

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | NOVEMBER 2023

# TOASTMASTER®



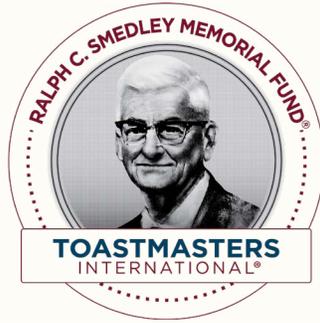
## 2023 World Championship of Public Speaking

Meet the three women who brought home trophies.

ALSO INSIDE:

**Learn the Secret to  
Effective Meetings**

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We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.



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## Speech Contests Unlock Possibilities

Speech contests are ramping up. If you have ever wondered about the experience, or considered participating, I encourage you to sign up. A speech contest is one of the best ways to grow your speaking skills, gain confidence, and even understand the bigger world of Toastmasters.

My home club, Erlangen Toastmasters in Bavaria, Germany, does a Table Topics® speech contest every year, and the organizers encourage every member who isn't involved as a contest official to participate. Not only does it give everyone the experience of speech contests, but it's also a fun activity to do together.

When I joined Toastmasters, I wasn't interested in participating in a speech contest—that wasn't why I joined. But when contest season came around, and I saw my club's lovely tradition, I took part and to my surprise, I won! This meant I got to compete at the Area contest. I managed to win the Area Tables Topics contest and the Division one, which then took me to the District conference.

And that was the moment that opened my eyes. It was my first District conference, and it gave me the chance to see my District doing business together. I was able to meet people from around the District, people I never would have met before.

A speech contest is one of the best ways to grow your speaking skills, gain confidence, and even understand the bigger world of Toastmasters.

My speech contest journey meant I also made a journey outside my club. I had the opportunity to meet many new people, and I got to understand what the Area and Division structure meant, and who those leaders were, those people stepping up to leadership.

Speech contests challenge us. They challenge us to put our best foot forward in a way we might not have thought about before. They give us the opportunity to connect with people who can give us feedback, feedback that we might never have asked for before, from a group of people who might not know us. And they also give us a chance to see and understand the wider world and bigger picture of Toastmasters.

I encourage everyone to consider competing in their club contest. It's a different experience from giving a club speech. I also encourage you to attend the speech contests at your Area, Division, or District level. You'll have the opportunity to meet new people and experience their speeches. And you may discover depths in yourself that you might otherwise never have known existed.

**Morag Mathieson, DTM**  
2023-2024 International President

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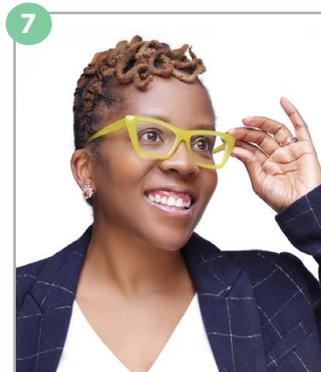
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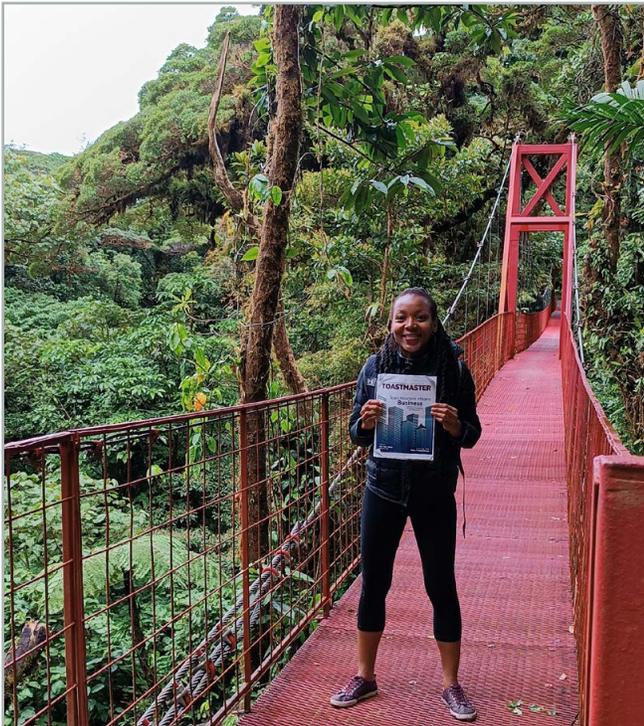
## Snapshot



**TOASTMASTERS OF PARIS**, located in Paris, France, host an Oscar-style presentation of awards during a club meeting. Each member received a trophy as a mark of recognition for something they had contributed to the club. Awards included the Protocol Master Award for knowing all the Toastmaster procedures, the Swiss Army Knife Award for helping in a variety of roles, and more. Visitors at the meeting received a Guest of Honor Award.



## Traveling Toastmaster



**AFTON LE GENDRE** of Cergy, France, visits the Monteverde Cloud Forest Biological Preserve in Costa Rica.



**CHRISTOPHER ALMEIDA, DTM**, of Doha, Qatar, holds the digital Toastmaster while visiting Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, India.

# Club Helps Members Amplify Their Voices

Members with speech disabilities have a place to sharpen their communication skills.

By Kate McClare, DTM

“The beauty with Toastmasters is everyone is learning together.”

—ANTHONY ARNOLD

Toastmasters is designed to be a safe, judgment-free space for anyone—whether held back by shyness or, like the members of PRC-Salttillo Toastmasters, a disability that impacts their ability to speak.

The club was founded for people who can only speak using augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, which supplement or replace spoken and sometimes written language. Ultimately, the club’s goal is to educate people about AAC technology and how it can help those who need it to be heard.

PRC-Salttillo, an AAC technology company headquartered in Wooster, Ohio, chartered the club. AAC users have a wide variety of disabilities that require assistive technology. They may be physically unable to control their tongue, lips, and vocal cords, or were born with autism, cerebral palsy, or another developmental disability. Others lose their ability to speak because of an illness or accident.

“A lot of our members use speech-generating devices which are similar to computer tablets,” explains charter member Anthony Arnold. The devices store vocabulary—words, phrases, or sentences—that is activated by striking a computer key or combination of keys, which turns the typed words into audible speech.

Arnold has cerebral palsy and uses an AAC device to write and speak. He is a prolific writer and often consults on disability issues for film and television productions.

The club’s formation began when two of the company’s training and implementation specialists began talking: Jane Odom and Cortney Maholtz. They began reaching out to potential mentors.

“I was intrigued when Jane first came to me with the idea of starting a Toastmasters club for this special group of people,” recalls Sandy Zalecki, DTM, the club’s sponsor and mentor. “How would we make it work?”

It wasn’t easy. The club was formed at the height of the COVID pandemic, and devastatingly, Odom’s sudden death occurred as the club was getting off the ground. That meant the loss of a leader, supporter, and friend.

“We had only met a couple of times before her death,” Arnold says. “I remember there were several emails saying, ‘What are we going to do?’ I remember someone finally saying, ‘What would Jane say?’ A lot of us knew her for years, and she was always up for a challenge. We remain strong like Jane would have wanted.”



One year later, the club is indeed going strong, with 16 active members. They’re split about evenly between members who need AAC devices and those who don’t. The meeting format has been slightly adjusted to accommodate the members. Some Table Topics® questions are sent out in advance to account for the extra time it takes to formulate a response. Answers must still be delivered within one to two minutes.

“I know it has taken time for some of our members to learn different roles,” Arnold says, “but I feel we are finally grasping things. For a lot of us, this is our first time being a member of something. Let’s say there’s been a learning curve, but most of us would join again. The beauty with Toastmasters is everyone is learning together.”

Although PRC-Salttillo’s AAC users are physically different from many other Toastmasters, their learning goals are much the same as anyone else’s.

“Most of us have wonderful ideas, but at times, I feel we don’t know how to express them effectively,” Arnold says. “Through the Toastmasters program, I feel we are improving our communication skills we can use in all environments and have greater opportunities.

“I would love to see some of us build up to having roles at the District and international levels,” he continues. “As a consumer of AAC, I think that would be powerful in multiple aspects. A lot of people don’t even know this kind of technology exists. We need to do more public awareness. It wouldn’t only simplify our work in the field, we could also help a greater number.”

And the club’s speaking members are learning, too.

“The reason why I stay in the club is because they’re great people and they have a lot to teach us about their circumstances,” Zalecki says.

“A lot of our members have developmental disabilities, meaning our disabilities were noticeable before age 3,” Arnold says. “Unfortunately, sometimes when people hear this term, they think of ‘mentally delayed’ as well. I know I sometimes struggle with this as well. As we progress in Toastmasters, hopefully, attitudes change and people see our abilities, not our disabilities.”

**Kate McClare, DTM**, is a copywriter who has contributed several features to the Toastmaster magazine. She has been a member since 2011 and is Club President of Miami Advanced Toastmasters Club in Miami, Florida.

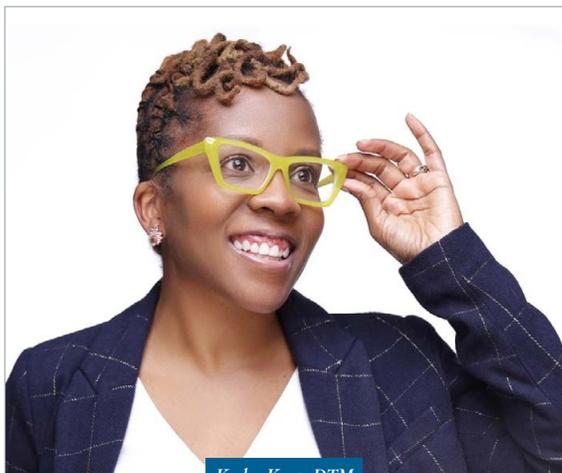
# Leading Others to Success

Empowerment speaker inspires individuals to reach their goals.

By Mackenzie Eldred

“Toastmasters helped me own my voice.”

—KESHA KENT, DTM



Kesha Kent, DTM

As a leader in both her professional and personal life, Kesha Kent, DTM, inspires others to reach their full potential and build lasting relationships.

With over 25 years of experience in human resources, training, and development, Kent has helped countless individuals reach their goals by connecting them to jobs and resources. She credits finding her passion and developing her skills to Toastmasters and other organizations.

Kent has always had a strong interest in leadership. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in leadership and management in 2005 and earned her master's degree in organizational leadership nine years later. In 2012, Kent attended her first Toastmasters meeting with Speakers of Success, a Gavel Club created by [Dress for Success](#), a not-for-profit organization that provides professional attire and resources to women. She wanted to develop her leadership skills, build her speaking presence, and learn how to tailor her stories to an audience.

“I wanted more confidence as a speaker,” Kent says. “I wanted to be able to lead an audience. I wanted to be able to get up in front of people and make sure that my message was heard.”

Kent first learned about Toastmasters while using Dress for Success as a client after being laid off from a job. She received professional development, coaching, and media training, and soon started volunteering for the organization.

“Dress for Success has really been a pillar in my career and my professional and personal life because Dress for Success has been a resource,” Kent says. “When I started volunteering, it allowed me to really rebuild myself, but also rebuild other women, too.”

Through the organization, Kent also joined the Professional Women's Group (PWG), a job retention program that provides support to hired Dress for Success clients. PWG offers seminars, workshops, mentoring, and career coaching. The program also provides networking opportunities for women. During the program, Kent was trained to lead the group, a position she held for several years.

Kent started her career working in the human resources call

center for Allstate Insurance Company in 1998. This position sparked her interest in finding talented people and building relationships. While volunteering at Dress for Success, she continued working in human resources for different companies by managing their recruitment processes, identifying job opportunities, developing training strategies, and establishing relationships with local and global organizations. Kent's true passion was helping individuals find the right position.

Her interest in helping others inspired her to start her own business, [MrsKeshSpeaks](#), LLC, launched in 2012. She motivates others by offering workshops, trainings, and presentations to help individuals grow and connect with each other. She also works remotely as a diversity talent strategist for the Husch Blackwell law firm, and has been in the space of diversity, equity, and inclusion for seven years.

Dress for Success helped Kent gain the experience needed to build her career, while Toastmasters helped her become a confident speaker. “Toastmasters helped me own my voice,” Kent says. In her role with Husch Blackwell, Kent speaks with many teams and assists with recruiting lateral and new attorneys who have been underrepresented. “It's my dream job and Toastmasters helped me land this opportunity. It was crafted perfectly for me!”

Today, Kent is a global ambassador for Dress for Success, the Division Director for District 8, the President and Vice President Public Relations of the online-only Ascension Health Toastmasters club based in Missouri, and a member of the online-only Leaders Worldwide club. In September 2023, Kent received the Distinguished Toastmaster award. Since rejoining Toastmasters in 2019, Kent has been Club President and Club Vice President Membership three times each.

Through Table Topics® and various club meeting roles, Kent learned how to evaluate and understand the club environments and people she meets. Toastmasters has also helped her network and continue to build relationships. “It's such a gift and what I've learned is it's relationships that really keep me thriving and keep my family thriving and also keep our clubs growing,” Kent says.

As President, Kent promotes Toastmasters as a resource and an opportunity to grow. She is looking at ways to help clubs and Districts become more inclusive by bringing in the younger generation. Her advice to Toastmasters is to always be connecting. “People connect to people, and they'll come [to your club] because you invited them.”

**Mackenzie Eldred** is editorial coordinator for the *Toastmaster magazine*.

# Mastering Fluency in a Foreign Language

How Toastmasters elevated my language and leadership skills.

By Marika Dubiel

In 2017, I moved across Austria, from the state of Upper Austria to the western state of Tyrol, for an e-learning development internship at Swarovski. Although my team communicated in English, some instructions from human resources were in German, and I soon realized that knowing German would be crucial for building connections and settling in.

I had passed a language exam and was able to read and write some German; however, speaking posed a challenge.

Formulating thoughts felt endless and resulted in filler words and grammatically incorrect sentences. My strategy was to speak quickly so my conversation partners didn't have a chance to catch my mistakes. They always asked me to repeat myself, and I did, but this gave me extra time to reformulate my original answer and correct myself.

I knew I had to conquer this hurdle, so I turned to Toastmasters. I decided to visit a local club, Toastmasters Rhetorikclub Innsbruck. The elegant room in Innsbruck's Old Town was full of welcoming native speakers. I realized that Toastmasters could offer the speaking, listening, and role-modeling opportunities I needed to improve my language skills.

I joined the club and prepared my first speech on the foundations of learning. I sought feedback from my Austrian colleague, whom I spoke to in English, and my Toastmasters mentor Markus, who provided input in German. I then took the stage and delivered my speech to over 20 people. My voice and knees trembling, and speaking German even faster than usual, I endured an eternity of five minutes.

As expected, the feedback urged me to slow down, but surprisingly, people understood and appreciated my message, speech structure, and stage presence. A founding club member even praised my speech, having learned something new about the key elements of learning. Thrilled by the positive response, I volunteered for other meeting roles and signed up for more speeches.



Marika Dubiel

I realized that Toastmasters could offer the speaking, listening, and role-modeling opportunities I needed to improve my language skills.

I began the Evaluation and Feedback project. My evaluation was far from perfect because I couldn't understand everything in the speaker's Tyrolean dialect. However, she appreciated learning about expressions that might challenge international audiences. Surprisingly, admitting confusion became valuable feedback, not an embarrassment.

As Table Topicsmaster, the Active Listening project in Level 3 requires you to listen to spontaneous answers and summarize them. If you have ever tried to communicate in a non-native language, you will know paraphrasing what you just heard is harder than speaking freely. But with encouragement from my club members, I somehow managed, and to my joy, the Ah-Counter revealed that I had already reduced my use of filler words.

Those experiences boosted my confidence, and after realizing that I wanted to work with

people in person rather than creating online courses, I applied for a corporate trainer position. Despite my progress in public speaking, the team lead thought I lacked the skills to manage demanding groups. Determined to grow, I turned to Toastmasters' leadership roles.

Each year, I took on a new position, which provided me with fresh opportunities to improve my German speaking. As Vice President Membership (VPM), I collaborated with the team and connected with newcomers. As Vice President Education (VPE), I stopped worrying about speaking "perfect German" and instead focused on motivating and delegating. As Club President, I found myself able to communicate my vision, lead meetings, and resolve conflicts in German.

One specific day highlights my transformation: our club contest. As President, I moderated the key event alongside the VPE before a hybrid audience of around 100 native German speakers. The progress of our club and my personal growth filled me with pride. That day was a magical milestone in my development as a speaker and leader.

After the year ended, I became an Area Director, this time without self-doubt. Interestingly, in this role, I mainly used English instead of German, but I was delighted to now effortlessly switch between the two languages.

This ability has also boosted my career. I have changed jobs twice in the past few years and am now an e-learning developer at MED-EL, a global hearing implant company. Building relationships with both English and German speaking stakeholders is such an asset. Toastmasters has consistently shown me that I can overcome my fears and gain confidence in my abilities.

**Marika Dubiel** designs online and offline learning experiences for professionals, and currently works as an e-learning developer at MED-EL. She holds a master's degree in organizational learning and development. Learn more on her YouTube channel, [Mastery Muse](#).

# Listen to Language

Get curious about context and implications.

By Bill Brown, DTM

Language is a form of communication. But do we use it to communicate? Far too often, we use the time that someone else is talking to plan our next comment. Far too often, we fail to listen to what is being said, or we jump to a conclusion about what someone is communicating.

The situation is further complicated when a translation is involved. After all, the phrase “lost in translation” is common for a reason. There are frequently significant differences in languages.

So what can we do to alleviate communication problems?

One solution is to improve our listening skills.

Listening goes way beyond letting the sound waves from someone else’s mouth hit our eardrums. It involves seeking to understand what someone else is truly saying and thinking.

I believe that the key to effective listening is curiosity. In other words, wanting to know what the other person meant by what they said or wrote.

Curiosity centers your thoughts on the other person, rather than yourself. That is where communication must start. The key question to ask yourself is “Curiosity about what?” And there are two different aspects to consider to ensure you’re exploring that curiosity effectively.

First, truly hear what the person said. That seems straightforward, right? Or is it?

As you have no doubt noticed in dictionaries, many, if not most, words have multiple meanings, and frequently the meanings are quite different. How is the speaker or writer using a particular word? And what if they are using slang? If someone refers to something being “really hot,” are they saying that you will get burned if you touch it, or that it is really popular?

Communicating in different languages can also make it difficult to understand the original message. Many words do not have an exact corresponding word when translated in our own language. When that happens, a translation may

not capture the full and true meaning of the original statement.

Second, explore what they are thinking. Let yourself be curious about implications, the extra meaning that comes along with the stated words. In other words, if this is true, what else is true? A mother of two boys told me once that she told one of them, “Stop hitting your



[Listening] involves seeking to understand what someone else is truly saying and thinking.

brother.” So he started kicking him. I suspect that this boy is destined to become a lawyer.

Attitudes are also a part of the meaning. My wife loves asparagus. I don’t. If she offers me some, is she thinking “I will give you another chance to enjoy this great tasting food.” Or is she teasing me, knowing that I will not find that opportunity enticing?

One reason that we might jump to a wrong understanding is that we approach the conversation with our own assumptions. And that can cause us to only hear or see one possible

meaning, the one that we expect to hear. This is called bias confirmation.

The key is that, if we are to be a good listener, we need to be able to recognize ambiguity or wiggle room in someone else’s statement. Sometimes it involves the differences in word meanings. Frequently it comes in the form of a vague pronoun. If someone says “he” when there are two men in the discussion, which one is meant?

Another form is where the person’s statement doesn’t make sense with what they have said before or what you know to be their attitude toward a subject.

To adequately understand what the other person said, you need to resolve any ambiguities and that involves asking questions. Even if you think you know what they mean, test it to be sure.

I usually like to start with open questions, those that don’t lead the person in a particular direction. One of my favorite ones is “in what sense?” That is a request for a person to elaborate on what they just said, being more specific. But it allows them to answer it in any way that they want. And you will frequently be surprised at what you learn.

At times you need some specific information, or you want to tie someone down who is trying to be vague. Asking a closed question would be appropriate in this instance. “Senator, are you voting for the resolution or not?” A yes or no answer is what you are looking for.

Language is an attempt to communicate, or at least it should be. But frequently it takes work to make that communication happen. People may think that they are being specific, after all, they know what they mean. It’s your job to make sure that you truly understand that meaning as well.

**Bill Brown, DTM**, is a speech delivery coach in Gillette, Wyoming. He is a member of Energy Capital Toastmasters in Gillette. Learn more at [billbrownspeechcoach.com](http://billbrownspeechcoach.com).

# The Ins and Outs of Dynamic Speaking

Vocal foundation is the cake and vocal variety is the icing.

By Jillian Mitchell

What does the term “dynamic speaking” really mean? There’s more to it than you might think.

In the most simplistic form, a dynamic speaker is someone whose vocal quality captivates an audience and makes a presentation shine. If vocal variety is the icing, then vocal foundation is the cake. Together, they embody dynamic speaking. As a vocal coach of over 20 years, I always ensure that my clients set up a proper vocal foundation (cake) before adding variety (icing).

Whether you receive tough feedback, do a self-evaluation, or are merely curious about dynamic speaking, it is important to note that nothing is wrong with your voice. There are only habits to break.

Get started building your vocal foundation with the following tips and techniques:

## Breath and Posture

Our voice is nothing without breath—quite literally. And oftentimes most vocal issues can be resolved by addressing our breathing. Plus, harnessing the breath will bring musicality to your speech and afford you more resonance/power.

**Try this:** Inhale low and slow (360-degree expansion of the ribcage), exhale smoothly and consistently through to each sentence end (belly should contract the entire time you speak). If the exhale feels sticky or sputtery, try holding an “oooh” sound for five counts and notice how your belly contracts.

**Pro tip:** Inhaling through the nose is preferred as it brings in filtered air and doesn’t dehydrate. And posture matters—you can’t get a good breath if you’re slumped down on your ribcage. Remember to keep your body loose and fluid.

## Emotional Intensity

Often when we connect to our breath, and then to the meaning behind what we say, the delivery sorts itself out in a natural, authentic, and dynamic way.

Emotional intensity can be summed up in two words: intention and vulnerability. What is the intention or motivation behind what you’re saying? Are you trying

to impress your audience, or are you simply sharing or telling a story? (We want the latter.)

Next, are you connected to your topic? Do you feel safe enough to access and express your emotions or does it feel forced, put on, or awkward? It all comes down to vulnerability—the idea of uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure as a form of courage. When you’re connected to your topic, and you feel safe being vulnerable about it, the emotions come naturally. Take a stance that it’s not about you, it’s about the message. This often better regulates breath, and amps up confidence, too.

**Try this:** Transition from *thinking* about the story to *feeling* the story in your body. Instead of thinking “I want to convey anger in this part,” try to access anger in your body, notice how it feels, and allow the feeling to guide the lines. Turn on a voice recorder to capture the magic.

**Pro tip:** Bring vulnerability to your presentation.

## Volume

This is the Goldilocks of voice—either we have too much, or not enough, or we can’t seem to get it “just right.” Establish your base resonance and then mix it up. Softer speech encourages an audience to lean in and listen. Louder speech emulates excitement or passion. Your base “narrative” volume will help distinguish between and bridge the loud and soft moments.

**Try this:** To find your base volume, aim your voice at the roof of your mouth, under your nose. This visualization will help you access your internal resonance chambers (head, chest, mouth, face). You’ll know you’re “there” when you feel a buzz and/or the sound gets louder.

**Pro tip:** Think like a singer. Where can you be bolder (louder) in your speech? Softer? Look for the excited or angry moments and add volume and pull back for vulnerable moments. Connect to your topic and you’ll know what to do.

## Pitch

Pitch refers to the notes you speak in. Likely you speak low-mid in your vocal range; think of this as your base voice. Are you also using mid-range and high notes?

Questions often demand higher pitches, whereas points of reflection often demand lower pitches. When you're delivering your speech, practice varying the pitches. And remember, adopting a vocal warm-up will afford you more variety with your voice.

**Try this:** Celebrity vocal coach Roger Love recommends the stair-step method. Start at your vocal base and walk up a few stairs of pitch (or notes) to the sentence end, and over the next sentence, walk back down the stairs.

**Pro tip:** Try out some character voices—they add to the story! Plus, we already do it naturally in our daily conversations. To illustrate the power of character voices, think back to childhood bedtime stories. Just refrain from adopting a persona or “stage voice” for the entire performance; your conversational voice (i.e., how you would tell the story to your friend) is just fine.

## Tempo

When we're nervous, we rush. Keep yourself on track by focusing on the words you are saying—are they clear? Can people understand you? Are you mumbling or fumbling? Take a breath. The space between your message is just as important as the message itself; it allows the meaning to sink in. Connect to the meaning or intention behind the words and let that guide you. Pause often. Again, don't be afraid to vary your speed. Excited? Speed up. Reflective? Slow down.

**Try this:** If you find yourself rushing, speak to the tempo of your heartbeat.

**Pro tip:** Remember to enunciate, naturally not forcefully. Think: tip of the tongue, the teeth, the lips—not only a great tongue twister but essential for communication. (Fumbling is a key sign that you need to slow down.)

## Gestures and Movement

Your body is your instrument. Ensure it's working for you, and not against you.

In the words of body language expert Louise Hahler, Ph.D., “Whilst most think words drive



Often when we connect to our breath, and then to the meaning behind what we say, the delivery sorts itself out in a natural, authentic, and dynamic way.

what we say, it's actually our body that has the greatest influence.” Awkward or forced poses, gestures, or expressions can undermine your message. To keep things natural, embody your message and act as it comes naturally. Bonus: Moving your body helps to calm nerves.

**Try this:** Start in the middle of the stage, and stay there for the presentation's introduction. Then walk to one side of the stage and pause for a story, walk to the other side of the stage and pause for another story, and then walk back to the middle. Repeat. You'll want to spend the majority of your presentation in the middle of the stage and end there, too. Use your face and arms for emphasis. Move your arms from your elbows, not your shoulders; it appears more natural. Again, embody your message and this will come naturally.

**Pro tip:** Opt for an expanded definition of voice. Imagine your voice fills your entire body, not just throat and mouth, from the top of your head to the tips of your toes. Seriously, it works! And it's a great volume booster, too.

Dynamic speaking comes down to connection—of your breath and to your emotions. Once you have this foundation set, often the dynamism takes care of itself. So have your cake and your icing—and sure, eat it, too.

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

# Explore What's in Store for Pathways

Positive changes are coming to the program's online functionality.

By Paul Sterman

The move to an improved LMS is the foundation for further steps that members have asked for.

The transition of Base Camp to a new learning management system (LMS) next year will spark a host of improvements in the [Pathways learning experience](#). The LMS is the online portal (Base Camp) where members access and engage with the Pathways content; the enhancements will include easier platform navigation, streamlined and more frequently updated educational content, and a future mobile application for Pathways users.

While the current content is widely applauded by members, there have long been difficulties with navigating the platform, and the Toastmasters World Headquarters Education Team has worked steadily to enhance the user experience with the help of member feedback. To that end, Toastmasters will shift Base Camp to a new LMS in the first half of 2024. The new LMS will offer much more functionality; among other things, it will be easier to launch paths and work through projects. In fact, projects will have a completely new look and feel.

Other benefits:

- Member access to Pathways content on mobile devices will be fully supported, with a mobile app to follow in the future.
- Pathways will be accessible to members who are visually impaired.
- Completed level and path approvals will be automatically submitted for recognition in Club Central.
- Members will be able to share learning accomplishments directly to social media.

The move to an improved LMS is the foundation for further steps that members have asked for. In an email to all members in July, Matt Kinsey, DTM, International President 2022–2023, and Morag Mathieson, DTM, International President 2023–2024, addressed the upcoming changes, which are based on member feedback to World Headquarters and data from member and nonmember surveys.

“Transitioning to a new LMS has been an ideal time for the Board of Directors to consider Pathways as a whole. Based on our deliberations, we can now make adjustments that better align with our members’ preferences, as evidenced by data and member feedback,” they wrote.

The LMS launch will come with minor content updates, and the Pathways program will be streamlined to the paths and languages that have been shown to have the most member engagement. The new LMS will launch with

the following six paths featuring the new look and feel of Pathways:

- Dynamic Leadership
- Engaging Humor
- Motivational Strategies
- Presentation Mastery
- Persuasive Influence
- Visionary Communication

The new LMS will launch with each path available in six languages.

- Arabic
- English
- French
- German
- Simplified Chinese
- Spanish

If members start a different path than the six listed here or are working in a language different than those listed here, prior to the new LMS launch, they can still work in their chosen path and language and will receive credit for path and level completions. Such paths simply won't feature the new look and the content updates after the transition to the new LMS.

World Headquarters will also work to ensure that Districts that want to translate new content into other languages are supported in forming District Translation Teams.

The new LMS will also make it easier for the Education Team to implement necessary changes to Pathways over time. In addition, the team will be able to plan and develop “new, relevant educational content,” said Mathieson and Kinsey.

Along those lines, a new Pathways offering, called “explorations,” will be added in 2024 to give members more flexibility. Each exploration will consist of a small collection of projects related to a specific topic—it will be a more narrow and specialized focus than a path. That way, members can focus more deeply on a specific topic but with a shorter time commitment. They can take a quick detour into an exploration without having to start an entirely new path.

You can find more information about the Pathways changes on the [Education Programs FAQ](#) page.

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



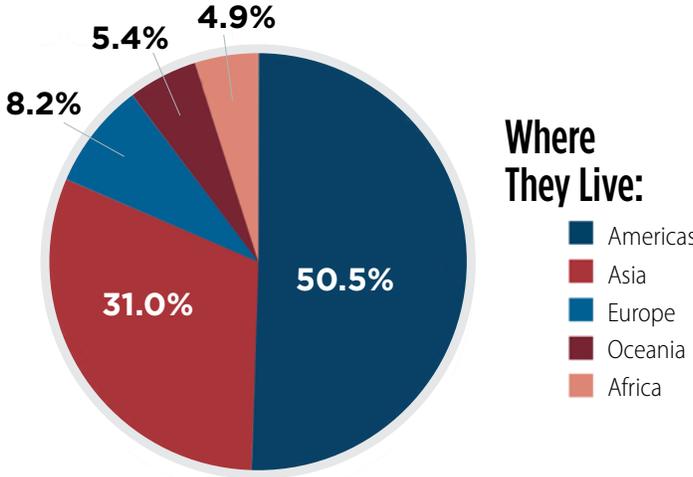
# Toastmasters at a Glance

The numbers are in! Discover the demographics of this social group of members in this report, covering July 2022–June 2023.

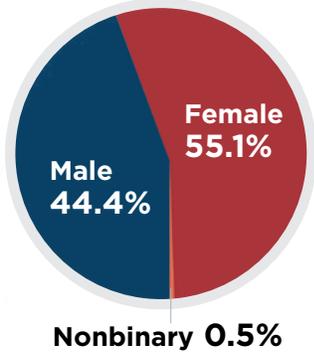
## MEMBERS

**>266,000**  
MEMBERS<sup>1</sup>

**>102,200**  
NEW MEMBERS<sup>2</sup>



**86.1%**  
have built social connections and networked with others<sup>3</sup>



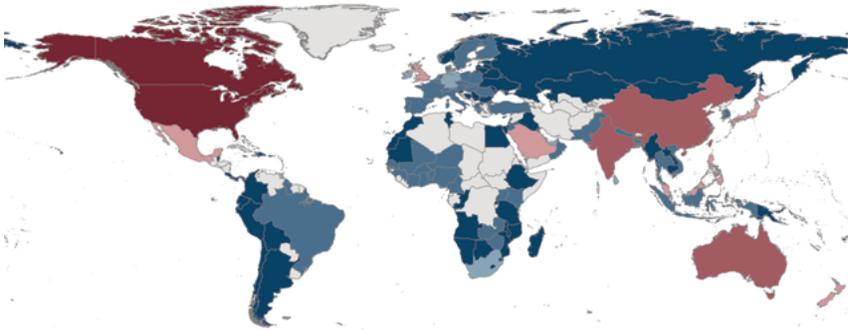
Age:	Education:	Language:	Gender:
<b>49.4</b> Average Age	<b>8.3%</b> are Students <b>80.5%</b> Bachelor's Degree or Higher	<b>39.6%</b> are Multilingual	

## CLUBS

**>14,200**  
CLUBS

**>810**  
NEW CLUBS

**148**  
COUNTRIES

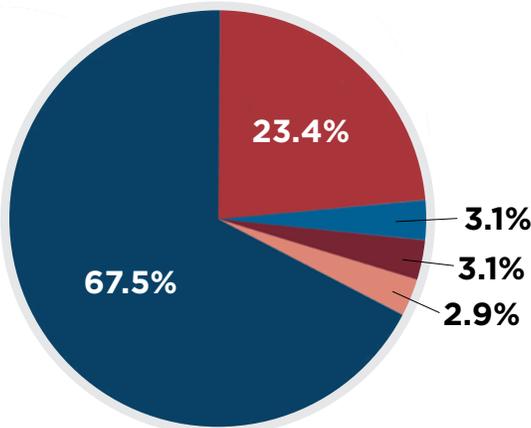


**Total Clubs:**

- 1 to 9
- 10 to 99
- 100 to 199
- 200 to 499
- 500 to 999
- 1,000 or more
- None

### Club Type:

- Community
- Company
- Other
- Government
- College



### Recognition:

President's	<b>&gt;3,600</b>
Select	<b>&gt;1,200</b>
Distinguished	<b>&gt;1,500</b>

**43.5%**  
ACHIEVED DISTINGUISHED

<sup>1</sup> Total membership for the October 2022 renewal period (includes dual memberships).  
<sup>2</sup> New member totals denote members whose original join date is during the 2022 to 2023 program year.  
<sup>3</sup> 86.09% of surveyed members met their primary goal of building social connections or networking with others.

Source: World Headquarters Research and Analysis Department



# Meet the **Winners** of the **2023 World Championship of Public Speaking**

Three women secure their place in Toastmasters history.

By Laura Mishkind

**F**or the second time in Toastmasters International history, three women earned all three World Championship of Public Speaking® trophies. They were among the eight contestants in the final round of the International Speech Contest, which begins at the club level with 30,000 speakers vying to advance to the international stage at convention. This year, the semifinals and World Championship were held online and in person in Nassau, Bahamas.

Jocelyn Tyson, Nisha Shivram, DTM, and Maryam Ganni, placed first, second, and third, respectively, and the three women drew speech inspiration from their everyday lives. From chronicling a triathlon race to dissecting an airport encounter to reflecting on a vision diagnosis, the speeches were captivating, and all had a message to share about the good in humanity and the confidence we can find in ourselves.

Learn about your 2023 World Champions, how they reached the final stage, and the lessons their stories can teach audiences around the world.

## Jocelyn Tyson

On August 3, 2023, Jocelyn Tyson started a new job. She also began packing her belongings to move from New Jersey to Maryland. Then, on August 19, she won the 2023 World Championship of Public Speaking. A whirlwind of events, to say the least.

Tyson explains that all of these events, especially becoming World Champion, have been surreal. “I haven’t had the chance to really nest into this space,” she says, while living out of suitcases two weeks after returning from The Bahamas. “It has been difficult. I will not say that it hasn’t been a bit stressful.”

Despite a few sleepless nights, Tyson is eager to take on opportunities to promote Toastmasters, meet with clubs, and share her experiences and message. “This is a great opportunity. No one really gets this,” she says of earning first place. “The heart is willing.”

Fortunately, Tyson has lots of support. District 38 Public Relations Manager Hannah Merschen is helping her schedule Toastmasters engagements. Tyson’s club, Voorhees Toastmasters, a hybrid club in Voorhees, New Jersey, is also a constant in her life and has helped her since she first joined in 2021.

From the start, her fellow members told her she had a knack for speaking and encouraged her to embrace her authentic self. She explains they told her: “Stick with who you are, allow yourself to shine, and people get to see that energy.” It was valuable advice that benefited her early in Toastmasters and throughout the speech contest.

## Contest Inspiration

Tyson’s path to the international stage didn’t take long. A Pathways project led her to attend the 2022 District 38 Annual Conference, where she watched the District speech contest. She was amazed by the talent she saw, but also had the thought, *Maybe next year I can get here.*

She voiced that idea to her club members and mentor Rhonda Young, DTM, and all encouraged her to try. Her 2023 speech contest goal was to reach the District level of the International Speech Contest. Then she surpassed that, advancing from the District contest to the region quarterfinals and then to the semifinals, and ultimately becoming the World Champion of Public Speaking the first year she ever competed. (This despite suffering a severe bout of nerves just before going onstage in the championship round. More on that later.)

Her goal in delivering her championship speech? “I wanted to make my message relatable,” Tyson says, adding that she wanted people to think, “That was a great story. I related, I found it funny, or I found it captivating.”

Of course, she drew on her club to get feedback on her delivery. She also attended other Toastmasters clubs to get their thoughts on how she could adjust her gestures and inflections. Tyson even gained insights from non-Toastmasters, because she wanted the speech to engage everyday



people who may not know the ins and outs of public speaking.

Through it all, her club mentor, Young, who is also the current District 38 Director, was a constant anchor and helped her stay true to her original message. Tyson respected that Young always said, “This is yours. Take my feedback as yours to decide on.” She never said that Tyson must do a certain gesture or change a word—it was always a suggestion that she could incorporate or not.

With her authenticity and dramatic flair, Tyson captured the audience’s attention on the international stage with her championship speech, “[Have You Been There?](#)” In it, she takes listeners through her experience competing in her first triathlon after hitting a milestone birthday.

## Battling the Inner Critic

While actively speaking onstage, Tyson’s confidence came through with her dramatic storytelling style and large movements and gestures. However, just before stepping on the stage, it was a different story.

The inner critic she introduced to the audience was out in full force, and she was a ball of nerves. Her stomach was completely in knots, and she was “sick nervous.” From backstage, she could hear the competitors performing ahead of her, including Maryam Ganni, the third-place winner. “I have to go on after that?” she shares of her thoughts at the time. “I’m in the back listening to this greatness.”

Part of her nerves came from the realization that she made it all the way to the championship without a coach. Many of the individuals she met through this process had been through the speech contests before and sought professional coaching to enhance their abilities. Tyson had decided to see how far she could get on her own for this first contest season.

“My inner critic was saying, ‘These people are amazing. You’re not even coached by the greatness! How are you back here?’”

With all this going on, she paused and took a deep breath. She reminded herself how well she knew her speech. She was speaking from an experience she had—one she had wanted to share since she joined Toastmasters. *This is authentically you. You were there. Visualize being at that race and tell these people how it was. Breathe and tell your story.* And then she stepped onstage.

## Cultivating Confidence and Connection

After finally silencing her inner critic, Tyson realized she had been battling the very lesson she was emphasizing in the speech: “Truly push yourself. Try new things. Don’t listen to that inner critic, because truly

“Toastmasters  
opens your world  
to so many different  
kinds of people,  
backgrounds, jobs,  
everything.”

—JOCELYN TYSON

you don't know what could happen." She doubted herself all the way to the World Championship of Public Speaking and almost let her inner critic stifle her opportunity to win.

So what is Tyson's inner go-getter telling her now? "Let's get out there and let's start sharing that message!"

Now that Tyson has affirmed her abilities, she's ready to settle in her new home, new job, and new Toastmasters title, so she can figure out how to share more messages with the world, including the benefits to be gained from joining this organization.

"Toastmasters opens your world to so many different kinds of people, backgrounds, jobs, everything," Tyson says. In fact, her new job came about because of a Toastmasters connection. She joined her club to begin to navigate the public speaking space, because she knew the organization could give her the platform to begin talking to larger audiences and finesse her speeches.

Now, she's learning Spanish, with the goal of fluency. She ultimately wants to give a speech in Spanish to a Spanish-speaking club, though she



laughs as she explains that may not happen this year with everything else she's juggling. Tyson also wants to earn the Distinguished Toastmaster designation.

Her overall goal as a Toastmaster and the newest World Champion of Public Speaking is simple: "I want to encourage more people to get out there and do the contest. Just make it happen."

Her goal with both the triathlon and competing in the World Championship was to "push myself past what I felt comfortable with, and I think that is where you get the most growth."

Growth continues to be a key focus of Tyson's. In the World Champions Showcase—where the three top finishers are interviewed—she told moderator and former World Champion Mark Brown that her word for what she is looking for next is "grow." She later explains that this win is a sprout in her garden. She plans to continue to cultivate her connections, work hard in her new job, and share positive messages. "I want to see how this garden will grow," she says. "I can take my flowers and share them with other people."



## Nisha Shivram, DTM

"It still feels like a dream," Nisha Shivram, DTM, says of placing second in the World Championship of Public Speaking. "A result of years of hard work, grit, and determination."

A Toastmaster since 2007 and lifelong public speaker, Shivram had made an earlier appearance on the international stage. In 2022, she reached the finals of the International Speech Contest and learned some lessons that helped her place this year.

"Last year during my semifinals presentation, I observed how the audience encourages the speaker with their responses, especially with their laughter. That made me work on the humor in my speech this year and I am glad that I succeeded," she says. This year, she began her speech asking if the audience was excited to be there and continued to engage with them throughout.

She also said she learned to remain calm and composed on the international stage.

Shivram began competing in speech contests when she was 31 years old. At 43, she earned the second-place spot—a valuable reminder to people everywhere that dreams take time to reach. "When you have a dream, there will be obstacles. There will be responsibilities," she says.

"But if you have a dream that is really close to your heart, do not give up. It will take time, but it will happen."

## An Experience to Share

This year's speech, "[Swipe](#)," was inspired by an event that happened last year when Shivram traveled to Nashville, Tennessee, from her home in Doha, Qatar, for the 2022 Toastmasters International Convention. A woman named Felly approached her in the London airport asking for help, as this was her first time traveling to America. It was also Shivram's first solo voyage to the country, but she ended up assisting Felly, who did not have a credit card.

The experience reminded the second-place winner of an important lesson: "The sole purpose of our existence is to help each other. We all need each other to strive, thrive, and survive, so keep offering a helping hand and let everyone finish their journeys beautifully," she explains to the *Toastmaster*.

She continued her speech to explain how we all have cards—not the plastic ones in our wallets, but ones of experience and expertise, contacts

and connections, and time and kind words. Her message: Be sure to swipe those cards regularly to assist those around you.

## Strong Support Systems

As Shivram was crafting her story and the reminder to help others, she gained help herself.

Led by Immediate Past Division Director Pradeep Menon, DTM, her club formed a “transformation council,” dedicated to the growth of speech contest contestants in District 116. This group of club members arranged special speech sessions for Shivram and shared feedback throughout her contest journey. “I had a session where the speech was evaluated based on the International Speech Contest judging criteria and critical feedback was provided,” she notes.

Ultimately, Shivram feels this group led her to win at the District level and succeed in the World Championship. Menon even traveled to The Bahamas to support her.

Lance Miller, 2005 World Champion of Public Speaking, also supported Shivram and coached her through the process, helping her tweak her speech to ensure she would connect with a global audience. She credits Miller for making her message worth remembering and bringing more clarity into her speech.

During the World Champions Showcase after the final round, Shivram said, “When we stand on a global stage, we are addressing a lot of people from different parts of the world and it is very important that our stories, even the minute details, they should be able to connect with that.” She mentioned adjusting her speech and using the more familiar “dollar” rather than the Qatari riyal.

Shivram had one mentor who has been helping her with contest preparation since 2011—Vinodh K Pisharom, DTM. “He has been a great



mentor, guide, and coach,” she says of her fellow Talking Matters Toastmasters Club member. She encourages all future speech contest contestants to find an experienced coach to help them see the things they need to improve upon.

## Learning Cultural Lessons

From strong club support to excellent mentors and coaches, Shivram is grateful for all her Toastmasters experiences and how they have shaped her. “[Toastmasters] is one place where we interact with people from different backgrounds,” she explains. “Something that is fine in my culture may be inappropriate in other cultures. So as a Toastmaster I have learned to respect other’s cultures, their viewpoints, pay attention to others, and this has eventually improved my social skills, making me a better human being.”

Of course, her family was also a large part of her support system. Though not a Toastmaster, her husband fully backs her on her speech contest journey. As she practiced this year, her son, 8, and daughter, 6, served as her timer and contest chair, respectively. “When all these people are involved, it becomes easy for me to practice,” she explains of her family’s support.

She has great respect for other speakers, including those she competed against throughout the International Speech Contest. She shares this advice with future competitors, “Never ever underestimate your fellow contestants just because you have competed and won many times. Support each other and help them grow.”

Shivram also says she’ll be back competing in 2024. “The stubborn side of me will not let me stop without achieving my goal. So, I will be competing again as my race is still unfinished.”

“If you have a dream that is really close to your heart, do not give up. It will take time, but it will happen.”

—NISHA SHIVRAM, DTM



## Maryam Ganni

Maryam Ganni of Laval, Quebec, Canada, earned third place in the 2023 World Championship of Public Speaking, and she doesn’t plan on stopping there. She says the most important lesson she learned during the contest process is “to appreciate the commitment and preparation needed to compete at that level: it was an eye-opener—no pun intended!

Wherever you place, it is not the end. The only question there is to ask is ‘now what?’”

Ganni has retinitis pigmentosa (RP), a genetic condition that affects a person’s retina and causes gradual vision loss. Over time the disease can cause the visual field to degenerate and narrow until it reaches the size of



a small hole similar to a straw hole and for some, completely disappears. Ganni explains that she has blind spots in different places which cause her to see straw-sized spots, therefore, limiting the amount she can actually see. “I describe it like constantly seeing flashes, fireworks, and special effects! This is constantly changing and subject to worsening as time goes by, as it is progressive.” Those with RP experience it differently depending on their specific gene.

In her World Championship speech, Ganni talks about her life before and after her diagnosis, but the goal was to remind the audience that we can all respect and love one another even with all the differences between us. Her speech titled “[You Have No Idea](#)” chronicles her relationship with her father and how his love for her narrowed their communication gap. She jokes that her dad speaks Arabic while she speaks millennial, but that never stopped her father from expressing his love.

“We might have different views, might have lived different experiences, have different opinions and ways to see the world, and might not see eye to eye—pun intended,” Ganni notes. “But there is hope to make different choices, and create inner peace by sharing three words universally understood: I love you.”

Her other goal? To honor her father.

## A Permanent Reminder

After returning home from The Bahamas, she showed her father, Sami, the video of her speech. She says he laughed at her impersonation of him and agreed that she nailed some of his key phrases. Then he said, “You have no idea how much I love you and am proud of you.”

While his unwavering love has been a constant in Ganni’s life, Mr. Ganni has surprised his daughter before. In 2017, she asked her father to write out the words “I love you” in Arabic. At the time, she told him it was because she needed to brush up on her Arabic writing, however, she was really planning to have the phrase tattooed on her wrist.

When she returned to see her father later that day, Ganni still had the protective plastic covering on the fresh tattoo. He told her to take it off and she explained it was a real tattoo and would be on her wrist forever. Ganni recalls the exact moment: “This is when he did something that surprised me and warmed my heart. He put his hand on it and kissed his hand. It meant everything even though there were no more words exchanged. I guess it meant I got his blessings for it!”

“Create inner peace by sharing three words universally understood: I love you.”

—MARYAM GANNI

## An Army of Support

While her father was a great guide throughout her life, she found mentors within Toastmasters as well.

Ganni met Scott McLaughlin when she joined Tunney’s Toastmasters in 2021. Within a week of becoming a member, he encouraged her to compete in the speech contest. Of course, she hadn’t completed the Pathways requirements to officially compete, but the club allowed Ganni to share a speech at the club level, and she won! She didn’t advance that year, but it lit a fire in her and convinced McLaughlin that his instincts were correct—Ganni had the potential to compete on the world stage.

The next year, the duo banded together to ensure Ganni completed Pathways Levels 1 and 2 and practiced consistently. McLaughlin said, “It’s 20% tactics, strategies, and techniques, and 80% psychology.” He also introduced her to some world class coaches and former World Championship of Public Speaking finalists: Verity Price, DTM, AS; Darren LaCroix, AS; Alexandre Matte, DTM; and Mark Brown.

In addition, Ganni received the support of her home club, other Toastmasters clubs, and District 61 members. She also formed a friendship and mentorship with Patricia Calixte, who Ganni says “supported me all along but especially during the contest days in The Bahamas.”

In fact, Ganni called Calixte about a month before the World Championship at a loss. She shared the pile of options she had for speeches, and with her friend’s urging and Matte and Price’s support, scrapped it all and wrote up “You Have No Idea” on August 2—just over two weeks before the competition.

Ganni learned the value of strong mentors and coaches. LaCroix, 2001 World Champion, told her just hours before stepping on the championship stage, “You have an army of people who are supporting you.” She says, “He couldn’t be more right. This is exactly how I felt.”

Ultimately, with the support of so many, Ganni finished the contest with the notion that the only thing that could stand in her way was herself.

As she said in her semifinal speech, “Losing my sight was not the worst thing that could’ve happened to me. The worst thing that could’ve happened to me was to lose myself, was to lose my dreams, was to lose my vision of the future.” Her key takeaway for others?

“No matter what, never lose yourself. No matter what, be unstoppable.”

Laura Mishkind is associate editor for the *Toastmaster* magazine.





# Get Down to Business With Parliamentary Procedure

System of rules ensures structure and fair participation in club meetings.

By Diane Windingland, DTM

**H**ave any of these frustrating situations occurred in your club meetings? An issue is debated and discussed but never decided. Rules aren't being followed, and nobody says anything about it. One member dominates a discussion, and other members aren't heard. The discussion drags on and on and on ...

Navigating group discussions and facilitating effective meetings can be an art. And one of the essential tools of this art is parliamentary

procedure. Parliamentary procedure, particularly Robert's Rules of Order, can keep meetings on track, shorten them, and create an atmosphere of fairness and equality.

However, some think parliamentary procedure is too formal, old-fashioned, and complicated. Others feel that the lack of knowledge is the problem. As Accredited Speaker and 1992 World Champion of Public Speaking Dana LaMon, DTM, said in a speech to the Virtual Parliamentarians Toastmasters club, "There are people who think that parliamentary law is what complicates meetings. They're wrong. ... It's the lack of knowledge of parliamentary law and what it's intended to accomplish that complicates meetings."

The basic tenets of parliamentary procedure never go out of style and are still undeniably relevant today: majority rule and minority rights. The wishes of the majority are enacted, while the views of the minority are heard and respected.

## Benefits for Clubs

A widely accepted standard for parliamentary procedure—though not the only form of it used—is Robert’s Rules of Order, based on the manual of the same name. A United States Army General named Henry Robert created the book, first publishing it in 1876. It has since been updated many times.

The main reason for using parliamentary procedure is to maintain structure and order, which can be valuable in Toastmasters meetings and other kinds as well. In club meetings, members use it during the business portion of the meeting, when club-related items are discussed. Under parliamentary rules, members can make a motion (a proposal to do something), such as take a vote on an issue or ask that the meeting be stopped for a recess, or adjourned. Someone could also raise a “point of information,” which is a request for more information on a specific question, or a “point of order,” a clarification that the rules are not being followed properly.

A “chair” oversees and guides parliamentary discussion. In the context of Toastmasters club meetings, the chair refers to the presiding officer, typically the Club President.

Past International Director Anthony Longley, DTM, is a longtime member of the First Bahamas Branch of Toastmasters club, in Nassau, Bahamas, which practices parliamentary procedure. He says seven fundamental principles of parliamentary law are key to the procedures.

1. Ensure an equal count of all voting members’ votes.
2. Protect the rights of the minority to be heard.
3. Uphold the rights of all members to express their views through fair debate.
4. Respect the rights of the majority to decide.
5. Facilitate smooth business transactions in a spirit of cooperation and harmony.
6. Establish a quorum for the group to conduct business. (A quorum is the minimum number of voting members who must be present to conduct business. For club officer elections, a quorum is a simple majority of club members.)
7. Ensure that the chair remains impartial. If the chair intends to advocate for or against a motion, they should cede the chair to the next member in line of succession.

Using parliamentary procedure in club meetings helps the presiding officers and members conduct the session smoothly, fairly, and transparently. For example, if a member makes a motion that seems irrelevant, and no one seconds the motion, the group does not consider the motion. The purpose of seconding a motion is to show that at least two members want the motion considered. It doesn’t mean that the person who seconded the motion agrees with it, just that they see value in the group considering it.

A member might say, “I move that we change the location of the meeting from our current location to the public library.” If no one seconds



“A member who understands parliamentary procedure can proficiently structure an agenda, table and dispense of reports, and navigate other business elements with ease and order.”

—ANTHONY LONGLEY, DTM

the motion by saying, “I second the motion” or “Second,” the chair will usually ask, “Is there a second?” If no second is obtained within a few moments, then the group does not consider the motion (i.e., it “dies for lack of a second”).

In recent years at the Annual Business Meeting held at the Toastmasters International Convention, a Professional Registered Parliamentarian has advised the chair (the International President) on parliamentary procedures.

## Benefits for Individual Members

Toastmasters is like a laboratory for communication and leadership training. It provides a platform for members to acquire transferable skills, such as practicing parliamentary procedure, to apply in the club and their careers. Longley, who served as [host District co-chair](#) for Toastmasters’ 2023 International Convention, points out that most business school graduates are not taught how to conduct a meeting effectively—a gap that Toastmasters aims to fill.

“A member who understands parliamentary procedure can proficiently structure an agenda, table and dispense of reports, and navigate other business elements with ease and order,” he says.

It might not be easy at first. “Learning parliamentary procedure is like learning a second language. It’s not intuitive,” says Margaret Hope, DTM, a Past International Director from Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada. “It feels backward to most people because they want to talk about something and then decide what to do, rather than make a tentative decision and then go to discussion.”

Knowing how to use parliamentary procedure is a skill that can help you get your voice heard. Years ago, as a new Toastmaster, Hope practiced parliamentary procedure in her club, the Advanced Speakers Club in Vancouver. She says she learned a lot from longtime fellow club member John Noonan, DTM, Toastmasters' 1989–1990 International President and a Professional Registered Parliamentarian. She recalls Noonan (who [passed away](#) in April) saying, "Learn parliamentary procedure because it gives you power."

Hope wielded that power in meetings when she was a teacher and her school district was forming a union. "I had to use Robert's Rules to be heard when they didn't want to hear me."

You might even use parliamentary procedure if you are summoned to jury duty. Bob Palmer, DTM, a member of Prime Time Toastmasters in Riverside, California, was chosen as the jury foreman for a trial, during which he set the following rules for deliberations based on parliamentary procedure:

- Jurors will be given permission to speak by the chair (in this case, the jury foreman).
- Nobody can speak twice until everyone has had a chance to speak once.
- Address all comments to the chair, not to each other.

"They saw the fairness of it all and had buy-in for the whole 18 days," says Palmer. "Peaceful, productive discussions ensued."

### Getting Started

When first learning parliamentary procedure, don't be overwhelmed by all the rules—take it one step at a time. You can start by learning how to state a motion properly. For example, say, "I move that ... ." not "I want to make a motion ... ." So instead of saying to the chair, "I want to make a motion that we adjourn ... ," say, "I move that this meeting be adjourned to (state date, place, and time for next meeting)."

Clubs can get started by including the basics of parliamentary procedure in meetings and club elections. Districts can support learning by holding training sessions on parliamentary procedures. The Riverside Society of Parliamentarians in California, of which Palmer is a member, is not a Toastmasters club; however, it's creating a new training program that it hopes can be used to develop Toastmasters District conference parliamentarians.

Most democratic countries use parliamentary procedures, though

not all use the same system of rules. People in the United States, for example, mostly rely on Robert's Rules of Order, while Canadians draw on Bourinot's Rules of Order, and Australians use the *Guide for Meetings and Organisations*, by N.E. Renton.

The most commonly used guide is *Robert's Rules of Order In Brief*, a concise guide with handy tables at the back of the book that tell you how to state things. You can also purchase a pack of 10 "Chart of Motions" from the [Toastmasters Online Store](#).

Toastmasters founder Ralph Smedley was a staunch supporter of Robert's Rules, even authoring two books about General Robert, including *The Great Peacemaker* (available from the online store). Smedley saw Robert's Rules as a tool to foster clear, democratic communication, a sentiment still valuable to Toastmasters clubs worldwide.

Parliamentary procedure, such as Robert's Rules of Order, is instrumental in promoting fair decision-making and encouraging each member's active participation. As you participate in future Toastmasters meetings, remember that this structured process is not a mere tradition, but a testament to the core values we uphold as members of Toastmasters International: integrity, respect, service, and excellence.

**Diane Windingland, DTM**, is a presentation coach from Spring, Texas, and a member of two clubs: *PowerTalk Toastmasters* and *Readership Toastmasters*, both in Minnesota, where she previously lived. Learn more at [virtualspeechcoach.com](#).

## Specialty Clubs Study Robert's Rules of Order

Five specialty Toastmasters clubs in the United States allow members to learn, study, and practice Robert's Rules of Order. One, the New York-based Virtual Parliamentarians club, helps some of its members become Registered Parliamentarians. A monthly calendar of the clubs' meetings is maintained on the [website](#) of the Riverside Society of Parliamentarians in California.

Members of these online-only specialty clubs, which meet monthly, try to touch on parliamentary procedure-related topics in their prepared speeches. Table Topics® often involves some aspect of the parliamentary vocabulary and rules to learn. Members even take quizzes to hone their knowledge. Rick Sydor, DTM, of Roseville, California, is a Registered Parliamentarian who regularly posts a quiz question on the Toastmasters International Facebook page. Sample: "When may a person rise [from his seat to indicate] a 'point of order'?" (Short answer: whenever the parliamentary rules are violated.)

Remarkably, both Sydor and Bob Palmer, DTM, have been Toastmasters for 50 years, each one joining in 1973. (Sydor served as an International Director 1996–1998.) Both men belong to specialty clubs dedicated to parliamentary procedure, and both believe strongly that learning these rules helps people in all kinds of settings.

"The lessons and training and practice carry over into [club members'] Area, Division, and District meeting experiences," Palmer says, "as well as to individual members' involvements on boards and committees in HOAs [homeowners associations], churches, and civic clubs such as Rotary, Kiwanis, League of Women Voters, and many others."



# Making the Most of Chat and Text

Four tips for communicating electronically.

By Joel Schwartzberg



If you want to keep the exchange civil and productive, aim toward responses versus reactions.

While skilled speakers recognize the importance of clarity and brevity in their oral communications, they often forget that those elements are just as critical in their electronic communications.

Modern platforms for texting and online chatting (e.g., Slack, Microsoft Teams, Google Chat) are incredibly important in both your personal and professional lives. Below are four ways to help you take advantage of those platforms.

## 1 Should You Email or Chat?

First, decide if chatting and texting are the correct tools for your communication. Email is more appropriate to convey detail and explanation, while chat and text are better tools for urgency.

### Use email if:

- You need to explain or respond with reasoning, evidence, or examples.
- Your message is necessary but not urgent.
- You need bullets to adequately convey the point.
- You're a new person in the organization and haven't established strong relationships with your colleagues yet.

### Use chat/texting if:

- You have an urgent question, update, or response.
- Your communication is brief, and you can construct it without complete sentences.
- You're responding to a situation already raised in a previous chat.
- You're responding to a question in a brief, simple, and direct way.
- You can respond effectively with a functional emoji, like a thumbs-up or a heart.

## 2 Follow the 3 C's

Because the abbreviated nature and quickfire delivery of chat and texting can lead to disastrous miscommunications, ask yourself these three crucial C's before you hit send:

### Is it clear?

Take ample time creating the text, to be crystal clear about your point and purpose. One smart review tactic is to read the text aloud before you send it. Does it sound clear to you?

### Is it concise?

Don't text or chat a novel. Stick to one idea per session. Check how often you're using the word "and," which can be a red flag that you're trying to insert too many ideas.

### Is it calm?

In a workplace setting, think of a response as a thoughtful

suggestion that addresses an issue, and a reaction as an emotional counter-expression. If you want to keep the exchange civil and productive, aim toward responses versus reactions. Keep yourself in solution mode, even if you hear something that bothers or alarms you.

## 3 Make Your Response Matter

Make efficient use of both time and (screen) space with these suggestions.

### Use emojis functionally, not just ornamentally.

A heart emoji indicates, "I love the idea." A thumbs-up emoji indicates, "I approve of this idea." Some GIFs (animated images) may serve the same purpose in a chat.

### Always respond to a text or chat question.

Don't leave texters and chatters waiting long for your response—especially on a platform designed to mimic live conversation. That said, don't keep texting someone until they respond. If you need an answer quickly, try switching to another format.

### Skip "You're welcome."

There's no need to respond, "You're welcome" to a message of "Thanks!" on chat or text, but if you're the one [expressing appreciation](#) or inclined to reply with a one-word response, try to elaborate—briefly—to make that message more meaningful. This approach will avoid further back-and-forth for clarification. For example:

- "Thanks." (Thanks for what?)
- "OK." (What will you do next?)
- "Fine." (Fine with what?)

## 4 Know When to Send

Perhaps the most important rule of all: Don't text while walking, driving, biking, or meeting. It may be tempting to fire off a quick text or chat on your way from Point A to Point B or during a meeting lull, but there's no such thing as true multitasking. You're only distracting yourself from one thing (perhaps a crucial thing) by doing another.

Be clear, be efficient, and communicate with purpose, and the valuable impact of effective chatting and texting will be at your fingertips.

**Joel Schwartzberg** is the senior director of strategic and executive communications for a U.S. national nonprofit; a presentation coach; and author of *The Language of Leadership: How to Engage and Inspire Your Team and Get to the Point! Sharpen Your Message and Make Your Words Matter*. Follow him on Twitter [@TheJoelTruth](#).

# Your Book

Yes, you have one in you, and here's how to get it out.

By John Cadley

They say everybody has a book in them. If you haven't written yours yet, it's probably because you think it's too hard. As I sit here in the community library writing this column, I gaze upon thousands and thousands of books by authors nobody has ever heard of, and I have to ask: How hard can it be?

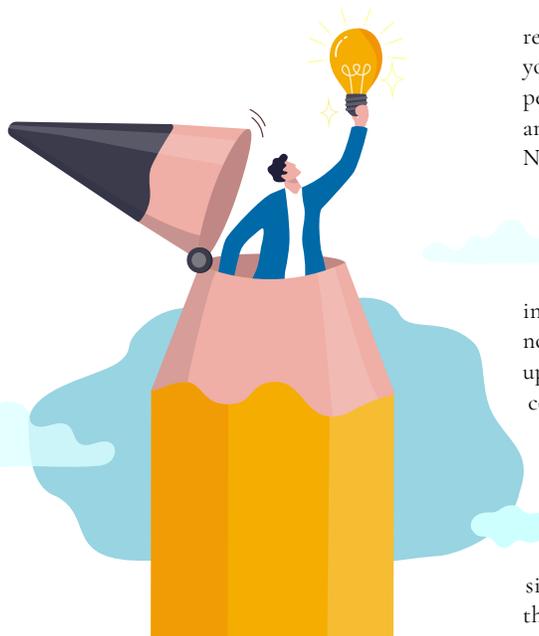
Or perhaps you're afraid your book won't be interesting. Perusing some of the aforementioned volumes, I can assure you "interesting" is not a prerequisite. Punctuation and grammar will do. Spelling you can leave to autocorrect. And if you're worried about finding a publisher, just go where you get everything else in your life—Amazon—and they'll publish it for you.

Now that I've taken away your excuses, perhaps you'll take the plunge. Let me make it easy for you. There are a lot of booky things you don't need, like a Foreword. Writers usually get somebody else to write it as a kind of third-party endorsement—*My Years in the Yukon* by Fred Wilson. Foreword by Ellen Smith. Well, forget Ellen Smith. She may say nice things about you but she'll take forever to do it. If you push her, she'll feel guilty and resent you; if you don't push, you'll call one day and find out she's moved to the south of France. There's no Backward so why should there be a Foreword, anyway? Lose it.

Skip the Dedication. If the dedicatees want to see their names in print, write each of them a thank-you note and stick an iTunes gift card inside.

You can dispense with the Table of Contents, too. If you want your audience to read the book, it's probably best not to tell them everything that's in it on the first page, complete with page numbers.

Acknowledgements are another big no-win. Nobody reads them except the people who expect to be acknowledged. In fact, it's the only part of the book they do read. And heaven forbid if you forget someone—which you will. They will never forgive you. Maybe it



was just catching your misspelling of "accommodate" (two m's, not one), but in their eyes that one contribution alone raised your book from mediocrity to a shot at the Pulitzer. And even forgetting a person or two, the average number of acknowledgements still comes to around 74 names, and you just don't want to admit you needed that much help.

Acknowledgements are another big no-win. Nobody reads them except the people who expect to be acknowledged.

Worried about an Introduction? Don't be. It's like an opening act at a concert. The audience wants to see the main attraction but first you make them sit through some lame warm-up performance. Worse still, an Introduction is like a Prologue, and a Prologue

requires an Epilogue, a finish to the finish, if you will, which means you'll put the last period on the last sentence in the last chapter and then have to write THE END ... BUT NOT REALLY. THERE'S MORE!

Once you get into the book proper, it's smooth sailing. If you think your book needs a map, for instance, it doesn't. From the time Gutenberg invented the printing press, maps have done nothing but make readers turn the book upside down trying to figure them out. The color coding, the arrows, the shading, the little bars converting inches into miles ... all they illustrate is that the average person can't read a map.

The same with graphs. Graphs are for people who understand graphs. There are six of these people in the entire world and they all work at MIT trying to solve the Twin Prime Conjecture and other unsolvable mathematical problems.

Footnotes? You must be kidding. You put a little number next to a word that refers your reader to the bottom of the page for some information in microscopic 6-point type, which, if it were worth reading, wouldn't be a footnote. How about an Appendix, otherwise known as Here's All the Other Stuff I Forgot to Put in the Book. Forget it. The same with an Index. How many readers want to know the page on which you mentioned "nutmeg"?

Finally, there's the Bibliography. This could be viewed as proof of solid research ... or as a list of all the books you stole your ideas from. Why take the chance, especially when you'll have to write "ibid." 400 times?

Or ... you can just write fiction, in which case all you need is a title, a story, and an unlisted phone number so friends and family can't keep asking if the book is really about them. Your choice.

John Cadley is a former advertising copywriter and currently a musician working in upstate New York. Learn more at [cadleys.com](http://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



We are happy to speak with you about your publishing needs.

Call us at 978-440-8364 or visit us at <http://www.eBookIt.com>.



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