



For In-Person Contests

District 26 Club/Area/Division Judge's Briefing

The judge's briefing is conducted by the Chief Judge. The voting judges, timers, ballot counters, and the sergeant at arms should be present. The tiebreaking judge was briefed separately. The contestants and contest toastmaster were briefed separately at a different briefing conducted by the Contest Chair.

NOTE: It is advised that a briefing be held online 1-2 days prior to the event with a quick follow-up on the day of the contest to review any questions. This will allow for ample time to ensure judges, timers and SAA are prepared well in advance.

Per the Toastmasters International Speech Contest Rulebook 2025-2026, the following will be addressed at this briefing:

1. Confirm distribution of forms to each voting judge.
2. Review the Judge's Guide and Ballot (Item 1172 and item 1180) and the speaking area.
3. Review contest protocols and procedures to mitigate and address unexpected challenges.
4. Provide guidance to judges for dealing with protests.
5. Review the Speech Contest Time Record Sheet and Instructions for Timers (Item 1175) with the timers.
6. Review the Counter's Tally Sheet (Item 1176) with the ballot counters.
7. Provide a list of contestants in speaking order.

<< Text >> Are instructions within the script that are not meant to be stated.

Chief Judge:

<<Call the meeting to Order>>

Welcome to the Judge's Briefing for the Club/Area/Division Speech Contests. My name is _____ and I am the Chief Judge for these contests.

Thank you for volunteering to help at this speech contest and for attending this briefing. This briefing has several purposes including completing required forms, communicating the speaking order, reviewing the rules and procedures for the contest, and providing guidance on how technical difficulties and protests will be addressed.	
1. <<Confirmation of Forms>> Judges, please confirm that you have received the following forms: a) Judge's Guide and Ballot (Item 1172 and/or Item 1180) b) <i>Speech Contest Rulebook</i> (Item 1171) c) Judge's Certification of Eligibility and Code of Ethics (Item 1170) Judges, please confirm that you have submitted the following form: a) Judge's Certification of Eligibility and Code of Ethics (Item 1170),	<i>Verify all judges are present and each have turned in Item 1170.</i> <i>It is the chief judge's responsibility to confirm judges are eligible and meet requirements.</i>
2. <<Review the Judge's Guide and Ballot>> Per the Speech Contest Judges Training Program Presenter's Script (Item 1190a), you are judging to select the speaker who has given the best speech on that day. You are not evaluating a speech. Please review the ballot judging categories and demonstrate the utmost objectivity by consciously avoiding bias of any kind in selecting first, second, and third place contestants. It is your responsibility to avoid bias in your judging. Avoid • Speaker Position Bias • Championing the Underdog • Halo Effect or Reverse Halo Effect • Second Time Around • Not the Norm • Prejudices and Personal Preferences Judge each speech on the merits of the speaker's performance today. Suggested Methods for Using the Judge's Guide: 1. Avoid bias by not filling out the guide during the speech. Instead, take notes and catalog what the speaker did well or poorly. Use these notes to	<i>Abbreviate this section depending on the experience of the judges.</i>

enter point values for each category on the guide when the speech concludes. This helps the judge focus on the speech instead of the guide and ensures the judge is not overly influenced by one category. 2. Use point values suggested for each rating (excellent, very good, good, fair). 3. Use other points available in the range (e.g., if “excellent” is 20 points judges can assign fewer points if the contestant did not epitomize excellence). 4. Use a system of pluses and minuses to rate speakers as they compete. After all contestants have spoken, assign points. 5. Put the first contestant’s name in the far-right column and mark the ballot. Fold that column under, then judge the next speech. Fold that speaker’s column under. Judges will not be influenced by their rating of previous speakers. The guide does not include space for speech time. Timing of speeches is the sole responsibility of the timers. Judges are not permitted to time the speeches and will not consider the possibility of under-time or overtime when judging a contestant’s speech. When you are scoring, some speakers may tie or be very close in points. You must break your own ties on your ballot. The speaking area for contestants is the area marked in the contest venue. Going outside the area is not a basis for disqualification. However, if movement, proximity, etc. seems awkward or inappropriate, you may consider that in your scoring.	
3. <<Review Protocols and Procedures>> Per the Toastmasters International Speech Contest Rulebook 2025-2026, speakers in the Table Topics® Speech Contest will be introduced using this format: Speaker’s Name. Table Topic. Table Topic. Speaker’s Name.	

Speakers in the International Speech Contest will be introduced using the following format: Speaker's Name. Speech Title. Speech Title. Speaker's Name. Timing will begin with the contestant's first definite verbal or nonverbal communication with the audience following their introduction. This will usually be the next word uttered by the contestant but would also include any other communication such as gestures or sound effects. Judging begins at the start of each speech for each contestant. When the last contestant finishes speaking, the contest chair will ask for silence until the ballot counters have collected all ballots. I, as the chief judge, will notify the Contest Toastmaster with a verbal or signal when all ballots have been collected. 1. In order for a ballot to be valid, each judge shall a) Complete their ballot by entering their choices for first, second, and third place. b) Sign and print their name on the ballot. A best practice is to sign your ballot <i>before</i> the contest begins, so that you don't forget during the excitement and time pressure of the contest. 2. When voting judges have finished marking their ballots, they must confirm that their name is printed legibly and signed. Unsigned ballots will not be counted and will be discarded. The voting judges then discreetly provide ONLY THE BOTTOM PORTION of the ballot to the ballot counters. The top portion of the ballot is not provided and must be discreetly discarded by the judge after the contest. 4. As the voting judges and the tiebreaking judge are completing their ballots at the end of the contest, the timer with the timing device completes the Speech Contest Time Record Sheet (Item 1175) and provides it to the chief judge.	
4. <<Guidance for Dealing with Protests>>	

Protests are limited to eligibility, originality, and reference to another contestant or another contestant's speech. Protests may only be lodged by voting judges and/or contestants. This does not include the tiebreaking judge. The tiebreaking judge must remain secret. Any protest must be lodged with the chief judge and/or contest chair prior to the contest being adjourned. The chief judge's preference for lodging a protest is _____ (e.g., write PROTEST on their ballot, send a discreet message to the chief judge). If there is a protest, the voting judges will be convened to discuss the protest and will vote whether to disqualify the contestant. This phrase will be announced when the judges are to leave the speech contest to discuss the protest _____ <Fill in the blank>. In that case the ballot counters should not begin counting the ballots until after the protest has been resolved. Before a contestant can be disqualified on the basis of originality, or for referencing another contestant's speech, the contestant must be given an opportunity to respond to the voting judges. A majority of the voting judges must concur in the decision to disqualify. Each contestant signs a "Speaker's Certification of Eligibility and Originality" (1183), in which they certify that the content of their speech is "substantially original". This means that "Twenty-five percent or less of the speech may be devoted to quoting, paraphrasing, or referencing another person's content. Any quoted, paraphrased, or referenced content must be identified during the speech presentation." Each judge must determine if they believe more than 25 percent of the speech was devoted to quotes, etc. The contest chair can disqualify a contestant on the basis of eligibility.	A common practice is to require protests to be lodged before the winners are announced. The <i>Speech Contest Rulebook</i> states that protests must be lodged prior to adjourning the contest. The definition is given on page 9 in the current <i>Speech Contest Handbook</i>.
5. <<Review the Speech Contest Time Record Sheet>> One timer will operate a timing device. The second timer will operate the time signaling device.	

The signaling device must be clearly visible to the speakers but not obvious to the audience. A visually impaired speaker may request and will be granted a signaling method of their choice (e.g., audible signals such as “Green!”) Timing of each speech will begin with the contestant’s first definite verbal or nonverbal communication with the audience following their introduction. This will usually be the next word uttered by the contestant but would also include any other communication such as gestures or sound effects. International speeches are 5 to 7 minutes long. A green signal will be displayed at 5 minutes. A yellow signal will be displayed at 6 minutes. A red signal will be displayed at 7 minutes and will remain visible until the speaker concludes their speech. Table Topics® speeches are 1 to 2 minutes long. A green signal will be displayed at 1 minute. A yellow signal will be displayed at 1 and a half minutes. A red signal will be displayed at 2 minutes and will remain visible until the speaker concludes their speech. Timers must not consider fractions of a second. In the event of technical failure of the signal or timing equipment, a speaker is allowed 30 seconds extra overtime before being disqualified.	
6. Review the Counter’s Tally Sheet Ballot Counters, please confirm that you have received this form: a) Counter’s Tally Sheet (Item 1176) Once all the contests are completed and the ballots have been collected, the Sergeant at Arms will escort you to the ballot counting room. However, should a protest occur, you will remain in the main contest room until the protest has been resolved. In the counting room, the ballot counters and chief judge will tabulate the results of the contest using the Counter’s Tally Sheet. a) On the Counter’s Tally Sheet, each contestant receives points for being ranked first, second, or third place on a voting judge’s ballot.	

1) 1. Three (3) points are scored for each first-place ranking. 2) 2. Two (2) points are scored for each second-place ranking. 3) 3. One (1) point is scored for each third-place ranking. b) Once all points are entered, the ballot counters compute the total points for each contestant and enter the totals on the bottom of the tally sheet. 1) Point totals must be verified by all ballot counters before results are entered on the sheet. 2) Contestants are then ranked on the bottom of the tally sheet according to the number of points scored. c) In the event of a tie, the chief judge will consult the tiebreaking judge's ballot. d) The tied contestant who received the highest ranking on the tiebreaking judge's ballot will gain the contested place, and any other tied contestants will be ranked in order behind that contestant. If a judge did not sign a ballot, do not use it. If a judge provides the top portion of the ballot, do not use it and hand it to the chief judge for discreet disposal. Review and compare results. If there are any differences in the results, review the ballots until all Counter's Tally Sheets have the same results. The chief judge records the results on the Results Form (1168) and delivers it to the contest chair.	
7. <<List of Contestants in Speaking Order>> I will now provide the list of contestants in speaking order.	

Are there any questions?

Thank you again for volunteering to help at this speech contest and for making it a success!