

Training Guide for New Topics Master - Nottingham Speakers Club

This guide helps you learn the Topics Master role step by step. Read it before your first time. Ask an experienced member for help.

What is the Topics Master?

You lead a fun part of the meeting. You ask quick questions. People speak 1-3 minutes each. You time them and close talks gently. That's it.

You are NOT:

- A judge of who speaks best.
- Someone who gives feedback.
- A timer who reads results out loud.

You ARE:

- A friendly guide who picks questions and keeps things moving.
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Before Your First Time: Get Ready

1. Understand Your Job (Read This Guide)

Know:

- How long the session is (40-60 min).
- How many people will speak (16-26).
- You use no wall clock.
- You stop talks gently if too long.

2. Pick Your Questions (25-35 of Them)

Pick a **simple theme**. Examples:

- Daily life (pets, food, travel).
- Quick choices (city or country?).
- Fun stories (worst haircut?).
- Work life (best team win?).

Write them down. Make them short and easy to understand. Examples:

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- "Tell us about a pet who made you laugh."
- "What's your dream job?"
- "Describe your best pizza."
- "What's a hobby you started as an adult?"
- "Tell a story about getting lost."

Keep 5-10 extra in case you finish early.

3. Learn Names

Ask for the member list. Say each name out loud. Practice saying it right. This helps you call people fast.

4. Write a Speaker List (In Order)

- Start with new or quiet people. (reduces anxiety of waiting turn)
- Mix them with loud or confident people.
- Note anyone who might say "no thanks."
- Have 25-26 names ready.

5. Practice Your Intro (30 Seconds)

Say this (or similar):

"Hi, I'm [your name], Topics Master for today. We'll do impromptu talks—that means speaking without notes. Each person gets 1-3 minutes. Use your own watch or phone to time yourself. I'll stop you gently if you go over. Have fun! First topic goes to [Name]..."

Say it out loud 2-3 times before the meeting. It feels less scary.

6. Get a Timer

Use:

- Your watch.
- Your phone timer (silent).
- A timer app (set to vibrate).

NOT a wall clock. You are the only one timing.

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The Day of Your First Session

What to Bring

- Your 25-35 questions written down.
- Your speaker list.
- Your phone or watch (as timer).
- A pen to tick off speakers.

When You Arrive

- Say hello to the main Chair.
- Say hello to the people you'll call.
- Breathe. You know this.

Start Your Session (1-2 Minutes)

1. Stand where most can see and hear you.
2. Say your intro (see above).
3. Call the first speaker's name.
4. Say the first question slowly and clear.
5. Start your silent timer when they start talking.

Do not rush this. It sets the tone.

During the Session: How to Run It

Call Each Speaker

Say: "[Name], your topic is: [Read question slow and clear]."

Examples:

- "Sarah, your topic is: Tell us about a time you helped a friend."
- "Mike, your topic is: What's a food you hated as a child but love now?"

Wait for them to nod or say "ok" before they start.

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Use Your Silent Timer

- Start when they say their first word.
- Watch at 1 minute.
- Watch at 1.5 minutes (if they go that far).
- Watch at 2 minutes.
- Watch at 3 minutes.

Keep it quiet. No beeping. No sounds.

Stop Talks That Go Too Long (Over 3 Minutes)

Only stop if WELL over time (3+ min). Let most finish naturally.

Use a warm, friendly voice. Examples:

- "Thanks, [Name] - lovely point; next one."
- "[Name], brilliant - wrapping up there."
- "Great energy - let's move on, [Name]."
- "Spot on; next speaker."

Smile. Be kind. Do not rush.

If Someone Says No

Some people will say "pass" or "no thanks." That's fine.

Say: "No worries, [Name]—who's next?"

Skip them. Move fast.

If You Forget a Name

Just say: "You're up next! Your topic is [question]." Smile. Move on.

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Keep Energy Up

- Smile between talks.
- Say each question with interest.
- Give a little nod to each speaker as they finish.
- Speak clear and not too fast.

Your energy sets the room's energy.

Time Guide: How Many Speakers

Use this to know how many people will speak.

People	Talks	Average	Full Time
16	16	2 min	40 min
18	18	2 min	45 min
20	20	2 min	50 min
22	22	2 min	55 min
24	24	2 min	58 min
26	26	1.5 min	60 min

If running early: Call more people. Use extra questions.

If running late: Gently close the last speaker a bit sooner.

After the Last Speaker

1. Say: "Thanks everyone - great practice today."
2. Hand back to the main Chair. Say: "Back to you, [Chair name]."
3. Sit down.

Do NOT give feedback. Do NOT score people. Do NOT read timer results.
Just say thanks and sit.

Common Things That Go Wrong (And How to Fix Them)

Problem: You Forget What You're Saying

Fix: Write it down. Keep your notes in hand. Look at them. It's ok.

Problem: Someone Takes 5+ Minutes

Fix: Gently say: "Thanks [Name]—I need to wrap you up to fit everyone in." Then move on. Stay friendly.

Problem: You Call Someone and They Freeze

Fix: Say: "Take your time—breathe, then go." Wait. If they say "pass," say "OK, no worries" and move on.

Problem: Your Timer Goes Off Out Loud

Fix: It happens. Laugh, turn it off, say "oops!" Keep going.

Problem: You Lose Your Place in Your Speaker List

Fix: Look at your list. Say: "Who haven't we had yet?" Ask for a hand. Move on.

Problem: You're Running Out of Time

Fix: Skip some speakers OR shorten the last few talks. Say: "We've got time for 2 more quick ones." They'll speed up.

Problem: You Feel Nervous

Fix: That's normal. Everyone feels it first time. Breathe. You have notes. You know what to do. Smile. The room is on YOUR side, not against you.

Tips for Getting Better

First Time

- Just get through it. Don't aim for perfect.
- Focus on: calling names, saying questions clear, moving on.

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Second Time

- Add: smile more, say questions slower.
- Watch how people react. Do they like funny topics or serious ones?

Third Time

- Try: mixing serious and funny topics.
- Notice: who is brave vs nervous. Give brave people harder topics.

After That

- Mix your question types more.
- Remember people's faces and what they like.
- You'll start to enjoy it.

You learn by doing, not by thinking.

Ask for Help

- **Before your first time:** Ask an experienced member to sit with you and show you how.
 - **During:** Sit near the main Chair. They can help if needed.
 - **After:** Ask the Chair: "How did that go? What should I do better?"
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Remember

- You are not perfect. That's ok.
- The speakers are nervous, not judgey.
- Your job is to be friendly and keep time.
- That's all.

You've got this. Smile. Start. Move on. Finish. Done.

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Quick Checklist for Your First Time

- ☐ Read this guide.
- ☐ Pick 25-35 questions on one theme.
- ☐ Write down 26 names in order.
- ☐ Practice your intro once.
- ☐ Bring timer, questions, and list.
- ☐ Say hello to the main Chair.
- ☐ Breathe before you start.
- ☐ Call names clear.
- ☐ Say questions slow.
- ☐ Time each talk (silent).
- ☐ Gently stop if way over.
- ☐ Say thanks to all.
- ☐ Hand back to Chair.
- ☐ Ask for feedback after.

You're ready. Go do it!