

# TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL®

February 14, 2020

Dear Club Officers,

Toastmasters International is aware of the significant impact the 2019 Novel Coronavirus has had on individuals and communities in China. We extend our empathy and compassion to those who are and may be affected. Clubs in China, specifically in Districts 85, 88, 89, and 118, may not be able to be conducted in person due to safety concerns and government restrictions. Therefore, Toastmasters International encourages you to meet online if in-person meetings are not possible or preferable. These exceptions are effective immediately and until further notice.

When you meet online, we suggest to:

- Use your club's chat or email group to discuss how your club will successfully facilitate online meetings.
- Determine which online platform to use—Skype, GoToMeetings, and Zoom are used successfully by some clubs.
- Review the [Toastmasters Online Club webpage](#).

For the purpose of conducting club level business, members that attend club meetings online are considered to be present at the club meeting.

Without knowing how long the impact of the virus may last, the Board of Directors has made an exception to allow Speech Contests to be conducted online at the club, Area, Division, and District level. This exception is effective immediately and until further notice. Review this [speech contest document](#) for more information.

Once the crisis is over, all Toastmasters clubs that normally meet in person must resume meetings with a majority of members participating in person.

We hope this information helps your clubs during this challenging time. Please contact our Club and Member Support Team at World Headquarters with any questions at [clubquality@toastmasters.org](mailto:clubquality@toastmasters.org).

Sincerely,

*D Menon.*

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# Online Speech Contest Exception

Effective immediately and until further notice, clubs, Areas, and Divisions in Districts 85, 88, 89, and 118, can conduct their speech contests online. This is an exception to General Rules for All Toastmasters Speech Contests, 2. Eligibility, A., 9. which states "Each contestant must be physically present to compete beyond the club level. Participation by audio, video, or other remote technology is not permitted beyond the club level." Other than this exception, the *Speech Contest Rulebook* must be followed as applicable. The requirements below must also be followed:

1. The contest must be conducted using live audio and video conferencing tools utilizing an online platform.<sup>1</sup> For the Evaluation and Table Topics contests, the platform must allow for contestants to exit the primary broadcast and temporarily enter a holding room where they can remain under the supervision of the contest Sergeant at Arms.
2. All contestants must use a webcam and microphone to ensure that they are visible and audible while delivering their speech. Contestants are responsible for providing their own technology at their own expense if there is a fee for use.
3. In case of technology failures during the contest, use another method of communication (beyond the online platform) to enable contest officials to communicate with the chief judge, and enable contestants to communicate with the contest chair.
4. The contestants must be briefed using live audio and video conferencing tools utilizing an online platform. During the briefing:
  - a. The contest chair explains the designated speaking area for the contest. They must be set to ensure that each contestant's gestures and facial expressions will be captured by their camera and their voice will be clearly captured by the microphone. If necessary, the contest chair will advise contestants on additional lighting needs. See below for an example:



- b. Each contestant tests their technology and practices in the designated speaking area to ensure that they are visible and audible.
- c. The contest chair explains the alternative method of communication in case of technology failures.

<sup>1</sup> Some platforms that have been used successfully by members include Zoom, GoToMeeting, WebEx, WeChat, or Skype.

5. The contest officials must be briefed using live audio and video conferencing tools utilizing an online platform. During the briefing:
- The contest chair advises all contest officials on the designated speaking area. Again, see below for example:
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- The chief judge instructs judges, counters, and timers on the process for submitting the appropriate ballot for the contest, Speech Contest Time Record Sheet and Instruction for Timers (Item 1175) and Counter's Tally Sheet (Item 1176). Digital signatures are accepted.
  - The chief judge instructs judges on the process for a protest.
  - The chief judge instructs timers on the process for timing.
    - Two timers are appointed by the chief judge.
    - Each uses a stopwatch to time the contest.
    - One uses a signaling device that displays green, yellow, and red colors and signals the contestant at appropriate times during the speech.
    - The other maintains and delivers to the chief judge the written record of elapsed time on the Speech Contest Time Record Sheet and Instruction for Timers (Item 1175).
  - The chief judge explains the alternative method of communication in case of technology failures.
6. Before the contest, the chief judge selects a member to act as tiebreaking judge and instructs them on the process for submitting the appropriate Tiebreaking Judge's Guide and Ballot for the contest.
7. During the contest:
- The timer with the signaling device keeps their webcam on for the duration of the contest and ensures that contestants are able to view an accurate green, yellow, or red signal at appropriate times during the speech.
  - Audience members are not required to have webcams or microphones.
  - All audience members will mute their microphones and turn off their webcams while a contestant is speaking.
  - If technology fails during the contest:
    - If the chief judge determines that the contest can no longer continue (due to a lack of contestants or contest officials), the contest will reconvene at a later date or time.
    - If only one contestant is impacted, the chief judge should pause the contest until the technology issue is resolved. The contestant will resume their speech at the point at which the technology failed and will be allowed 30 seconds extra time.
8. During an Evaluation Contest, when the contestants enter the holding room to prepare their evaluation for five minutes, they must keep their webcam on, so they remain under the supervision of the contest sergeant at arms.
9. During a Table Topics Contest, when the contestants enter the holding room, they must keep their webcam on, so they remain under the supervision of the contest sergeant at arms.