

Handout 12b: Toasts

Do:	
Aim for 2-3 minutes! If you are wondering if your toast is too long, it is.	
Start with a hook that connects the <u>audience</u> to the <u>person of honor</u> . Then introduce yourself.	<p>Don't think about how <u>you</u> perceive the person of honor. Think about how they perceive themselves. What do they like about themselves? What is their self-image? What do they want other people to know about them?</p> <p>Your toast is an exercise in myth-making. You are the PR person for your friend. You're not the headliner, you're the hype man.</p>
A lot of the audience engagement stuff still applies here.	Make eye contact. Smile. Take up as much space as you can within your physical boundaries. Use people's names as much as you can. Let the audience know where they are in the toast. Pacing and emotional variation is good. Volume Ceiling for sure. Strategically use pauses.
Only 1-2 stories	Each story should take the form of a quest or a journey. Frame it as an accomplishment that reveals something about the person's distinctive personality. The quest should not be whatever event you are celebrating. <i>E.g. If it's a wedding, the quest should not be "find true love"</i>
Choose a theme and plan the kicker!	<p>Think of a phrase or theme that the audience will be able to remember for years to come.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> Taylor Swift wedding theme, kicker is "So let's raise our glasses to our favorite Swifty who found her endgame., Ally, we are all so happy that you have found someone to pick up bottles with you for every new year's day to come!</p> <p><i>Example:</i> Professional toast for someone who values their publication record. Theme = A CV is a tip of an iceberg Kicker = That's why the most impressive thing about his CV is all that it doesn't show. So let's raise our glasses tonight to celebrate and commend the entire iceberg of Ryan's accomplishments here at XYZ.</p>
Go for a joke	<p>Yes. Even if it's a eulogy.</p> <p>Laugh at your own joke. If your joke bombs, that's the new joke.</p>
Go over the top with the compliments,, but don't lie.	Don't be afraid to say things that seem kind of vulnerable and overly sincere. This is the time for it! Don't be afraid to say things that are seemingly too nice, as long as you genuinely believe them. At the same time, don't lie just to make the toast more complementary.
Consider a prop or a gimmick if you are giving a toast for someone who you do not know well, especially if you are one of many toasts.	<p>Props include: memorable objects, an old text or email, photographs</p> <p>Gimmicks include: Show of hands, fake-out, speaking in rhyme, briefly breaking out in song, asking a guest to stand for applause</p>

Do not	
Don't tell a story where the audience comes away primarily thinking you're cool and interesting	
Don't start by talking about yourself!	"I've known A for 2 years" "A and I first met as roommates sophomore year.."
Don't hedge or qualify your toast	X "I'm so nervous" "idk why they asked me to be here" "I'm going to need to read first"
Don't use any inside jokes or nicknames or references to events and stories that are inaccessible to the audience	The catering staff should be able to follow and understand everything you are saying.
Avoid cliches. Talk about the <i>particular</i> person. Even if you don't know the person well, find a thing that is distinctive about them/their personality.	
Don't read!	
KEEP IT CLEAN	Don't use swear words. Don't talk about sex. Don't comment on people's sexuality. Don't refer to anything about people's bodies that they can't control. Don't reference private health struggles. Don't talk about politics. Don't talk about any drug/alcohol/bathroom related stories.

Specifics	
Wedding /Vow renewal	Ask the person who invited you to give the toast what they want!
Retirement / Work	This is a victory speech, so make sure you're clear on what the victory is (you may need to find an enemy)
Eulogy	Think about the closest relatives and their relationship to the deceased. How do they want that relationship to be perceived by the audience? Is there anything you must/must not acknowledge?
Team dinner/awards	Ego management: pitch the speech so that one person's victory doesn't make other people in the room feel bad.
Professional Introduction	Tie your reputation to the person you are introducing.
Reluctant guest of honor	Keep the attention on you and avoid biographical content
Birthday	Avoid jokes about death or "we/you're so old" stories. Avoid stories about the day someone was born or when they were children