to let the Zoom Master know.>

<For District contests>

The District Videographer will be recording this contest and will record your speech only if you sign the Video Release Form. If you give your permission, please give me your signed Video Release form if you have not already done so.

<Provide forms as needed and ensure they are returned when completed.>

Do I have all the forms?

Your speech may be recorded by others besides the District videographer only with your permission and my permission. They can only be submitted to Regional Quarter finals for judging if they are recorded.

Has everyone given their permission to have their speech recorded?

<All speeches should be recorded for District or they cannot be presented as potential winners.>

DRAW FOR SPEAKING ORDER

You will now draw for your speaking position. The drawing will be done by contest. After you have drawn, when I call out your number, please pronounce your name so that the Contest Toastmaster can fill in the script. If you are in a speech contest, also pronounce the title of your speech.

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<Call out the number starting with one through the number of contestants. When you have finished, repeat this procedure for each contest.>

BADGES

You need to remove your badge or any items that reveal your education level and/or your club affiliation. Please do so now.

RULEBOOK

We will conduct this contest according to the **current Rulebook**. You should have reviewed the rules prior to this contest. If you would like access to a rulebook, please see me after this briefing.

SPEAKING AREA

<Discuss the speaking area> Amount of space and what portion of body showing in the individual contestant Zoom spaces should be agreed upon prior to the contest and adhered to and explained for all contestants at this time. Contestants should have had time to practice with lighting, camera and body language at some time prior to the contest.

EVALUATION CONTEST SPECIFICS

The contest will begin with a five-to-seven-minute test speech that you will be evaluating.

If contestants want to make preparatory notes during the test speech, they must use the **Evaluation Contestant Notes sheet** (Item 1177). More than one (1) sheet may be used.

After the Test speech is delivered, the “Prep Room” Sergeant-at-Arms will escort all the contestants to a holding area where they will be given five minutes to prepare Evaluations. When five minutes has elapsed, contestants are asked to stop working on their notes and look up until it is time for them to give their evaluation. The “Chat Monitor” Sergeant-at-Arms will call for the first contestant and subsequent contestants when it is their time to return to the main contest room. The remainder of the contestants will stay in the holding area with the “Prep Room” Sergeant-at-Arms until it is their turn to speak.

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Contestants must not use digital or other devices during the contest to gain an unfair advantage. It is recommended that, if you have a digital device with you, secure it someplace other than on you for the entirety of the contest. The Prep Room SAA will not allow digital devices in the holding room. You may access your device(s) once the contest is finished.

TABLE TOPICS CONTEST SPECIFICS

After the Contest Toastmaster announces the speaking order, the “Contestant” Sergeant-at-Arms will escort all but the first contestant out of the contest room to the holding area (breakout room), where they will stay until it is their turn to speak. The first contestant will stay in the contest room.

Contestants must not use digital or other devices during the contest to gain an unfair advantage. It is recommended that, if you have a digital device with you, you give it to a friend or secure it someplace other than on you for the entirety of the contest. The SAA will not allow digital devices in the holding area. You may access your device(s) once the contest is finished.

SPEECH CONTEST SPECIFICS

Each contestant selects their own speech topics. Some of the content may be personal in nature and contain language, ideas, or beliefs that some audiences may consider sensitive.

<Read only if a Humorous Speech contest is being conducted.> **Humorous Speech** contestants must avoid potentially objectionable language, anecdotes, and material. The speech must be thematic in nature (opening, body, and close), not a monologue (series of one-liners).

STAGING, LIGHTING AND MIC CHECK

We will now discuss how you will be staged prior to your speech.

All contestants will be identified by having their role included in their name (Example: Eval Tom Jones or Spkr Tom Jones) Please be sure to rename yourself with that information.

We will now allow you a short time to practice with your personal staging area, camera, lighting and mic. Those of you who want to practice, one at a time, move around your speaking area,

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and say a few words. Adjust your lighting if needed. *<Take the time for contestants to practice.>*

INTRODUCTIONS

We will now discuss how you will be introduced, when you will move to the speaking area, and what to do when you complete your speech.

<Read only for International Speech, Humorous Speech or Tall Tales contest.>

For the International Speech contest, the Humorous Speech contest, or the Tall Tales contest, you will be introduced by your name followed by your speech title. Your speech title will be repeated, and then your name.

<Read only if an Evaluation contest is being conducted.>

For the Evaluation contest, you will be introduced by your name, and then your name will be repeated. You can take your notes with you before you are introduced.

<Read only if a Table Topics contest is being conducted.>

For the Table Topics contest, you will be introduced by your name followed by the Topic. The topic will be repeated, and then your name.

For all contests, when you hear your name the second time, begin moving to the speaking area.

When you have finished your speech, exit the speaking area and take a seat in the audience. If you are using a lapel microphone system, return it to the sound station before taking a seat.

Are there any questions on staging and introductions?

TIMING

We will now review timing.

Timing signals will be given there. *<Point out the location of the timing signals. Timers will have the word Timer in their name in Zoom.>*

Timing will begin with the contestant's first definite verbal or nonverbal communication with the audience. This usually will be the first word uttered by the contestant, but would include any other communication such as sound effects, a staged act by another person, etc.

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We will now review the timing signals and qualification times for each speech contest type being conducted.

<Read only if an International Speech or Humorous Speech contest is being conducted.>

For the International Speech Contest or the Humorous Speech Contest, the Green signal will begin at five minutes, the Yellow signal at six minutes, and the Red signal at seven minutes. To qualify, you must speak for at least four minutes and 30 seconds and for no more than seven minutes and 30 seconds.

<Read only if a Tall Tales contest is being conducted.>

For the Tall Tales Contest, the Green signal will begin at three minutes, the Yellow signal at four minutes, and the Red signal at five minutes. To qualify, you must speak for at least two minutes and 30 seconds, and for no more than five minutes and 30 seconds.

<Read only if an Evaluation contest is being conducted.>

For the Evaluation Contest, the Green signal will begin at two minutes, the Yellow signal at two minutes and 30 seconds, and the Red signal at three minutes. To qualify, you must speak for at least one minute and 30 seconds, and for no more than three minutes and 30 seconds.

<Read only if a Table Topics contest is being conducted.>

For the Table Topics Contest, the Green signal will begin at one minute, the Yellow signal at one minute and 30 seconds, and the Red signal at two minutes. To qualify, you must speak for at least **one minute**, and for no more than two minutes and 30 seconds.

Are there any questions about timing?

DISQUALIFICATIONS

We will now review disqualifications. You can be disqualified for any of the following reasons:

1. You are ineligible. The eligibility requirements are listed on the Speaker's Certification of Eligibility and Originality form and in the rulebook. (If at any level it is determined that a contestant was ineligible to compete at any previous level, the contestant must be disqualified. This disqualification must occur even if the ineligibility is discovered at a later level and has been corrected.)

<NOTE: As the Contest Chair, you should have confirmed eligibility with Toastmasters International prior to the briefing.>

2. You are not present when the Contest Toastmaster is introduced.

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3. Your speech is timed under the minimum qualifying time or over the maximum qualifying time.
4. You reference another contestant, or a speech presented by another contestant, from the platform at the same contest in which you are competing.
5. Your speech violates contest rules on originality. If you are in the International Speech, Humorous Speech, or Tall Tales contest, **twenty-five percent (25%)** or less of the speech may be devoted to quoting, paraphrasing, or referencing another person's content. Any quoted, paraphrased, or referenced content **must be so identified** during the speech presentation.

Are there any questions about disqualifications?

PROTESTS

We will now review protests.

Protests are limited to eligibility, originality, and reference to another contestant's speech and must only be lodged by voting judges and/or contestants. Any protest must be lodged with the chief judge and/or contest chair prior to the contest being adjourned.

The chief judge, contest chair, voting judges, and contestants must not consider protests from audience members.

The contest chair can disqualify a contestant on the basis of eligibility.

Before a contestant can be disqualified on the basis of originality, or for referencing another contestant's speech, the contestant must be given an opportunity to respond to the voting judges. A majority of the voting judges must concur in the decision to disqualify. All decisions of the voting judges, and qualifying judges are final.

Are there any questions on protests?

PROPS

We will now discuss props for the International Speech, Humorous Speech, and Tall Tales contests.

You are responsible for your props. You may enlist someone to help you with positioning or using props. If used, props are to be put in place before you speak.

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Are there any questions about props?

This covers all the information for this briefing. Do you have any additional questions? If not, this concludes the briefing. Thank you and good luck!

CONTEST TOASTMASTER PRE-CONTEST QUESTIONS

<Ask the Contest Toastmaster the following questions>

Have you prepared and read through your script?

Did you record the speaking order in the script?

<Ask only if an International Speech or Humorous Speech contest is being conducted.>

Did you record the speech titles in the script?

<Ask only if an Evaluation contest is being conducted.>

Did you record the Test speaker's name and speech title in the script?

Are you comfortable with the pronunciation of names and speech titles?

<Ask only if a Table Topics contest is being conducted.>

Do you have the Table Topic and can you read it clearly to the contestants?

Do you understand the proper introduction protocol?

- International Speech, Humorous Speech and Tall Tales contest
 - Name, Title, Title, Name
- Evaluation contest
 - Test Speaker: Name, Title, Title, Name
 - Contestants: Name, Name
- Table Topics Contest
 - Name, Topic, Topic, Name
- Use ONLY the words above. **Do not add words like first, last, final, next; second, third, Mr. or Mrs., etc.**

Do you have the completed Speech Contestant Profile forms?

Do you have any questions or concerns?