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TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL MISSION:

We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

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What Is Your Story?

By far, the most significant speaking lesson I have ever learned came from the Toastmasters 1991 Golden Gavel recipient, Bill Gove—the father of professional speaking—who said, “make a point, tell a story.”

The “point” is the message that you want to get across: the life lesson, the wisdom you learned, the knowledge you want to impart. The story illustrates that point. I have had people come up to me long after a speech and tell me they remember the story I told. They may have forgotten the point, yet the story is retained.

What makes a good story for a speech? The most important element is that it should be your story. There are many books about famous people and the lessons they learned. Those lessons are important. But your audience will want to hear something new: *your* story. Take a step out and share your life lessons, your experiences, because that is what being vulnerable as a speaker is about. Connecting with other people means telling your story and touching the hearts and minds of those in the audience. Your story matters.

The second part of a good speech is the 3 C's: character, contrast, and conflict.

First, your story needs characters. If it's your story, you are one of those characters. Often there are other characters around you, even if it's just a voice in the back of your head reminding you of a lesson that you learned long ago. Good stories need characters.

Connecting with other people means telling your story and touching the hearts and minds of those in the audience.

The second thing is contrast. The audience needs to be able to tell the difference between the characters. If one person speaks quickly, another person should speak slower. If one person has a low voice, another person might need a higher voice so the audience can differentiate between the characters.

The third component is conflict. I remember going to my speaking coach at one point and sharing this beautiful story about meeting my wife, falling in love, and getting married. I told this wonderful story that touched my heart and he looked at me and said, “So what? You met. You fell in love. You got married. I'm not going to the movie theater to see that story on the screen.” There needs to be conflict, there needs to be doubt. There needs to be an issue that must be resolved because the power in the story is in the resolution of that conflict.

The lesson I learned is to tell your story with characters, with contrast, and with conflict. Share your story—the world needs to hear it!

Matt Kinsey, DTM
International President

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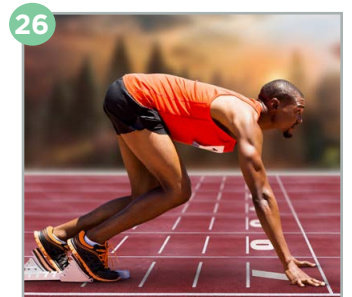
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News



Convention Is Coming!

Toastmasters invites you to attend the 2023 International Convention in beautiful Nassau, Bahamas, at the Grand Hyatt Baha Mar Resort from August 16–19, 2023. Visit the Toastmasters website for more details and to [register](#)! You can also visit the [tourism website](#) to learn more about Nassau and The Bahamas.

District Speech Contests

District speech contests are underway, and each District will submit video of their first-place winner to Toastmasters World Headquarters for the International Speech Contest [Region Quarterfinals](#). In the quarterfinals, the top two contestants from each region will be chosen to advance to the International Speech Contest Semifinals at the International Convention.

If you're helping with a District contest, review the [Video Recording Guidelines](#) for District online and hybrid speech contests. Otherwise, cheer on the contestants in your District and check the Toastmasters website in early July to see who will represent your region in the semifinals.

Print Paths Retired

Starting July 1, print paths in the Pathways learning experience will no longer be available for purchase. Instead, all members will be able

to work in the digital paths, which provide a comprehensive and interactive experience. Fewer than 1% of Pathways users request printed materials; the overwhelming majority use the content online. By focusing exclusively on digital content, the Toastmasters International Education Team is better able to make ongoing improvements to the program.

If you currently work in a print path, you will receive all the printed materials for the path, regardless of what level you are in. Toastmasters World Headquarters will send you a communication regarding this. If you prefer working with a physical copy of your projects, you will always have the option to print entire projects directly from Base Camp.

If you do not have a way in which to access digital materials, contact the Education Team via email at educationprogram@toastmasters.org or membership@toastmasters.org, or by phone at +1 720-439-5050, Monday–Friday 8 a.m.–5 p.m. Mountain Standard Time.

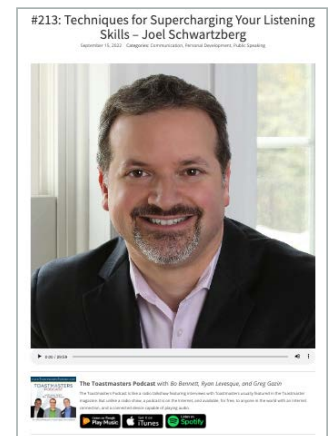
Resources

Find the Right Speakers

One of the most important aspects of planning your conference is selecting educational speakers. Review these [guidelines](#) to help you get started.

Tune In: Supercharge Your Listening Skills

We often think of leaders as strong speakers and thinkers, but the most admired leaders are also strong listeners. In this *Toastmasters Podcast* [episode](#), presentation coach Joel Schwartzberg shares valuable tips on how leaders can be more effective listeners. Want to learn more? Schwartzberg reveals seven tips for better listening in this *Toastmaster* [article](#).



Reminders

Zoom Discount Code

Is your club using Zoom to conduct virtual meetings? Then you may want to request a discount code for 50% off your plan. If your club hasn't received a discount code and would like to, email clubquality@toastmasters.org with your request. If you already have your code or have questions about this program, please visit [Zoom Discount FAQ](#).

Have Something to Say?

Did you read a magazine article that stood out or inspired you? Or maybe you listened to a recent *Toastmasters Podcast* episode and have some feedback. The *Toastmaster* would love to hear from you. Simply fill out [this form](#).

Club Profile

Irish Members Go Long Distance

By Paul Sterman

The seven Toastmasters stood together, readying themselves for the start of the Belfast City Marathon. All members of the Belfast Toastmasters club in Northern Ireland, they were teaming up to each run a leg of the 26.2-mile (42.2-km) race, relay-style, with one member aiming to run the whole distance.

It was time for some encouraging words—and these being Toastmasters, a couple of them delivered impromptu pep talks to the group.

“It was all about establishing a positive mindset,” recalls Phil Sturgeon, one of the members, and an admitted running novice. “I know for some of us, like myself, we were very nervous. We were used to running solo and suddenly you were among thousands of people who were much more fit than you.”

Whether it was the positive words, the mutual support, or the group running sessions over the previous months, the Toastmasters triumphed in the October 2021 event. Aidan McCann completed the entire race, while the other six (Sturgeon, Lynsey Quinn, Andrew Dawson, Tony O’Callaghan, Lee Maguire, and Martin McClean) ran segments of approximately 5 or 6 miles (8 to 10 km). Their effort, which raised nearly \$2,500 USD for cancer research, drew the club members closer.

“There was a real sense of camaraderie,” says Sturgeon, an Area Director in District 71. “These people were colleagues before, but they were friends by the end of the race, because we had shared something both painful and worthwhile.”



Belfast Toastmasters club members Tony O’Callaghan and Phil Sturgeon at the Belfast City Marathon.

The Toastmasters also added their own twist to the endurance event. As each member finished their leg of the run, they asked a question of their fellow member running the next segment, such as “What music do you listen to while running?” or “Which runner has inspired you the most?” The member receiving the handoff question responded before embarking on their run.

“It got us talking, so it wasn’t a high five and away you go,” says Sturgeon. “You had the opportunity to wish your buddy good luck and give them a slap on the back by giving them a Table Topic before they sped off.”

At the end of the race, he adds, the group of Belfast members were exhausted but happy. “And then we all left for a Guinness afterward just to refuel and recharge ourselves.” Building rapport and learning more about fellow members are among the benefits of doing things together outside the club. For the Belfast Toastmasters, these activities tend to be outdoors and exercise oriented. Besides the marathon, members also participate in the Walk and Talk,

an annual summer excursion that draws members from various clubs around Ireland.

Stephen Morrow, a member of the Lagan Valley Toastmasters in Lisburn, Northern Ireland, organizes the Walk and Talk. He selects a pristine spot—typically a beach or a mountain—where Toastmasters can walk and chat in groups. After a while, they stop and hold a session with speeches, evaluations, and other aspects of a club meeting.

Last year, members from six different Irish clubs gathered to ascend Slieve Binnian, a Northern Ireland peak with dramatic views. One member was Lee Maguire, also one of the seven Toastmasters who ran in the Belfast City Marathon. Now a member of the Monaghan Toastmasters in County Monaghan, Ireland, he says the Walk and Talk is a great bonding activity. “I have enjoyed meeting and getting acquainted with Toastmasters from across Ireland who have diverse backgrounds,” Maguire says.

Paul Sterman is senior editor, executive and editorial content, for *Toastmasters International*.

Looking at Language

10 Words and Phrases to Forget in 2023

Gaslighting, permacrisis, and goblin mode were 2022’s [most prominent words](#), according to leading dictionary publishers. Now a United States university has released a list of words and phrases it considers so excessively prominent they should be erased from our vocabularies.

For the past 47 years, Lake Superior State University (LSSU) in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, has taken nominations from around the world for words it believes should be banished from our brains due to “misuse, overuse, and uselessness,” according to a story from National Public Radio.

Topping the 2023 list: GOAT, an acronym that stands for Greatest of All Time. It’s a term often applied to famous world athletes. Yet how can any person or thing be titled as the best ever when new GOATS come along frequently, LSSU reasons.

Rounding out the 2023 top 10: inflection, quiet quitting, gaslighting, moving forward, amazing, irregardless, absolutely, and the phrases “Does that make sense?” and “It is what it is.”

Stephanie Darling is senior editor for the *Toastmaster* magazine.

Snapshot



Indian Club Toastmasters of Doha, Qatar, celebrate the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 by displaying flags representing a few of the countries that had teams playing in the tournament.



Traveling Toastmaster



REHNA KHALID, DTM, of Dubai, United Arab Emirates, enjoys Muzhappilangad Beach in Kerala, India, with her digital *Toastmaster* in tow.



LUZ BOBADILLA of Sugar Land, Texas, poses with her pocket-sized *Toastmaster* while she visits the Museo Ferrari in Maranello, Italy.

An Outdoor Adventure—Online

Our club's first hybrid meeting included camping in the Canadian wilderness.

By Dana Holland

The beautiful thing about change is it forges a path toward growth. During my Toastmasters journey, I recognized roles and speech opportunities were abundant, with personal growth at my doorstep. I delved into the Pathways learning experience and spoke to mentors. I saw opportunities to grow, and a new uncharted world was at my leisure to explore.

I began brainstorming for the Level 4 elective project “Manage Projects Successfully.” I had numerous discussions with members of my club in Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, to explore potential hybrid opportunities for something unique. The result: I formed a team with members from three different cities in Canada to create a one-of-a-kind hybrid camping Toastmasters experience.

Once a date for the trip was selected (three months in advance), I delivered my Level 4 speech, “The Future is Waiting,” to my club, introducing the idea. The focus of the speech was to demonstrate that even with the challenge of COVID-19 and the changes the world has experienced, the pandemic has allowed most people to see that things could be done differently.

I explained that our club had embarked on a journey to learn and evolve. We benefited greatly by meeting people from all over the globe on a virtual stage, but there is also something to be said about togetherness. I wanted to provide an opportunity for that and introduced our plan to conduct a hybrid meeting during a camping trip where members of our group would meet virtually and in person. For many of us, this would be our first time attending a meeting in person, as we had been conducting only online meetings.

Once the event was introduced, promotion began. Our team sent out posters, pictures, and emails to generate excitement and urge members from all over the world to experience the peace and beauty of the Alberta Rockies in the Canadian wilds. When the day came, we achieved victory with seven Toastmasters and two guests attending in person, and two



Dana Holland

members and two guests attending via Zoom, totaling 13 people.

Echoing mics and wind gusts created some technology hiccups, but we adapted to our environment. We switched to headphones and distanced ourselves from one another to prevent the microphones from picking up extra sound, therefore eliminating the echoes. We got creative and strategically positioned ourselves around our trailers and trucks to solve our wind-gust issues.

At one point, as I was serving as Table Topicsmaster, I lost connection but was able to run over to my colleague's computer and ask the next question. While the respondent was answering, I logged back in, allowing the event to continue without skipping a beat. With a sink-or-swim mentality, we proved that even

in a challenging outdoor setting, a hybrid meeting could be conducted.

The greatest thing that came out of our hybrid camping experience was the knowledge that nothing beats true human connection. We were able to laugh with and embrace people we had grown to love over our Zoom environment. I will forever be grateful for Zoom and the opportunity it has given me to meet and grow with so many people from around the world that I otherwise would have never met. However, having the chance to meet the people I cherish in person was enchanting, especially in the mountains! Our meeting was full of laughter, impromptu decisions, and memories that were truly unique to this type of event.

In addition to gaining special memories, I also improved my planning and speaking skills. A few of my takeaways for an outdoor hybrid event:

- Plan events in advance to allow maximum attendance.
- Use headphones to stop echoing.
- Be prepared for unexpected audio disruptions; in our case, a wind block would have helped with unexpected wind gusts.
- Trust that with teamwork, communication, and unity, any goals—hybrid or not—can be achieved!
- Set your sights high. Anything is possible with the support of Toastmasters.

Overall, I consider our Toastmasters hybrid camping adventure one for the books. I encourage other clubs around the world to see what you can create in your area, to foster group unity and truly find new ways to build the skills and connections of people around you as you forge new paths of growth.

Dana Holland is a police officer, mother of four, and owner of *Bold N Brave*, a business promoting confidence in youth living in Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada. She is a member of *Dynamically Speaking Toastmasters* in Lethbridge. You can reach her at boldnbrave1@gmail.com.

Develop a Blueprint for Speechwriting

Build your speech like you would your home.

By Bill Brown, DTM

Speechwriting can sometimes seem complicated. There are a lot of different working parts, so, yes, it can be complex. I recently made a list of all the categories that I could think of related to speechwriting and came up with 27. But that is far too many for you to worry about when writing your speech.

When I train speakers, particularly new ones, I try to keep it simple. And the model that I use is that of building a house.

When you build a house, what is the first thing you do? Decide what you want it to look like, right? How many bedrooms, how big of a kitchen, and maybe a game room for the kids (even us big kids)? You then develop the blueprints (the detailed design).

The next step is to implement that plan, which is done in two phases. You pour the foundation, put up the walls, and install the plumbing. At this point, you have a functional house.

The next and final phase includes adding the flooring, window coverings, and crown molding. Then there are the personal touches like pictures and your favorite colors. Now your house is a home.

I have found that it is easier to understand speechwriting if you break it down to these three categories: planning, implementation, and finishing touches.

The planning stage is where you map out what you want to accomplish. Ask yourself questions like, what is my purpose? Is it to persuade, inspire, or inform?

Also, what is my message? If you can't reduce it to one sentence, you don't understand it well enough to communicate it simply. Obviously, you aren't giving your entire message in detail, but you have an overall message that needs to get through. If you don't have that clear in your mind, it will not be clear in the

minds of your audience. And recognize that often audience members won't be as knowledgeable as you are on your topic. Make sure that is easy for them to understand.

Let's now move to the construction stage—implementation. This is where you develop an outline for your speech. And before you do that, you should decide on an overall speech structure. Frequently, that involves three key points with supporting information, although there



Your job is to grab
the audience's attention
and focus it on your topic.

are many other approaches. Pathways Level 1 does a good job of explaining the options.

Your outline should include your main sections and all your supporting information in detail. While you may be tempted to write your speech at this stage, I suggest that you take a few moments to compare your outline to your purpose and your message statement. Do you accomplish your purpose? Does your outline

develop your message? Or did you get off track somewhere? Revise your outline, if needed. Then you can write your speech.

Now it's time to add the finishing touches. One key component of this stage is the opening. All too often, speakers begin their speech with some neutral comment like "thank you for coming." While certainly polite, it is not all that effective. Keep in mind when you begin your speech your audience members' minds are not 100% in the room, even if you are the boss. They may have a problem with a project that they are managing, they might be behind schedule on a tight deadline, or they might have just received a call that their child is having a health problem. In other words, their attention is split.

Everyone comes to presentations with divided attention. Your job is to grab their attention and focus it on your topic for the duration of your presentation. And you do that through your opening. My favorite ways to begin are to ask a topic-related question or to make a bold and hopefully shocking statement.

Next, work on your transitions between your main points. This is an area many speakers neglect.

And then, finally, practice your presentation. This is where you polish what you are going to say so that it comes out smoothly.

There is much more to speechwriting, but this is what you need to know to get started. Hopefully the house construction format has simplified, or at least demystified, the speechwriting process for you and made it easier to understand.

Bill Brown, DTM, is a speech delivery coach in Gillette, Wyoming. He is a member of Energy Capital Toastmasters in Gillette, and Evening Stars Club in Denver, Colorado. Learn more at billbrownspeechcoach.com.

Choose Your Words Wisely

Help attract guests and gain new members with inclusive, clear language.

By Amanda Mae Gray

I never went into my first Toastmasters meeting. I was late trying to find the right room and once I arrived, the meeting had already started. I couldn't muster up the courage to barge in and interrupt. Later, I found a different club to try instead of going back to the first, since I was too embarrassed.

Once you are in Toastmasters, you know it is the most welcoming and supportive environment, but those first steps can be scary, and some will find any excuse to run away or not go at all. It takes a lot of courage to go to your first club meeting, and it can be even more intimidating and overwhelming if members are using jargon and acronyms you don't understand.

Finding the right words to convince a prospective member to take those first steps or to create effective marketing materials can be tricky. It is easy to slip into the same verbiage we use internally and feel like we are connecting with those who may be interested in learning more. Transforming your marketing efforts starts at the core of communication and understanding what brings people in and makes them feel comfortable instead of unintentionally pushing them away.

Careful Language Selection

There is not a secret message that converts people instantly. There is a lot of nuance that goes into why someone decides to join Toastmasters. It's important to keep that in mind as you craft your message or pitch.

Think back to the very first meeting you went to. How did you learn about it? Did you know anyone there? How did you feel walking into the meeting? Was it a bit scary?

Reflecting on our first experience gives good insight on how we can be more welcoming and mindful of a first timer's potential feelings.

What does this mean for our marketing efforts? Use language that not only speaks to prospects, but clearly communicates the benefits of Toastmasters. Be cognizant to avoid jargon when marketing or speaking to a prospect.

Jargon is the internal language and acronyms a group uses that don't translate clearly to someone outside of the group, like DTM or District Director.

"Jargon creates a barrier," says Nitay-Yair Levi of City Tattersalls Toastmasters Club in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, and 2021 runner-up in the World Championship of Public Speaking®. He explains that jargon isn't inherently bad. In fact, it's great for communication between fellow Toastmasters, and it creates a sense of belonging to a group. However, if someone is not part of the group, it creates isolation.

"Not only does it create isolation, it's actually emphasized to you that you don't belong. It also puts someone in a position of power over someone else," Levi says. "That's terrible if you want to invite someone to a club."

Using internal terms like "Division E" on an open house flier or "our VPM" when chatting with a prospect about who will get their contact info, puts up those barriers. If I don't know what you're saying, or if I feel inferior, I'm just going to turn away and say no.

Instead of leaning on familiar jargon, try going more general. For example, if you are making a flier for an open house for an Area, Division, or District, try using physical location terms like the county name or metropolitan area. What do people in your geographical area already relate to?

If the District Director is speaking at your open house, use their work title or company instead of their Toastmasters role. Or when explaining the education program, instead of using the term "Pathways" right away, keep it broad with "training programs."

Levi explains, "You want to create a sense of security that I might have with the group. I want to sell it to you instead of using all these Toastmasters words."

He suggests introducing Toastmasters as a volunteer organization. Explain that we help each other become better speakers and leaders. Then say something like, "We all volunteer here. Amanda is a volunteer this year. She's actually helping to run the club and navigate it to the next year."

Use language that not only speaks to prospects, but clearly communicates the benefits of Toastmasters.

If you were to say, “Amanda is the Club President,” that may put up a barrier, but phrasing it as a “volunteer role” puts the guest at ease. It’s inclusive language, and Levi says it helps show “we’re selling a relationship, not a number.”

Promote the Practical Benefits

How can you find ways to be more general while still communicating the amazing benefits to someone new? Consider how your time in Toastmasters directly impacted your work or career.

Many members feel Toastmasters has benefited them at work, including Pankaja Kulabkar of Pune Advanced Toastmaster Club in Pune, Maharashtra, India, and a project lead at a publications company. She learned the sandwich method for evaluations (positive feedback–suggestions for improvement–positive feedback) very helpful when doing appraisals of her work team.

“Toastmasters [is] where we experiment with ideas and then the confidence comes from that to implement [the idea] when working,” says Kulabkar.

Think of the ways you’ve used Toastmasters skills on the job. Ask fellow club members what they now use in work that has come from their Toastmasters experience and create a club-specific approach when talking or marketing to potential members. For example, if your club has a lot of entrepreneurs, they could provide great selling points for networking. If Bob works in finance and has learned skills in Toastmasters to speak at his work-recruiting functions to gain more clients, mention that directly. By highlighting specific member achievements or skills people have gained as a result of being in your club, you create a personal approach that new people can connect with.

This is a way to celebrate your current members and give new prospects a way to connect to feel like they can do it, too.



Continued Connection

It’s important to follow up with your prospects and stay connected with them. Sending a quick email or text the following day is a great way to see if they have any questions while things are fresh on their mind. Keep it short and sweet! Try something like:

It was great meeting you yesterday! Wanted to see if you had any questions. Hope to see you again at our next meeting [insert time and date]. Feel free to reach out any time.

People tend to forget with their busy lives exactly when they should be coming back. It is key to remind them of the specific time and date. Sending a message 24 hours before the next meeting also helps to give people the time to free up their calendar while not being so far out they forget. This could be a task for the Vice President Membership but be sure to change the email from meeting to meeting to maintain engagement—include information about special events or the theme or word of the day.

To bring people in, start thinking outside the box for meeting ideas. Hold a meeting where everyone gets to practice and receive some feedback on their elevator pitch. Try a mock interview round-robin. Or have a toast meeting where each person gets 30–60 seconds to give a toast at a work or personal event. Advertise these types of meetings where the traditional format can be loosened to get lots of people practicing with real world applicable skills.

When you open up the doors to invite people to join in a way that makes them feel comfortable, confident, and included, they are much more likely to come back again and again!

Amanda Mae Gray is the founder of blueplate.io, a media company that specializes in branding and video production. She also speaks professionally on digital marketing and is a member of Toast of Cobb Toastmasters and Speakers Roundtable Advanced Club, both in Georgia.

Online Skills Are Here to Stay

As the pandemic recedes, the need for online communication savvy isn't going away.

By Ruth Nasrullah

It's hard to remember there once was a time when it was unusual to attend an online meeting, when we hadn't heard of Zoom, and when few people knew what ring lights or webcams were. Now, three years after the pandemic shut down the world, it's hard to imagine a life without online meetings. If you were hoping this change would be just a blip on the world's radar, you're probably out of luck, at least according to business specialists and medical experts.

The world has changed, and the need for online communication skills continues. These skills continue to be not only important but even necessary in the workplace, in a variety of presentation settings, in training people, facilitating sessions, and more.

A Shifting Way of Doing Business

International business consulting firm McKinsey and Company has been tracking the impact of the pandemic on businesses around the world. One phenomenon they have explored is “the great resignation,” a global trend where increasing numbers of employees are leaving their jobs, with some moving to different industries, some cutting down working hours to care for family, and many deciding to go it alone, creating their own businesses or going to part-time work. With workers also expressing a preference for working remotely, many companies are now focusing on attracting staff by offering at least part-time remote opportunities.

A July 2021 study published in the *International Journal of Disaster Reduction* found that 63% of U.S. small businesses had changed how they serve customers, with 41% shifting to online sales. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projected similar changes in the coming decade in its 2022 report on pandemic-driven employment changes.

To benefit from these changes, workers need to be able to communicate effectively both in person and online.

Continuing Importance of Online Presentations

Whether in the workplace or in club or community meetings, anticipate the ongoing need to communicate

and navigate via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Cisco WebEx, or Google Meet. In fact, many companies have found that a variety of common workplaces practices, such as interviewing, training, and participating in meetings, are more convenient and efficient in the online setting.

“[Virtual work] is not going away,” says Kimberly McNeil, a knowledge advisor with the Society for Human Resource Management. “From what we're seeing and hearing, employers are focused on [online skills].” Some companies, she notes, have made policies specific to the virtual or hybrid space; some have created standardized virtual backgrounds or other customizable components of video platforms.

McNeil also highlights the importance of knowing how to manage the video platforms themselves. For instance, understanding how to use the waiting room, virtual backgrounds, and breakout rooms on Zoom.

“Employers are offering internal training for their employees and management to ensure they feel comfortable in the [online] environment,” she says, and stresses that that includes backgrounds, lighting, and presentations.

Mary Abbajay, owner of the training and consulting firm Careerstone Group in Washington D.C., agrees that virtual isn't going anywhere and platform-specific technical skills are essential. “Virtual presentations are here to stay,” she says. “So anybody who is doing presentations, whether as a speaker themselves or part of a company, they really do have to have their virtual presentation skills up to snuff.”

Ongoing Benefits of Toastmasters

In early 2020, only 5% of Toastmasters clubs met online, but that number rapidly grew and within six months, 75% of clubs had switched from in-person to online or hybrid formats. Today, the majority of Toastmasters clubs (around 80%) meet in either an online or hybrid format.

In 2020, District 98 (western India) organized “Beyond Toastmasters,” a series of special online video presentations featuring a variety of veteran international leaders and speakers.

Manideep Kanagala, DTM, former District 98 Division Director, and Krishnakanth Jarugumilli, past Area



Director, were instrumental in putting the video series together as a way of responding to the pandemic's impact on the District.

"Our idea was to bring the best of those master speakers and influential leaders from across the globe," says Kanagala. "Membership was declining back then, and we wanted to showcase the value of Toastmasters."

Online-only Toastmasters clubs have flourished due to the pandemic, allowing members to gain new skills by practicing public speaking in a remote setting. But a handful of clubs were ahead of their time. The Online Presenters club in Coral Springs, Florida, chartered in 2017—well before the world had heard of COVID-19—specifically to help members develop online presentation skills. The club has attracted members from around the world; at a recent meeting, participants were from the United States, United Kingdom, Chile, Australia, Japan, and The Bahamas.

David Carr, DTM, a charter member of Online Presenters, was originally motivated by research he did as a journalist researching collaborative communication. As a longtime Toastmaster, he recognized the relevance of online communication to public speaking.

"When we started Online Presenters, online clubs had started, but they didn't approach

online presenting as a distinct professional skill," he explains.

The club developed two meeting roles specific to the online environment: The Watcher focuses on the physical components of prepared speeches, such as physical gestures and proper camera framing, while the Chat Monitor pays attention to comments in the chat and reports back on any important or especially pertinent comments or questions. Club meetings also include a "Tip of the Day," which features a tool for online presenting, such as Prezi, Speakflow (a teleprompter app), or [Yoodli](#), a Toastmasters' partner.

Accepting the New Normal

According to medical experts, it's unlikely COVID-19 will disappear entirely, but the hope is that it will become endemic—meaning that it circulates through a community at predictable levels at a stable and manageable rate, much like the seasonal flu.

A study done at Yale University in 2022 predicted that COVID-19 would become endemic in 2024. If that is the case, it's likely that most businesses will keep using virtual meetings indefinitely. In addition to employee satisfaction and safety, meeting via an online

platform saves money and time associated with travel.

Another reason online skills are so important: In today's global economy, there are often keen differences in countries and regions in terms of both the severity of COVID transmission and resources available to respond to outbreaks. As our world grows smaller, the ability to effectively communicate and meet virtually with colleagues and associates around the world will become even greater.

The pandemic has made significant changes in our lives, and they're proving to be long-lasting. Don't get left behind by neglecting to practice and improve your online presentation skills. Take advantage of your club meetings—an online or hybrid format can give you a prime opportunity to practice, and improve upon, these increasingly vital online skills.

Ruth Nasrullah is a freelance journalist and a member of the Pearland Toastmasters Club in Pearland, Texas. She is president of the Houston chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists and was recently honored with the Howard S. Dubin Outstanding Pro Member award from the society's national organization. She is also a co-founder of the COVID-19 Wall of Memories. Read more about her at ruthnasrullah.com.

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Essential tips to take your speaking skills to the next level.

By Toastmaster magazine staff

No matter if you're new to Toastmasters or a longtime member, it's always helpful to take a look at the fundamentals of public speaking. Maybe you struggle coming up with speech topics; maybe you've been asked to give a toast at a wedding. Maybe you can't get your hands to stop sweating just thinking about delivering a speech. We've rounded up some tips and tricks from past articles to provide a one-stop shop for everyone.

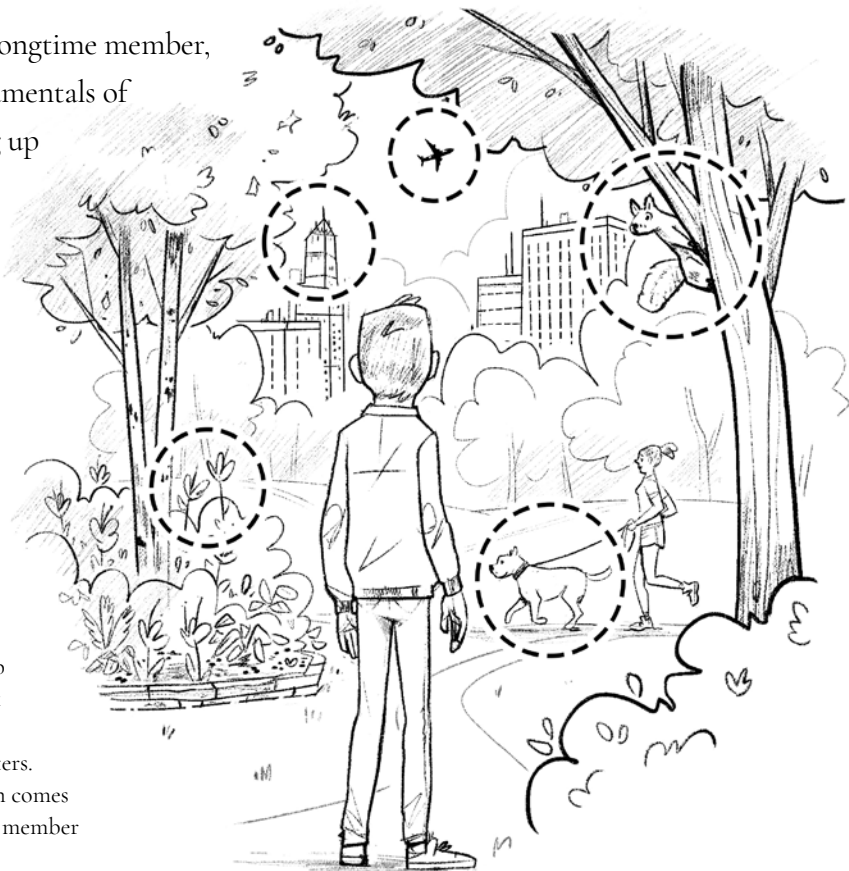
Best Suggestions for Finding Speech Topics

The options are endless ... and all around us.

What should I speak about?

How many times have you asked yourself that question? You sign up to give a speech in your club and then wrack your brain trying to think of a topic. You ponder, reflect, grasp for ideas.

The process doesn't have to be that daunting, say veteran Toastmasters. Speech topics are everywhere—you just have to look. Part of that search comes simply from experiencing and observing. "Live life, pay attention," says member Ray Engan.



Get Personal

The late American author Nora Ephron lived by a tried-and-true motto: “Everything is copy.” In other words, everything that happens to you, no matter how painful, silly, or absurd, can be turned into content.

The same is true for crafting speeches. Need ideas for a presentation? Pull from your own life. “Personal experiences are often the backbone of a successful speech, so expand on one of your own experiences and use it to inform or inspire,” says Toastmaster Rosie Wolf Williams.

Need ideas for a presentation? Pull from your own life.

In her Ice Breaker—the first speech every Toastmaster gives—Williams talked about how her parents named her after the film they saw on their first date: *Rose Marie*, a 1954 remake of a musical her mother had loved.

Are there funny family stories you can share? Or professional triumphs and travails? Maybe adventures with pets—or children.

Adversity can also be a powerful source for material. Tammy Miller, DTM, a longtime Toastmasters leader and the author of *My Life is Just Speech Material ... And So is Yours*, has given speeches about her battle with breast cancer. Inspirational topics can include how you overcame obstacles, achieved certain goals, or learned from mistakes.

Go back even further when looking for ideas. “Your childhood is a wonderful place to start,” says Engan. “Use your older, wiser eyes to look back at your youth, and reflect on the memories and how they’ve changed you.”

Draw From Everyday Life

Common, relatable experiences can engage an audience. Give a speech about your old car. Or what you see at your neighborhood grocery store. Or a recent adventure: Miller went skydiving once and turned it into a talk about leadership lessons.

If you’re out and about, write down ideas and observations in a notebook. Keep a file of story ideas and organize them by topic.

Just taking a walk is helpful. “Walking, or even pacing, can clear your mind,” says Williams. “You’re more receptive to ideas. It helps you look at your surroundings in a different way.”

Another idea she suggests: Share a favorite quote and tell a story that reflects the message.

Dig Deeper Into Your Interests

If you’re still having trouble generating speech ideas, it might be time to consult some reliable resources: websites, newspapers, books, and magazines. Plug in an interest of yours or something you’ve wondered about, and you’ll find a wealth of topics. Research rising travel costs, or the latest technology in classrooms. Such resources are a natural route if you’re doing your “Research and Presentation” project in the Pathways learning experience.

The next time you need to think of a speech topic, let your mind wander and your thoughts flow. And have fun in the process!

Resources:

- [Speech Topics Are Everywhere](#) by Ray Engan
- [What Should I Talk About?](#) by Rosie Wolf Williams
- [Leadership at 12,000 Feet](#) by Tammy A. Miller, DTM

5 Simple Tips to Better Speechwriting

An easy formula for figuring out what to say.

Before you step up to the podium or onto the stage, you have to know what you’re going to say. While your writing doesn’t need to be professional, it helps to have some organization and a main point. Follow this formula to make it easy.

1 Summarize your main message. Before you begin putting pen to paper, or fingers to keyboard, make sure you have a good grasp on what you want to say. “Audience members should be able to summarize what you said in one sentence,” says Elizabeth Danziger, author of *Get to the Point!* “Your listeners will not be able to sum up your message succinctly unless you deliver it clearly.”

2 Follow an outline. Once you have a topic and you’re able to clearly summarize what you want to say, write a brief outline. Ramona J. Smith, the 2018 World Champion of Public Speaking, says the key to writing a great speech is to keep it simple. “I start with the skeleton, then start to throw meat on the bones,” she says.



She recommends breaking your speech into three parts—introduction, body, and conclusion, something she does in her championship speech, “[Still Standing](#).” Once you have your three points, add at least one supporting story, example, or finding to fill out those points in your speech.

An outline not only forces you to organize your speech into main and supporting points, it also helps you memorize and deliver the speech. It’s much easier to deliver a speech naturally when you can visualize the organization in your mind.

3 Write a wordy first draft. Then cut. Using your outline, begin by writing down anything you can think of that could go into those main points. Don’t edit yourself at this point, or practice timing, or worry about word count.

Allow a few days for ideas to percolate in your brain then look at your speech again. Remove or revise anything that takes your speech offtrack. Remember that less is more when speaking.

4 Analyze your pace and transitions. As you start to practice your speech, pay attention to the rhythm. “Oral speech is very different from written language,” says Gary Schmidt, DTM, Toastmasters International President 2009–2010, and a former professional speechwriter. He points out that sentences should be shorter when you speak them, because listeners can’t go back and reread the line if they lose the thread. Also, the sound and rhythm of spoken words is more important than it is in writing.

Take a look at the transitions between the main points of your outline. If you don’t have any, add some so the speech isn’t too choppy. Transitional statements help the audience easily follow you from one section of your speech to the next, or from one idea to another. Transitions can be as simple as, “In the same way, ...” or “Another way of looking at it ...”

5 Beginning and ending. The perfect beginning may not come to you when you start writing, and that’s okay. When you’ve put it all together, take a look and see if there is something you can use to grab listeners’ attention at the start: telling a story, asking a question, or making a joke.

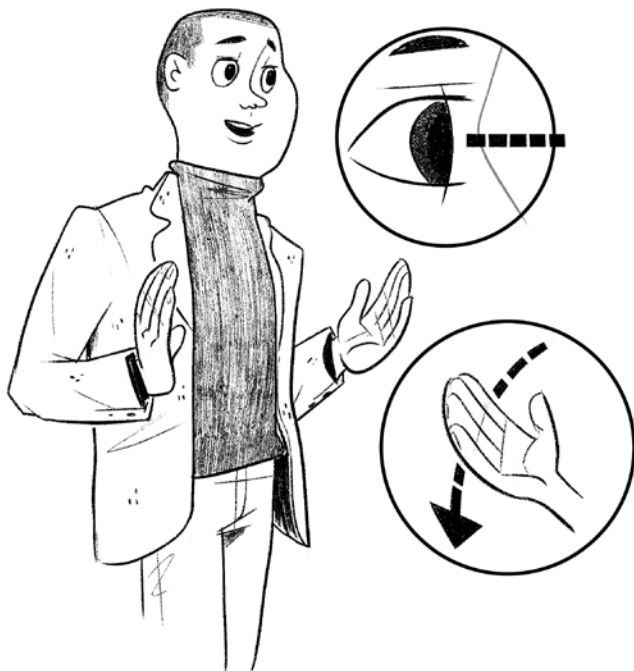
There are two common ways to wrap up your speech. First, you can do a callback, where you refer back to the story, question, or quip you told at the beginning. Or you can summarize the three points you made in your speech (based on your outline).

An outline not only forces you to organize your speech into main and supporting points, it also helps you memorize and deliver the speech.

Finally, give yourself plenty of time to practice. Everyone has a different time frame for this, but most people find that a few days to a week before delivery is sufficient. As you practice, make sure you are speaking in your authentic voice, and not trying to sound like someone else. These are your words and your thoughts—make sure they sound like YOU.

Resources:

- [10 Ways to Be a Better Speechwriter](#) by Elizabeth Danziger
- [How to Build a Speech](#) by Ruth Nasrullah
- [Build a Great Speech](#) by Christine Robinson, DTM
- [How to Succeed in Speechwriting](#) by Caren S. Neile, Ph.D.



10 Strategies to Boost Your Gestures and Body Language

Sometimes your actions can speak louder than your words.

Using gestures and moving your body when speaking isn’t just a way to engage your audience and help them remember your content; it also helps you, the speaker, learn, remember, and articulate your speech. While preparing your next presentation, whether for an in-person audience or online, try using gestures and body language to help you convey confidence and boost your stage presence.

Gestures

1 Train yourself to gesture more. Prod yourself in your speech notes to gesture, either with specific, meaningful gestures or planned “spontaneous” ones. This will seem awkward at first, but you don’t have to add all the gestures you try to your repertoire.

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2 Learn from the pros. [Watch](#) a few World Championship of Public Speaking® speeches or popular speeches online, focusing specifically on the speakers' body language. Get some new ideas to try.

3 Create a gesture for each main point. Experiment with having a specific gesture for each of your speech points. See for yourself if doing so helps with recall.

4 Observe yourself in action. Record yourself practicing and watch for what looks natural and what doesn't. ([Yoodli](#), which has partnered with Toastmasters, offers an artificially intelligent speech coach to help you with this.) Gestures, even if planned, must flow naturally as you speak. If you script and choreograph your gestures too much, you may forget your speech and look or sound unnatural. Conversely, some spontaneous gestures may be too repetitive, such as continually slicing the air. Keep in mind that you may need to adjust the size/type of gestures to the audience or venue size (bigger audiences need bigger gestures).

5 Have a dress rehearsal. Practice your speech as you plan to give it, including all gestures you hope to use during your presentation. The words and the movements will be encoded in your memory, making recall easier.

Body Language

1 Leadership gaze. When speaking to a group, focus on one person at a time for the length of a thought. When there's a natural pause (e.g., at the end of a phrase), shift your gaze to someone new. Experts at San Francisco-based SNP Communications advise speakers to avoid sweeping the room with their eyes or letting their eyes dart up to the ceiling or to the side, which may signal uncertainty. If your lips are moving, your eyes should be locked onto someone else's. This type of eye contact is more deliberate and longer lasting than what most speakers are accustomed to. It's also harder to maintain, because it feels too long.

2 Resolute stance. Plant your feet shoulder-width apart when you're speaking. Avoid shifting from side to side, and avoid pacing or walking while speaking. If you want to move to another area of the stage, room, or computer screen, walk there purposefully, plant your feet, and make eye contact before you start speaking again.

3 Emphatic gestures. Use gestures for emphasis. Bring both hands up simultaneously with open palms facing each other (as if you were holding a large ball). Gesture symmetrically, as though setting the ball down on important words.

When you're not motioning, keep your hands comfortably at your side. Avoid clasping them or placing them in your pockets. Eliminate extraneous movement like the "washing machine"—when your hands go around and around as you reach for words. Also avoid defensive postures (arms crossed).

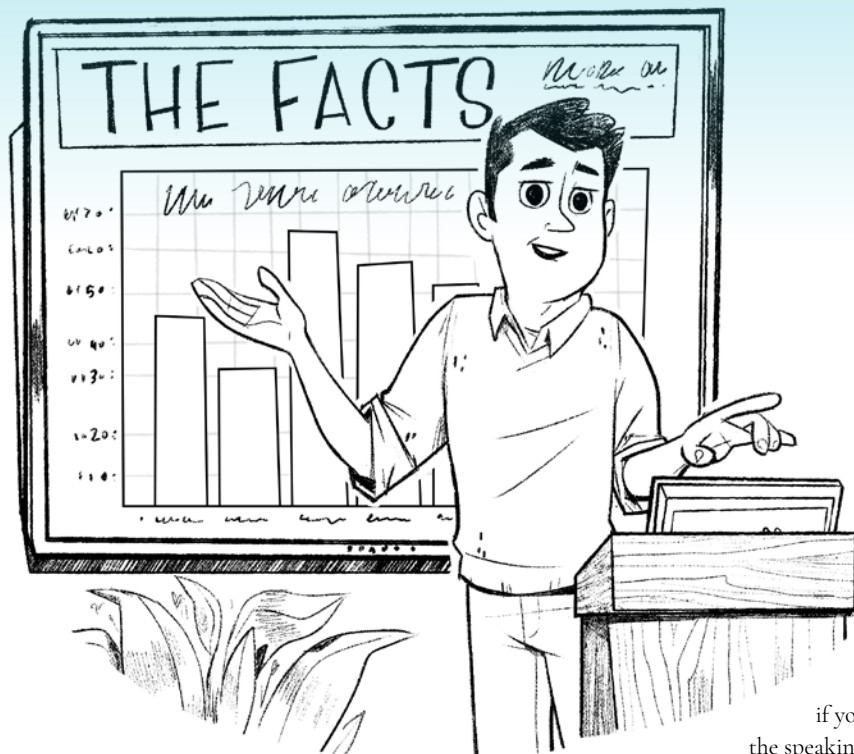
If you want to move to another area of the stage, room, or computer screen, walk there purposefully, plant your feet, and make eye contact before you start speaking again.

4 Vocal vigor. Be loud enough that people in the last row can easily hear you. This may feel embarrassingly loud, but sound dissipates quickly in a big or carpeted room. To project your voice to the last row, you have to breathe and speak from the diaphragm. Practice by placing your hand on your stomach and taking a deep breath so your diaphragm expands. Use this air to support your words. Speaking loudly has the added advantage of forcing you to emote.

5 Focused feedback. Because impression management is central to professional presence, feedback is critical. Most trainers incorporate some combination of peer review and video recording. Video is particularly useful for spotting uncontrolled gestures and eye movement. In time, we can become more aware of what we're doing in the moment and coach ourselves to more useful behaviors.

Resources:

- [Talk With Your Hands!](#) by Diane Windingland, DTM
- [Mastering Body Language](#) by Jesse Scinto, DTM
- [Body Language Tips Video](#) with Ramona J. Smith



Using the stage as a prop can also assist in how you structure and even remember your material. Toastmaster Toolbox columnist Bill Brown, DTM, says, “The lesson I have learned is that a visual presentation of your message greatly enhances the audience members’ understanding and retention of it. And the stage is frequently the best way to achieve that.”

You can even incorporate body language. For example, if you’re explaining a scale or continuum, start on one side of the speaking area and move across it as you advance through your presentation.

5 Pointers to Make Your Visual Aids Valuable

Enhance your message with PowerPoints and props.

PowerPoints, flip charts, props, a lectern, and even the stage itself serve as valuable visual aids for speakers. But how do you ensure you use these aids to enhance your speech and not distract from it? Here are some tips from experts on how to smoothly incorporate your visual aids.

1 Prepare your presentation first. Decide what information you want to share and how you want to say it before anything else. Once you home in on your message and key takeaways for your audience, then you can write your speech. After that, choose the appropriate visual tools—but remember that you shouldn’t need to rely on the aids, such as a PowerPoint, to recall your presentation. It’s easy to inadvertently begin reading your slides, causing you to turn your back to the audience. Knowing your presentation before you incorporate visual aids helps you avoid this.

2 Structure your material. You have your key points and the message you want to convey. Now it’s time to put it all together, and your visual aids can help you with your structure! For example, if you are presenting to a work group, you may want to emphasize your message with data and statistics. A handout or chart may work best in this scenario. You’ll just need to determine if it’s best to share the information on your visual aid at the beginning of your presentation or a little further into it.

3 Reinforce your message. Once you have your speech written, you can begin incorporating your visual aids. If you’re using PowerPoint slides, build them out with minimal text on each slide. Use images to emphasize a description.

If you’re using props, keep them simple, and don’t add too many. Visual aids should enhance your message to make it really stick, not distract from it. You want your audience to remember your point, not just the prop itself. “Your interaction with the prop, even just holding up a

Visual aids should enhance your message to make it really stick, not distract from it.

picture, makes your presentation more concrete, and can add emotion, drama, and meaning to your words,” explains Diane Windingland, DTM.

4 Consider your audience and environment. Different presentations require different visual aids. While a presentation to colleagues may require handouts or a chart, especially if you’re in a conference room with limited space, a Toastmasters club speech could be less formal. You know audience members are there to support you, so experiment with fun props and even how you use the stage. It doesn’t have to be complicated: During one District speech contest, a participant brought a suitcase when speaking about traveling and put on a pilot’s cap at the end of the speech.

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5 Add humor. If humor is appropriate in your message and for your audience, props are a simple and effective way to incorporate some laughs. Beverly Wise, DTM, once dressed in scuba gear for a presentation about scuba diving trips. She had a fellow member wear six T-shirts with maps of the dive sites. As Wise progressed through her presentation, she would say “Next slide, please” as the man peeled off a shirt and she pointed with a snorkel at the new map.

Of course, you don't need to incorporate this many aids or humor points, but maybe your main point has a prop that can be added. Give it a try!

You are your most prominent visual aid and required for any presentation. Be sure to put your best foot forward with your appearance and attire.

Resources:

- [It's No Secret: How Toastmasters Skills Can Boost Your Career](#) by Nina John, DTM
- [Use the Stage as a Visual Aid](#) by Bill Brown, DTM
- [Ditch the Notecards](#) by Diane Windingland, DTM
- [6 Rules of Humor](#) by Graham Honaker
- [Discover Your Inner Comic](#) by Beverly Wise, DTM

6 Secrets for Keeping Your Cool

Calm your nerves before stepping onstage.

The majority of Toastmasters say they joined a club to overcome their fear of public speaking. If you feel faint and clammy, or you can hear your heart racing at just the thought of standing in front of people, read on and learn to cool those nerves.

1 Breathe. Your body reacts to your nervousness, and shallow breathing is one of the responses. Take big, slow diaphragmatic breaths. Dianne Glover, executive speech coach and Texas Toastmaster, says, “Make sure the exhale is longer than the inhale to activate the parasympathetic nervous system and calm the body. Inhale to the count of eight, exhale to the count of 12. Repeat.”

2 Move your body. The body overproduces adrenaline when you're nervous, which can speed up your heart rate. Jump up and down and shake out your arms and legs to turn the adrenaline into focused energy. A quick walk around the block or dancing may also do the trick.

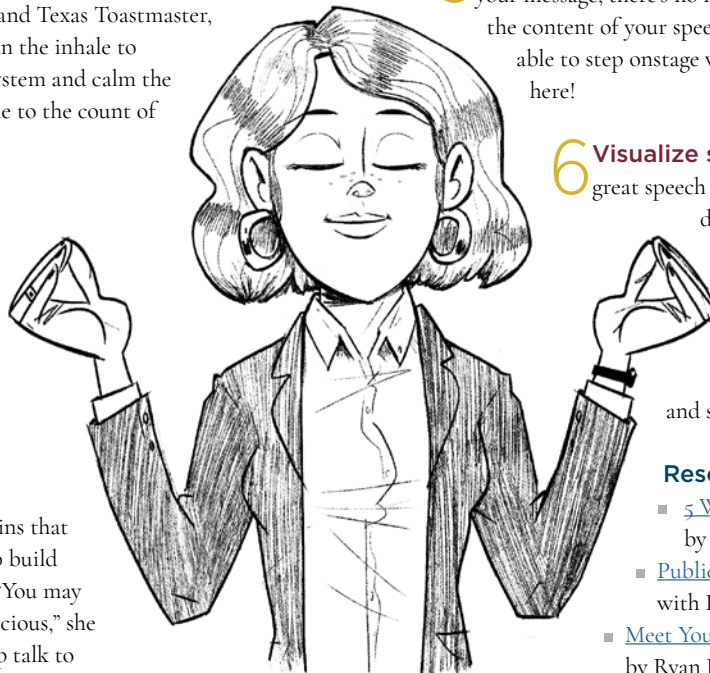
3 Positive self-talk. Glover explains that speaking kindly to yourself can help build your confidence and calm your nerves. “You may have a saboteur lurking in your subconscious,” she says. “I use a mantra or give myself a pep talk to

combat that voice of negativity. I repeat the word ‘calm’ or ‘I am enough’ before I speak.”

4 Focus on the audience. Remember the reason why you're giving your speech—to share a message with those in attendance! Don't put your focus on yourself. Think about the audience and remember that your presentation isn't about you, it's about imparting knowledge to them. Your purpose can become greater than your fear.

5 Know your subject. With a strong purpose and grasp of your message, there's no need to fear sharing it. If you know the content of your speech through and through, you'll be able to step onstage with confidence. You are the expert here!

6 Visualize success. Imagine yourself giving a great speech and think about how well you've done. What gestures did you implement? Was your voice clear and strong? Picture yourself feeling relaxed and accomplished after the speech—your future self. Channel that confidence and step boldly into action.



Resources:

- [5 Ways to Calm the Pre-Speech Jitters](#) by Dianne Glover
- [Public Speaking Tips Video](#) with Ramona J. Smith
- [Meet Your Future Self—Today](#) by Ryan Levesque, DTM

International Service to Members

Whether you're new to Toastmasters or have been active at the club level for some time, it's good to be familiar with how the organization is governed. It all starts with members in local clubs—the foundation of Toastmasters International. Dedicated local leaders work to build strong club cultures so that Toastmasters all over the world are able to achieve their personal public speaking and leadership goals. It's been Toastmasters' core mission for nearly 100 years.

This graphic shows additional governance roles held by member-elected volunteer leaders at the Area, Division, District, and region levels and the International Board of Directors.



Good, Better, Best

Ghanaian Toastmaster uses skills to advance her career and personal mission.

By Laura Mishkind

“Growing up, I had three careers in mind: air hostess, TV announcer, or banker,” says Loretta Sarpong, DTM, Ph.D., of EcoBank Ghana Toastmasters Club and U.S. Embassy Accra-Gladiator Club in Accra, Ghana. “I was fascinated by how these workers presented themselves and dressed for work, how smart and sharp they looked, and as fate will have it, I have been in the banking industry for two decades now!”

Sarpong is head of the women’s desk at Ecobank Ghana Limited and in her role, she’s doing much more than looking sharp. She joined the bank in 2005 as a relationship manager and rose through the ranks, eventually moving into branch management. In 2017, she completed her Ph.D. in business administration and management at Texila American University. After managing the second largest branch of Ecobank’s 68-branch network, Sarpong shifted her focus to a new initiative. In November 2020, she began her current role assisting women-owned, women-focused businesses.

In Africa, 26% of adult women start or manage a business. Approximately 46% of those women are running their businesses in Ghana. In her role, Sarpong says her goal is to provide female entrepreneurs and businesses that target

the female market with financial and non-financial support to grow their businesses.

She provides needs-assessment trainings, creates networking opportunities, gives women in business access to various markets to increase visibility of their brands, and assists with grants and loans. Sarpong feels so strongly about the work she does that it has spilled over into her Toastmasters journey.

In 2019, she joined Toastmasters to expand her social network and improve her speaking skills. At the time, she was in a branch manager role and looking

to progress even further. “A Journey to the World Bank” was the title of her Ice Breaker speech, and since then her fellow Toastmasters have served as supporters and accountability partners, helping her try to achieve her dream of advancing her career at the bank. Sarpong says her club members “push me further for that dream to come true, and so taking this new role to head the women’s desk is a step in the right direction to make that dream materialize. Most of my club members call me ‘Mama World Bank.’”

Now, nearly four years later, Sarpong has advanced in her career and earned the Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM) designation. For her DTM project, she partnered with Women Rising Network, a support system for professional women in Africa. They conducted a business branding and digital marketing support clinic to train 30 women on how to run successful businesses. She called the project “Ellevate My Business,” which plays off the Ellevate program Ecobank designed to assist the women’s desk.

Sarpong explains, “We created social media platforms for these businesses and assisted them to create logos and gave them digital solutions to boost their sales. It was hands-on, very practical, and made an impact on society!”

Toastmasters has impacted her day-to-day work as well. Participating in Toastmasters has made her more aware of herself and the content she’s sharing when speaking. Thanks to a growing knowledge of basic presenting skills—a strong opening, consistent message, and clean conclusion—Sarpong says people don’t often forget what she says, and she’s earned more presentation opportunities on the job.

Sarpong’s favorite part of her work is solving problems, along with recommending solutions and providing training and guidance to customers and businesses. The encouragement she receives from her fellow Toastmasters, husband, and three children gives her “the support and motivation needed to strive and achieve more each day,” she says. And she’s still planning to achieve more.

“My favorite rhyme is ‘Good, better, best. May I never rest, until my good is better and my better best.’ I am not resting until the best is achieved,” she says. “I want to be a growing, contributing human being, impacting not only this generation, but the next one to come!”



Loretta Sarpong

Laura Mishkind is associate editor for the Toastmaster magazine.

Tone It Up!

How to use
your voice for
powerful effect.

By Jillian Mitchell

If you cringe at your outgoing voicemail, this one's for you. The good news? With minimal effort, you can befriend the sounds you make, and this essential step just may be the trump card that turns a good speech into a great one.

Tone is quickly becoming one of the vocal industry's hottest topics. As a 20-year vocalist and a vocal coach, I want to pull back the curtain on this industry buzzword by answering the top tone-centric questions I get asked and offering accessible tips on how you can best harness this quality in your own voice. (Hint: You'll want to. And don't worry—it's not a ton of work and most likely, your voice is better than you think.)

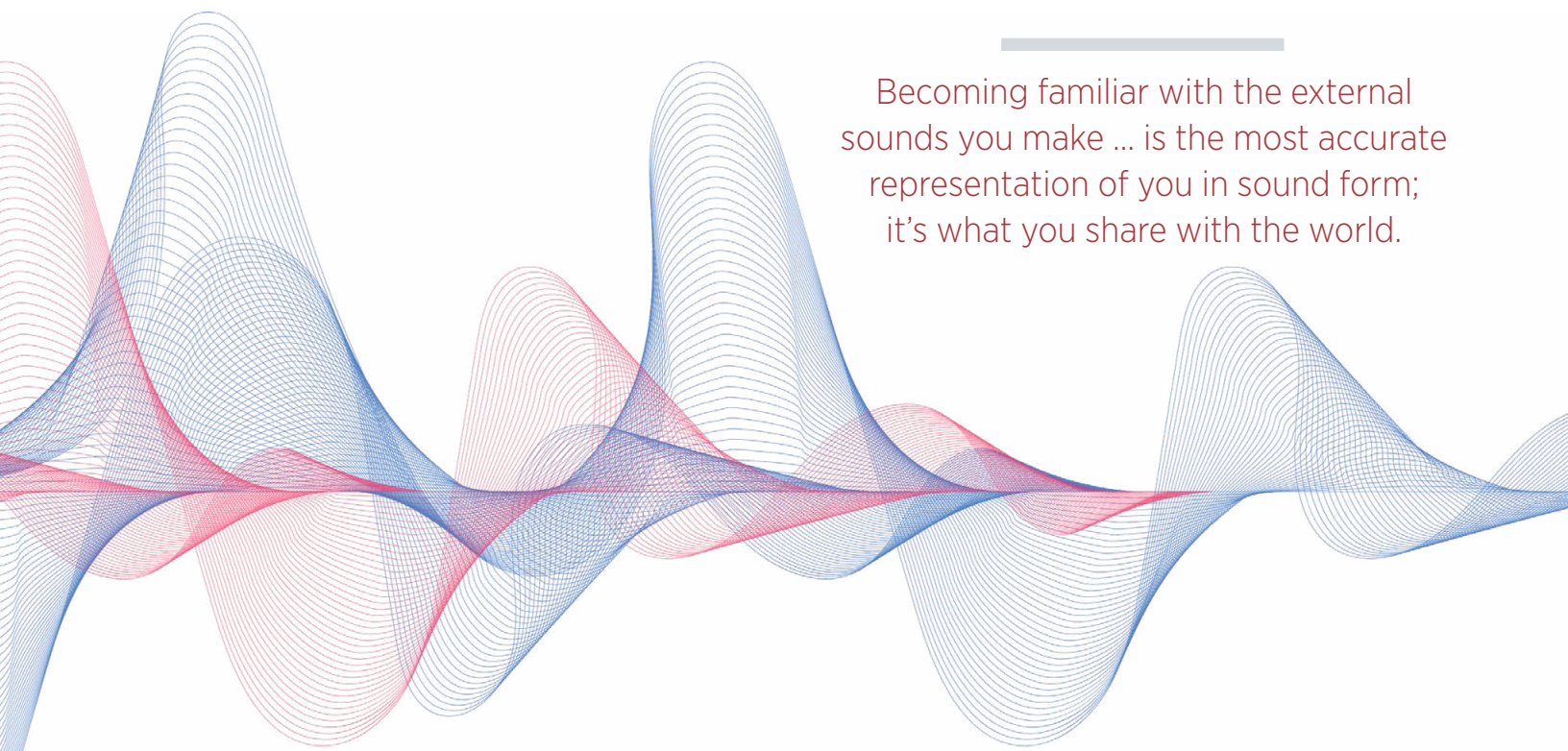
What is Tone?

Many Toastmasters will recognize tone—along with pitch, volume, and pace—as characteristics of vocal variety, which is considered essential to expressive public speaking. In Pathways projects, tone is understood as the *emotions behind what we say* that telegraph joy, anger, sadness and more to listeners.

In this article, tone refers to the *quality of sounds* you make, the color or timbre of your voice, as opposed to the emotional intent behind the sounds.

Tone is one of the most distinguishable vocal qualities we have—it's why we can recognize one voice from another. Words like *warm, bright, rich, raspy, barky*, and *nasal* are just some of the descriptors that help us understand the quality of vocal tone.





Becoming familiar with the external sounds you make ... is the most accurate representation of you in sound form; it's what you share with the world.

On a biological level, tone is the product of air from the lungs moving through the voice box and resonating in the body's acoustic chambers (head, throat, chest). And since our body is one-of-a-kind, so is our tone.

Why does tone matter?

Ever wonder why you choose to listen to certain podcasts and not others (despite both having equally appealing content)? Or find yourself drawn to a presentation on a topic you thought you weren't interested in—or conversely, find yourself nodding off during a lecture you were excited for? This is largely tone in action.

The fact is, our brains are wired to favor certain sounds (free, clear sounds) and it shows in our preferences and reactions. And research is starting to reveal the “why” behind our sound preferences.

Numerous studies have shown that people are able to detect an unexpected range of characteristics from a voice, including dominance, cooperativeness, emotional state, and even the body size of the speaker. Individuals who spoke with good tone were viewed as more successful, while those with rough, weak, strained, or breathy voices were viewed as negative, weak, passive, or tense. Add to that, new research concurs that the sound of a person's voice significantly affects how they are perceived—and may matter twice as much as content. Other top factors include the speakers' passion, knowledge, and presence, all characteristics Toastmasters strive to bring to their speeches.

What makes for good tone?

Though the term *good* is relative, let's go with this: Good tone is the result of the respiratory, phonatory, and resonatory systems working together in perfect harmony.

There is no one ideal voice or octave of speech that makes for good tone. Much like fingerprints, no two voices are alike and it's in this uniqueness that we can maximize our appeal.

Every voice can maximize tone while maintaining individuality. For example, these famous voices demonstrate good tone, with diverse and distinguishable qualities: Morgan Freeman, Sir Patrick Stewart, Meryl Streep, Dame Judi Dench, Oprah Winfrey, and the late Sir Sean Connery.

What are the benefits of achieving good tone?

According to celebrity vocal coach Roger Love, tone is a key component that takes speakers from unnoticed to in demand. In his book *Set Your Voice Free*, he offers three characteristics of a tonally balanced voice: a voice people want to listen to, a voice that inspires trust, and a voice that can motivate people to action.

Isn't the voice I have the voice I'm stuck with?

The short answer is no. Because the voice you have today may not accurately reflect the voice you were born with.

From a DNA perspective, our voices haven't changed since birth (other than the obvious growth and development from childhood to adulthood, the sound quality remains). But here's where the environmental factors enter the conversation: The sounds we make as adults are heavily influenced by our childhood influencers, namely our parent figures, family, friends, and schoolteachers. From these influencers, we learned how to use our instrument (both good and bad habits), and we learned which sounds were acceptable and which were not. From there, our childhood selves began emphasizing certain qualities and deemphasizing others—again, some good habits, some not. And for many of us, this is the tone we have today.

Of course, there are always exceptions to the rule: Select comedians and voice actors have made successful careers from exaggerated, blocked tones. To that I say, bravo! I encourage folks to play with the instrument they've been given, and part of that play is finding your most free voice for your day-to-day interactions.

Exercises: Getting to Know Your Voice

What do you sound like? Use this chart to explore your tone. Check Column 1 against Column 2. See if you have any characteristics of a blocked tone you might want to work on.

Tone: A Free vs. a Blocked Voice

Free	Blocked
Warm	Nasal
Bright	Brassy
Supported	Breathy
Velvety	Husky/Raspy
Balanced	Barky
Resonant	Dopey
Rich	Quiet
Powerful	Loud (one volume)
Melodic	Weak
Strong	Dull/Flat

Ready? Record.

Record yourself reading the following voicemail script and listen back (objectively) for tonal qualities. Use the chart for reference.

“Hi, you’ve reached [name]. I’m either away from my desk or on the other line.

Please leave a message after the tone and I will be sure to return your call. Cheers!”

5 Exercises to Explore Vocal Tone

Visit the [author’s website](#) to try these exercises.

- ♦ **Exercise 1:** Inhale and Exhale
- ♦ **Exercise 2:** Breath and Speech
- ♦ **Exercise 3:** Vocal Chords
- ♦ **Exercise 4:** Breath to Face
- ♦ **Exercise 5:** Putting It All Together

Now, record the greeting for a second time. Take note of any changes. Repeat as desired.

However, if you’ve learned from tonally sound influencers, chances are your tone is more open than someone who did not. The good news: Habits can be changed.

Why does my voice sound different on recordings?

Because it is! When you speak, what others hear differs from what you hear due to the vibration of bones, muscles, and tissues during phonation. Your voicemail greeting is an example of your external voice. Becoming familiar with the external sounds you make is integral to tonal work because it’s the most accurate representation of you in sound form; it’s what you share with the world. If it still makes you uncomfortable to hear your voice in this way, I’ve got you covered with the exercises on the left of this page.

I’m worried that changing my tone will make me sound fake or phony.

This is a natural response. Knowing more about your voice is a gift of awareness and this kind of change can be off-putting even if it’s well-meaning. Remember though, your voice today is likely a reflection of your past experiences and may not accurately represent you as you are now (or the sounds you were born to make). The goal of this work, then, becomes unblocking your natural voice and becoming more authentically you.

How can I achieve good tone?

Though the best way to maximize tone is by working with a vocal coach, there are things you can do now on your own to start the process. The vocal exercises below are a good place to start.

A few tips before you start.

- Record and listen to yourself regularly to get familiar with your external voice. You’ll be able to see progress as you practice.
- Stay objective when you practice. It makes for a more enjoyable experience and expedites results.
- As with any new practice, consistency is key. Spending a few minutes each day on tone will foster the muscle memory required for a balanced voice.

Once you can maintain this balanced sound consistently, simply defer to your regular [vocal warm-up](#), with the addition of a few tonal exercises for good measure. If you don’t have one, I highly recommend it. The voice is a muscle just like any other, and just as runners must stretch before they run, speakers must warm up before they can speak most effectively and influentially.

Knowing more about your voice is a gift of awareness. Happy exploring!

Jillian Mitchell is a vocal coach, recording artist, podcast host, writer, and all-around voice advocate. She is the founder of [Voxsana](#), an online platform dedicated to voice empowerment. Jillian lives in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, with her husband and two children.

3 Ways to Build Your Personal Brand

How to market yourself by being your own authentic champion.

By Rachael Dubinsky

To successfully build a personal brand, it's critical to be your own biggest champion.

In a world where we are so often scrutinized by others and inundated with a constant barrage of messages, our value often feels tied to how others perceive us. However, what if we could influence how others see us?

No, I'm not talking about becoming an influencer—I'm talking about building a "personal brand." And yes, there's a difference. As someone who has worked in the fields of communication and public relations for 10-plus years, I've spent a lot of time crafting communication strategies to make messaging stand out, both for companies and individuals.

At its root, personal branding is about who you are and how you represent yourself in the world. The operative word here is *you*. Just as big companies market themselves—think of the ubiquitous Nike and Starbucks logos—people, too, can show how they are distinct and valuable.

So how do you build a brand as a person, not a company, especially a company with big resources? The advent of social media has certainly given us all a platform to express ourselves, and how we choose to use it can be extremely powerful. However, the main difference between a company building a brand and an individual creating one for themselves is authenticity. To successfully build a personal brand, it's critical to be your own biggest champion.

Toastmasters is the perfect testing ground to express your own messaging, to share and refine your personal brand in a safe space. In Toastmasters, you develop your communication and leadership skills, and you get to decide what you want to say and how you want to say it. What is the narrative you want to tell to reach your personal and professional goals?

Consider these three steps to develop a personal brand through your Toastmasters journey.

1 Define Your Style

No two speakers are the same. Some speakers love sticking with facts and figures, while others love to tell stories to illustrate a point. One way isn't better than the other, but it's a good idea to understand *your* preference.

You can learn your style simply by giving your Toastmasters speeches, which is a great way to discover and define the type of speaker you want to be. By crafting your words and practicing your delivery, you slowly develop your own authentic voice.

It might be illuminating to see how your style and tone has changed over time. Try revisiting your first speeches in Toastmasters. How has your voice evolved?

2 Align Your Goals with Your Values

One of my favorite projects in the Toastmasters Pathways curriculum is "Delivering a Speech With Purpose" (Level 1 of all 11 paths). This project prompts members to define a clear message and think about the "why" behind the statements we make as speakers.

Thinking about the "why" applies to personal branding, too, because it's important to understand why we want to achieve our own personal and professional goals. Whether you're looking to become a thought leader in your field or speak with more confidence at a family get-together, aligning your goals and values adds clarity to what you are trying to achieve.

3 Reinforce Your Message

Once you are clearer on your style and what drives you, it's time to repeat your message to solidify your brand. Cindy McGovern, author of *Sell Yourself: How to Create, Live and Sell a Powerful Personal Brand*, writes that "if we aren't consistently reinforcing the narrative we want about ourselves, then we leave that narrative up to chance."

Define the narrative and be consistent with your message. While your goals may shift over time, taking control of the ideas you express and how you express them will give you a strong narrative to build upon. Toastmasters is where you can do that. From the meeting roles you fill to the speaking decisions you make, you have many chances to make an impression in each club meeting. Use these opportunities to share your strengths with your peers and get clarity on the value you bring to the table.

The best part of having a personal brand is getting to decide what you want to be known for. I hope this article gives you guideposts to express your personal messaging and ultimately shape your own narrative.

Rachael Dubinsky is Vice President Education for Boston Toastmasters in Boston, Massachusetts, and a District 31 Area Director. She is the founder of Wicked Writers, a public speaking and thought leadership consultancy. Learn more about her work at wickwriters.com.



The Secret to Getting Everything Done

Learn to move quickly without rushing.

By Elizabeth Danziger

How often have you written an email and heard a little voice in your head say, “You really should proofread that,” and thought, *I know, but I don’t have time!* Then you suffer the mortifying consequences.

Or, maybe you’ve written to a colleague or customer while trying to do something else and ended up making a faux pas or upsetting your reader. As a Toastmaster, you may have experienced the painful consequences of presenting a speech that you rushed to prepare. In training businesspeople to write clearly, I have noticed that when people make costly communication mistakes, it’s usually because they are rushing.

repairing mistakes caused by rushing? Fundamentally, is rushing sustainable?

Rushing exacts a high price: Ruined relationships. Wrecked reputations. Costly mistakes and misunderstandings. Lost sales. Even on-the-job injuries. Beyond these costs, there is the loss of serenity that rushing creates in our minds. The good news is that there are practical alternatives to feeling that we are always dashing in a futile effort to catch up.

Of course, you have to get the work done. However, you can move quickly without rushing. What is the difference? When you move quickly, you are focused,

The first step in moving quickly is to find your focus, get centered, and set your intentions for each day.

We all sense intuitively that rushing is counter-productive, but we feel we have so much to do that we have no choice but to rush. Yet think about a time when you rushed to complete a task: Did you really save any time? Did you have to spend more time

centered, and in control of yourself, like an Olympic skater spinning on ice. When you rush, you are scattered, uncentered, and at the mercy of emotions or outside forces. When skaters lose focus, they fall—and we do too.

The first step in moving quickly is to find your focus, get centered, and set your intentions for each day. Then implement. Maintaining a focused state of mind will carry you to fulfilling your goals more reliably than all the multitasking in the world. As the late Apple co-founder Steve Jobs said, “Focus and simplicity: Once you get there, you can move mountains.”

It’s easy to talk about staying focused and not rushing, but in the tumult of everyday life, it can be hard to do. Fortunately, you can adopt a few habits that will build your capacity to move quickly without rushing.

Here are a few ideas to prime you for success:

Before You Start the Day

Knowing your main goals for the next day before you go to sleep at night enables you to hit the ground running in the morning. This practice also enables your unconscious mind to do its magic while you sleep, so you will wake up more prepared to tackle your tasks.

Research indicates that the brain works best in 20-minute increments.

I have practiced meditation for decades; in my experience, even a few minutes of meditation or prayer in the morning can make the difference between a productive day and a frazzled one. I strongly recommend that you spend a few moments finding your center before you start your day.

A centering practice I learned long ago is this: Sit up straight with shoulders back and feet flat on the floor. Imagine a string extending from the ceiling to the crown of your head. Put your attention on a spot about three inches below your navel. Then take several deep breaths, focusing on the center of your belly.

To facilitate a focused mindset, spend time after you wake up to set your purpose for the

day. Don’t jump on your smartphone right away. Instead, take a few minutes for yourself. Whether you meditate, pray, journal, walk, run, or sit quietly with a cup of coffee, gather your thoughts and intentions before you let the world come charging in.

During the Day

Research shows that human beings are able to work productively for only about four hours a day. Figure out when your most productive hours are and use them to accomplish your most important tasks. Entrepreneur Alex Cavoulacos suggests following the 1,3,5 Rule: Plan to complete one major task, three mid-level goals, and five small jobs daily. If you can only accomplish one big thing, consider the day a success. To achieve this, follow these tips.

- **Prioritize.** Focusing on the small number of tasks requires us to prioritize them. Clearly, there will be interruptions; our task is to manage them so we can still

accomplish the main tasks. That may mean scheduling specific times to check email or asking an unexpected visitor to return after you have completed your main goal.

- **Do not multitask.** Multitasking is the bane of productivity. It is also the source of most of the rushing that people do. When we try to do three things at once, we generally do all three badly. If you have three tasks: A, B, and C, and you try to accomplish them by switching from one task to another until all are completed, you will spend more time than if you had done all of A, all of B, and then all of C. The lost time is associated with the energy expended while switching tasks. You may have the illusion that you

are more productive because you’re juggling balls madly: Be aware that this feeling is illusory and ultimately leads to a frazzled mental and physical state. You might not be able to complete a whole project during your available time. If that’s the case, then complete a sub-task.

- **Work in short spurts.** Research indicates that the brain works best in 20-minute increments. After that, our focus begins to wane. So, take a moment to stretch or take a quick break every 20 minutes to keep your mind fresh.
- **Reread emails or documents before sending.** In my Worktalk trainings, most people say that they find errors 50 to 100% of the time when they reread. Yet many people feel they “don’t have time” for this fundamental process. You can’t take back errors once you send them, so force yourself to check your writing first.

Rush Less, Focus More

Ironically, the secret to getting more done is to keep your energy focused on a small number of goals. Racing generally leads to regret.

The key is to move quickly without rushing. Center yourself at the beginning of the day. If you feel yourself veering off focus as the day wears on, sit still and take three deep breaths to regain your equilibrium. Don’t multitask; complete one job at a time. Give yourself a chance to unwind at regular intervals. And remember the proverb, “More haste, less speed.”

Like the spinning ice skater, you can move quickly without rushing—and get more done in the process.

Elizabeth Danziger is founder of *Worktalk Communications Consulting*, a Los Angeles, California-based company that teaches effective writing. She is the author of four books, including *Get to the Point!* second edition. For more information and to sign up for her *Writamins* monthly writing tips, visit worktalk.com.

Feats of Clay

The mighty have not fallen, but they've certainly slipped.

By John Cadley

They make it seem so easy, so effortless, as if it flows through them like a crystalline stream in an Alpine meadow. I'm talking about the great speakers of the world, the Lincolns, the Churchills, the Dr. Kings. How can we ever dream of rhetorical renown when we are consigned to forever dwell in the shadows of the gods?

By seeing them fail, that's how. By watching them slip on a banana peel, metaphorically or otherwise. This is awful, of course ... this need to see others fail where we wish to succeed. But there it is. As the French author François de la Rochefoucauld said, "If we had no faults of our own, we would not take so much pleasure in noticing those of others." Therefore, being a person of multitudinous faults, I feel eminently qualified to take some small pleasure in the foibles and failings of history's most august speechifiers. You are welcome to join me.

What could be more perfect than Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address? Glad you asked. Experts tell us that a good speech must catch the audience's attention within the first five seconds. I don't know how this can be, since every speaker I've ever heard spends at least five seconds tapping the microphone and saying, "Is this on?" Assuming the experts are right for once, Lincoln failed miserably. He began his speech with "Fourscore and seven years ago ...," then continued speaking while his listeners were left behind to do the math. He also lied when he said, "The world will little note nor long remember what we say here." If Honest Abe really believed his remarks would be forgotten, he wouldn't have spent three days preparing them and then given out five copies to various colleagues "just in case" someone might want a souvenir.

It's romantic to envision the Great Emancipator hastily scribbling those immortal words on the back of an envelope while riding a



train to the event but ... it just ain't so. Abe had one for the ages in his pocket and he knew it.

In modern times we have Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech, delivered in Washington, D.C., on August 28, 1963. Dr. King's oratorical skills were indeed gargantuan, but his immortal phrase was not in the script that day. Dr. King was talking about jobs and freedom when Mahalia Jackson, the great gospel singer, shouted, "Tell them about the dream, Martin!" referring to an earlier speech of Dr. King's. Knowing a good idea when he heard one, the Atlanta preacher set aside his text and proceeded to improvise one of the most galvanizing perorations in American history. So yes, Dr. King gets full credit for his monumental accomplishment, but I will still enjoy the pleasure of knowing he had to be reminded.

As long as I'm going after big game like Lincoln and King, why not Winston Churchill, the lion of English eloquence? Who among us has not thrilled to the sound of the British Bulldog's sonorous voice intoning his famous "We shall fight on the beaches" speech on June 4, 1940, when England's fate seemed perilous? Alas,

it becomes a little less thrilling when we know that those stirring words we still hear today on radio and TV were recorded, not from the ramparts of war-torn Britain in its darkest hour, but from the bright, sunny comfort of Churchill's country home in Chartwell nine years later, when someone thought it should be preserved for posterity. (His original 1940 address was reported on in the news but never broadcast.) That the old prime minister could have conveyed the same sense of danger and destiny four years after England was safe and sound is a remarkable feat ... of patriotism or acting. I'm not sure which.

Another British prime minister, Theresa May, fared far worse. On October 3, 2017, she began a speech on Brexit that went sideways in a hurry. First, she erupted into a coughing fit that had her sucking down water and throat lozenges like someone with the swine flu. Then the sign behind her reading *Building a Country That Works for Everyone* dropped the "f" in "for," leaving Ms. May hacking like a consumptive in front of a campaign slogan that suddenly made no sense. She resigned two years later over opposition to her Brexit plan. I say it was the speech.

So now, as the American radio personality Paul Harvey used to say, you know the rest of the story. Even those with tongues of silver can have feet of clay. It doesn't make them less praiseworthy. It just makes them more human, more like—dare I say it?—you and me. It's true. You may never be a president or a prime minister or the leader of a social movement, but you will have to give a presentation or speak at the awards dinner. And should you stumble, you can continue on confidently, knowing that Abe, Martin, and Winston would be proud.

John Cadley is a former advertising copywriter and currently a musician working in upstate New York. Learn more at cadleys.com.

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CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - BO BENNETT, DTM

You might know Bo as the creator of FreeToastHost, the host of the Toastmasters Podcast, or the Founder of eBookIt.com. Or perhaps you never heard of the guy. Either way, you will enjoy his latest book, *Some Really Personal, Yet Entertaining Stories From My Life That You Will Enjoy and May Even Find Inspiring*.

What is a "normal childhood?" Does it include almost being murdered by your sister with an ax? Speeding around town in the back of a station wagon because your mom is chasing an "alien spaceship"? Being busted by the police for intent to light a pond on fire? Tackling your mom to the ground and wrestling a knife out of her hand because she was trying to kill your dad? While my stories may be unique, readers will be able to relate to the broader themes that are part of a normal childhood such as sibling rivalry, eccentric parents, doing stupid things, and frequently preventing one's parents from literally murdering each other.

Although some of the subject matter is not something one would generally laugh at, you have my permission to laugh. Social rules don't apply here; my rules do. It works for me, and who knows, after reading the stories from my past, you might be inspired to see your own screwed up past in a more humorous light.

Some Really Personal, Yet Entertaining Stories From My Life That You Will Enjoy and May Even Find Inspiring by Bo Bennett is available in ebook, paperback, and audio, at 

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