

Contests in a nutshell

- Start and end on time! People appreciate when you value their time. Toastmasters is not the center of everyone's world. Make it worthwhile and everyone will be happy!
- Rule of Thumb for how long a contest should be: speeches/speakers 10 minutes per, and Table topics/evaluations 5 minutes per. Then add 30-45 (tops) minutes for all the other stuff.
- Do not fill up "gaps" with unnecessary fluff. Raffle, door prizes and certificates are to be given away, not take up time walking, drawing numbers by everyone in the room, clapping until they walk from the back of the room, etc. This can be a HUGE time waster, and not with any real educational benefit.
 - Appreciation certificates can be given as the functionaries arrive, and you can have them stand to be thanked publicly. It is the appreciation that is important, not the paper.
 - Door prizes/raffles should be done quick and fun. CM or assistant up front draws the tickets and let the winners come to the table to pick their prize.
- Ensure that all who have a role understand what that role is (train them) and that they carry out that role.
Critical that all forms, ballots, tally sheets, scripts, are available. Make sure they are filled out correctly for contestants, timers, judges, etc.
- Never assume that anyone "just knows" what to do just because they have held a district office and/or have been in Toastmasters for a long time. Contests are not an every-day thing, and not everyone has worked one – therefore they may not really know what to do (train them). You only get one chance.
- Person in charge should check with Contest Chairman to see what the content of their "entertainment" is for the time that the votes are being counted/break. Is it appropriate? Is it worthwhile? Using a video of a District or World champion winning speech would be an excellent use of time, from an entertainment standpoint, as well as educational. Plus it is only around 7 minutes, and might be all you need.
- Check the room. Think it all through to know how it should be set up.
- If the club has "low" membership, start a few weeks before contest date to round up outside help to fill roles. Be sure to **thank** these outside helpers.
- Ensure that SAA has set up room properly and that all aids (timing lights, watches) are available.
- Briefings are to be done before the scheduled time for the contest to begin. Can be done a half-hour before start time. Person in charge to determine if late arrivals (not briefed) can compete.
- The club VPE & Pres. should ensure that all chores are being done BEFORE the contest date.

- Get copies of scripts/briefing forms to Contest Chairman, Chief Judge BEFORE the contest date so that they have ample time to review and become familiar with their role. To insure they have read it, ask them “Do they have any questions?”
- Try not to use brand-new members for contest roles. Even though most think that being a timer, for example, is a great way to get started, this is a CONTEST.
- HAVE FUN!