

Club programming Cookbook

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Table Topics

Turn Around Topics

It may never happen, but if you should find yourselves with an unprepared, even though previously assigned, Topics Master, don't give him the opportunity to throw together some hasty topics. Let him be the recipient of what he would foist on you. Turn the tables on him. Have him stand at the lectern and respond to all of the hastily prepared topics that the membership can give him, each taking a turn. A few of the questions should relate to his unprepared-ness. Best Topics award is given for the best question submitted.

Fractured Headline Topics

Cut out newspaper article headlines and with a black felt tip pen personalise them to pertain to club members. Seal them in individual envelopes. Pass them out with instructions not to open them until called on. When called, speakers open the envelope and then relate the story that they feel fits the headline as it pertains to the member it has been personalised for. Some of the funniest news stories result when a member gets a headline that names him as a subject.

Biggest Blunders Topics

Some of the best humour comes from stories in which the teller is the goat. In this Topics session, the speakers are asked to "tell" on themselves. To maintain the spontaneity of Table Topics, give each speaker a particular field that his biggest blunder story must relate to. For example, one may be asked to tell about his biggest blunder as a driver. Another could explain his biggest blunder as a car buyer, another his biggest blunder as a love, etc. An appropriate award for the best topic would be a big lemon.

Soap Opera Topics

This is one of the versions of the continued story Topics. The Topics Master sets the stage for today's episode of "John's Other Wife" and then selects members to continue the story. Add variety by having every third speaker give a spot commercial for products named by the Topics Master.

Objectives Topics

This is a good one for New Years or for a meeting shortly after the TM start-up. Have each speaker discuss his Toastmaster objectives for the year in terms of manual speeches, new members and guests, Area Council attendance, etc. If "Objectives" is the meeting theme, then one or two speeches can be assigned to relate the details of the Management by Objectives approach.

End of the World

Tables Topics

You've just gotten the word that the world will end in 24 hours (collision with a star or other unavoidable disaster). How would you spend this last day? (Everyone could have the same topic). Or: How do you think the world will finally end? Is it worthwhile to spend so much on space exploration, so our descendants can leave Earth in case of such a disaster?

Speeches

How can we work to save our planet from man-made disaster such as pollution, nuclear explosion, etc? Space exploration and its need. Variation on spending the last 24 hours.

Good speakers know how to use just the right words to convey meaning. Like telling a lady "Time stands still when I look into your eyes" when you really mean, "Your face would stop a clock!"

Waiting Room Theme

A week before the meeting, have the speakers choose their topics so there will be no duplications. Possible waiting rooms are the Dentist, Doctor, Maternity Ward, Bus Depot and the Unemployment Office.

Topics can relate to "pleasant" and "unpleasant" experiences in waiting rooms.

Backyard Invention Topics

Each Topic starts with the phrase "You have invented a". The speakers' task is to explain the invention to the patent office. A clever Topics Master will select items that are not only needed badly, but also which will stimulate the speakers' imaginations. Who knows? Perhaps a much needed invention will be initiated by this session!

Secret Desires Topics

Prepare envelopes containing slips, each with a different members name on it. Number the envelopes on the outside. Instruct the members to take an envelope but not open it until their number is called. When the number is called, the speaker opens the envelope, reads the name, but does not disclose it. Speaker then describes what he thinks are the secret desires of the individual - without disclosing the name. Members are furnished ballots on which they guess whose desires each Topics speaker described.

Abstinence Topics

This has nothing to do with alcoholic beverages. The Topic Speakers are however to abstain from answering the Topic, no matter how attractive it might be to them. They should talk instead about why they will not discuss the subject and why they believe no one else should discuss it either. This can be hilarious if the Topics Master knows the members well enough to entice them with subjects that they would otherwise discuss at the drop of a hat.

Be careful of those who say they're on your side: So in appendicitis

Problem with middle age is, you're not young enough to know it all anymore

Life is now in session. Are you present?

Ice Breaker Topics

This one is good for joint meetings with other clubs, or on special occasions when there are many guests in attendance. It helps, of course, in getting others to know you; and sometimes in getting to know yourself. Have you ever thought about what you would say in a two-minute self-introduction?

Lemonade Topics

A popular thought in recent years has been "If the world has handed you a lemon, make lemonade". The Topics Master should invent lemons for each speaker, personalised if possible, and then ask them to explain their reactions at receiving the lemon and what positive action they would take to turn the lemon into lemonade. An example might be "you have just lost your job after ten years with company". The speaker could then indicate that it was just the catalyst he needed to start some kind of business of his own which was what he secretly desired to do all these years.

White Elephant Topics

Members bring articles that are no longer useful to them but which do have some value. One member acts as auctioneer, but as each item is offered, the contributing members makes a brief sales pitch in its behalf. Therein lies the educational value. If the sale is well planned, the Club will benefit monetarily. Present the most useless item to the winning “sales pitcher”.

Nostalgia Topics

Topics Master presents each topics speaker with a word reminder of something out of the past. Speakers respond by relating their fond or nostalgic memories triggered by the reminder word. Some example reminder words are: soft mud, popcorn, black jelly beans, first grade teacher, Christmas stocking, shiny pennies, etc.”

Baby Picture Topics

Have each member bring a bay picture in the 1 to 4 years range. Place them all in a large envelope so they can't be seen. Speakers will remove only one picture from the envelope and discuss for two minutes the life of the member they believe it to be.

Self development

Why Doesn't Someone

This is a chance to get things off your chest, ask probing questions, and raise buried objections. Some possible “Why doesn't someone” topics”:

- ☀ ...start a Toastmaster library with loaner books
- ☀ ...sell an inexpensive electric car/
- ☀ ...build an easel that collapses to suitcase size
- ☀ ...make a lectern low enough for women

Table Topics could follow the name theme. After each event, a general discussion could evaluate each suggestion.

Note to speakers, husbands, and others: If you want to pull the wool over someone's eyes, be sure to use the right yarn!

Hobby Night

“Show ‘n tell” night for member's hobbies, avocations, or interesting projects. When possible, the speakers could bring samples or pictures of their hobbies.

Some hobby-related activities:

- ☀ Calligraphy, sign painting, posters
- ☀ Sales jobs, demonstrating products
- ☀ Teaching course in communications
- ☀ Political activities that require speaking
- ☀ Speaking for community agencies, health services, other groups
- ☀ Specialities, such as auctioneering, calling figures for dance groups, etc.

When possible, speakers could point out how their hobbies tie in with communications; and they could offer invitation to participate.

Education

Investments Theme

Table Topics can be real or imaginary situations related to “losing your shirt” or gaining fortunes in the market. One or two speeches should be research studies of the different kinds of investments available to people with financial situations similar to the club members.

A Stock Broker would be a good guest speaker. Invite him to joint Toastmasters!

Note for busy people: You can get a lot done ... if you don't do anything else!

Effective Communication

Effective communication concentrates on having the listener really understand what you mean. It includes such techniques as:

- How to size up your audience and tailor your speech to it
- How to simplify your message by use of non-technical terms, short graphic illustrations, simple sentences, etc.
- Holding audience attention by use of humour, dramatics, enthusiasm, emotion, and other presentation techniques of delivery
- Avoiding listener boredom by use of visuals, gestures, eye contact, voice variation, etc.

The Speakers should concentrate on fulfilling the specific objective of each speech, so this programme will be educational. A good source book for this theme is “Speech Can Change Your Life”, Dell #8199, by Dorothy Sarnoff.

Evaluation Theme

In preparation for an Evaluation Theme, you may wish to order some or all of the following TMI catalogue:

- #162 – “The 10-minute Evaluation Book”
- #167 – Evaluation Kit containing 25 copies each of
 - Panel Discussion
 - Speaker’s Profile
 - Picture and Score Yourself
 - Speech evaluation Forms
 - Evaluation of the Evaluator
- #202 – “Effective Speech Evaluation”

The Evaluation Theme meeting may consist of one speaker and a number of evaluators. Each evaluator may be evaluated; or the group could simply vote on the best evaluator. If possible, the programme should be preceded by a session on evaluation, in which the above pamphlets (especially #162 and #202) are introduced to the members.

Debate Theme

In preparation for this theme, the club could order the Debate Handbook, TMI Catalogue #104, and one member give a descriptive talk on it.

The debate may be held within the club, but is more interesting if you challenge another club. Choose two 4-person teams: one Affirmative and one Negative position. The Affirmative argues for changing from a present situation (i.e. Resolved that we should change our club charter in order to admit women). Each team has two lead speakers to state its position and two rebutters to counter the other team’s position. There should be at least three judges (if two clubs are involved, select an outside tie-breaking judge).

It's best not to have debate-type Table Topics on this occasion, as the debate topic may be brought up then and influence the later formal debate. Specific debate procedure can be found in the Debate Handbook mentioned, and in other source books on the subject.

Electronic Media Theme

THEME/SETTING: Simulate TV and radio experience as closely as possible. A closed box should be provided for "radio" speakers; one with open side for TV speakers. A microphone can be to PA speaker, or to tape recorder for later playback and evaluation. Speakers should use prepared script and follow it closely, reading as an Anchorman would without distractions or interruptions. Other speakers could be "weathercasters", "Sports reporters", etc. As an additional touch, someone who has been on radio or TV could give a straight presentation on the techniques to follow: how to use notes, positioning head when using stationary mike, etc.

Building Vocabulary

In addition to the ongoing vocabulary-building programme (word-of-the-week, grammarian's report, etc.), which every club should be conducting, why not have a special vocabulary theme? For example,

Table Topics

Ask each respondent the meaning of an unusual word (permit others to challenge the definitions given)

Speeches

- ✿ How to read a dictionary (pronunciation marks, root words, etc.)
- ✿ Vocabulary-building course and books reviewed or explained
- ✿ The impact of good word choice (passages from writers to illustrate)
- ✿ The history of our language
- ✿ The use of slang and colloquialisms

Research Theme

How to gather material for a speech? Could include such topics as:

- ✿ How to get best service from the public library
- ✿ Using tape recorder for interviews and notes
- ✿ Where to find: how to use encyclopaedias and reference books
- ✿ Using cards and other methods of organising notes
- ✿ Contacting research and reference agencies, such as Hill Library,
- ✿ Government offices and other information sources
- ✿ Reference books for speakers (Bartlett's, Toastmasters; handbooks, etc.) available in libraries
- ✿ Analysing research information for speech material
- ✿ Compiling the speech from notes

Along with this, a speech or two could be given, using much reference material.

Advise to speakers: If you haven't struck oil in five minutes ... STOP BORING

Planning

Several good Planning texts and Planning Seminar Materials are available. In fact, the whole educational portion of the meeting can be conducted as a seminar with two or three presentations on such topics as "The Elements of Planning", "The Planning Process" and "recognising Situations that Require Planning". Handouts should be given to the members along with a list of suggested reading material. A good follow-up for this session would be a workshop meeting with a demonstration planning session for an Area Speech Contest.

A poor speech usually has a happy ending: The audience is glad it's over.

Maturity is the capacity of knowing you are right, without the compulsion of trying to prove it.

Audio-Visual Theme

In preparation for the Audio-Visual Theme, the club may wish to order from the TMI catalogue and review the Toastmaster Audio-Visual Handbook #1193.

If possible, get experienced AV people to handle the presentations. This may mean inviting someone from outside the club for the features presentation. Some local schools or community agencies have AV departments and might supply a main speaker. The following topics are appropriate:

- ✿ How to prepare and use flip charts
- ✿ How to prepare and use slides
- ✿ Overhead (Vu-graph) projectors
- ✿ Movies, chalk-talks, other visual presentations

Special emphasis might be placed on flip charts, since most Toastmaster programmes are readily adaptable to these. If possible, the club should acquire an easel, and encourage its members to use flipcharts as often as they can.

Speech Construction

Experienced speakers explain the mechanics of a good speech; with different emphases, such as:

- ✿ How to give a winning speech in a contest
- ✿ The statistical speech: How to organise and present the information
- ✿ The persuasive speech: Getting the audience on your side
- ✿ The audio-visual speech: Handling flip charts, slides, vu-graphs material
- ✿ Other possibilities: The Roast, the accolades, the after-dinner talk, etc.

To be believable, only the best speakers should handle these assignments. It might be a good idea to have visitors from other clubs that are experienced in the techniques involved.

Parliamentary Procedure Theme

The TI scrip's can be used through a series of meetings allotting just a short period of time at each meeting. The scripts will be more meaningful if someone explains the reasoning behind the actions that are portrayed.

Several of the members who are well versed in Parliamentary Procedure may enact situations as a panel, giving tips and pointers both before and after their slots. Make an award to the member who catches the most built-in errors the panel makes.

Health Theme

Here are three suggested methods for preparing for a Health Theme programme:

- ✿ Have club members research topics for their choice and give talks on them
- ✿ Call community health agencies such as Kidney Foundation, Cancer Society, Heart Association, etc. and request speakers
- ✿ Request speakers who specialise in these agencies from our District Speakers Bureau

Method 1 is preferable, since you get the regular speaking programme with club members participating. The speakers can get information free from the community health agencies mentioned (their phone numbers are listed in the telephone directory).

As an interesting sidelight, each speaker could invite participation in the Toastmaster Speakers Bureau, which sends many speakers each year to health agencies.

Toastmaster Recognition

Theme Setting

Toastmaster emblem, books, literature should be in evidence

Programme

Talks on

- ☀ How to approach and persuade a prospect
- ☀ How to keep members interested
- ☀ Keeping programmes informative and entertaining
- ☀ Club bulletins
- ☀ Speakers Bureau

In short, an educational programme on Toastmasters, with members of other clubs if necessary to get the information needed. This could be done once a year if necessary, to keep new members informed. Good time for guests.

At the dedication of the Gettysburg battlefield on November 19, 1963, Massachusetts politician Edward Everett spoke for an hour. Then Abraham Lincoln uttered just 266 words ... and sat down. You see, it's not the length of your speech that counts, it's the depth.

Improving your speaking ability is like polishing a diamond. It adds nothing to the diamond itself; it only improves its value.

Literary Theme

Theme Setting

Members review favourite authors and books

Programme

Speakers talk on literary subjects – great authors, best books. Each should come with examples of the works described, and be prepared to defend the choice against others if necessary. As TABLE TOPICS, each could bring a quote from a favourite author or poet.

Formula for success

Work like a dog, eat like a horse, think like a fox, play like a rabbit, and see your veterinarian once a year.

Humour, How to Find and Use it

The proper use of humour is one of the most valuable speaking techniques; well worth a full theme. You might have the club's most successful humorists discuss their approaches to humour. If possible, get the district humorous speech winner in to give the winning speech; and have the club evaluate it. Or invite another speaker in who handles well. Some ways to build the club's humour-consciousness

- ☀ Appoint a humorist (permanent or new one each meeting) to bring in bits of levity
- ☀ At the beginning of each meeting, have a brief humour or joke contest, with the winner getting a travelling award
- ☀ Occasionally have a Humour Night, with all speeches humorous, evaluated on that quality alone
- ☀ Try a humour-discussion theme, with various forms of humour discussed and evaluated
- ☀ Allocate club funds for a "Humour Handbook (#1192 in TMI Catalogue) or some of the other humour how to books on the market

Planning Workshop

In place of speeches, have a simulated committee session for planning a special event such as an Area Speech Contest. Be sure to list all the things that must happen, what should be done to make them happen, who should and by when. Be sure to consider

back up or contingency plans for critical things that can fail (spare stop watch, spare lights or substitute, alternate invocator, etc.). This may sound basic to some of you, but many Toastmasters who have never planned anything are asked to full roles that require it.

Wills and Estates Meeting

Topics can be centred around what the speakers will do when they receive their inheritances.

One or two speeches should present pertinent information about wills and estate planning. In particular they should explain when and how a person should make a will. This would be a good time to invite a lawyer or a banker as a guest speaker.

Discretion is the art of forgiving the enemies you can't lick.

Expediting is doing at the office what, if your wife does it at home, you call it nagging.

Effective Listening Theme

Schedule Table Topics at the end of the meeting. Topics Master should prepare questions during the speeches to test the members listening ability. Ask where, what, when, why and how questions about the speeches. This will be especially interesting if one of the speeches is on "Listening Techniques".

The first time it is tried, tell the members what you are going to do. The second time, just tell them that Topics will be at the end of the meeting.

Political Convention Theme

This should provide a humorous exercise in Parliamentary Procedure. Assign a Convention Chairman, Keynote speaker and candidates for the "big" office. Let the candidates select several planks for the party platform (hopefully controversial) and announce them a week in advance. On Convention day, the Chairman should have some pre-coached help from the membership to get things started. Once going, he will be hard pressed to control the action.

Motivation

Motivation Theme

Table Topics can be selling an object removed from a paper bagful of things. The bag is then passed on to the next member. A single technique is selling the product should be used, e.g. appeal to vanity, patriotism, or raising guilt feelings. "If you don't buy this product you'll let the whole family down".

Speeches should expand on one aspect of motivation: loyalty, ego fulfilment, praise, threat, etc. Award prize to the one best demonstrating his own techniques.

Great Men's Birthdays Theme

Objects remindful of a great man's life can be passed out in a brown paper bag.

For **Table Topics**, each speaker selects an object and discusses it in relation to the great man's life.

At least one **Speech** should be assigned to present the highlights of the man's life in a way that might prove motivational to the membership.

Effective Persuasions Theme

Persuasion requires more than speaking skill; it requires an understanding of how a specific audience will respond. A good technique is to use an assigned-audience approach in which the speaker is told who the listeners are supposed to be and slants the speech to that group. The speaker is evaluated on how well that particular audience would have received the speech.

A second possibility is to present speeches about the art of persuasion: e.g.

- How to size up an audience
- Using emotional appeals
- Getting and holding attention
- Judging audience reaction

An excellent source book for this theme is “The Magic Power of Emotional Appeal, ACE #K – 186, by Roy Garn, Copyright 1960

Assertiveness Theme

Theme setting

Practice being assertive and forceful, without being abusive. As role-playing aid, assume assertive nicknames, such as Pugnacious Phil, Forceful Fred, etc. Keep the tone light enough to avoid giving offence to anything said in the programme.

Table Topics

Responders should be prepared to cite some activity of the club, community, or otherwise that should be changed; and argue for the change. Another member can challenge the suggestion and argue against it. Both should be deliberately assertive.

Speeches

Power of Positive Thinking (Norman Vincent Peale) Ayn Rand’s philosophy of assertiveness. Other talks on self-independence. A good source book is “The art of selfishness”, Pocket Books #78426.

Management Techniques

Topics

Have members relate their reactions to different kinds of stimuli or motivations to do things in volunteer organisations such as Toastmasters, Church, PTA, etc. Ask others to compare job type motivators to volunteer task motivators.

One or two **Speeches** should relate to methods for making people want to do things when there is no remuneration involved. These can be researched from Library texts or they can relate personal experience. The objective should be to make members recognise approaches they can use to get others to agree to accept volunteer tasks and feel good about doing them. The kind of experience can be beneficial in job situations.

Roasts

Accolade to the moving Toastmaster

This one can start as early as the business meeting. Coach the members in advance. Have someone make a motion to recommend the subject to a club in his/her new area. This should develop into a discussion on what qualities the subject should be recommended for and finally referral to committee to research the limited possibilities.

Topics can be pointed toward the horrible experiences the members have had in the city of the subjects new home. Other topics should relate the reasons why the member shouldn't move away unless he/she has something to hide.

At least one **Speech** should be a researched dissertation on the area to which the subject is moving. At the end of the meeting, give the subject a chance to related his thoughts about leaving. Close the meeting with a rousing chorus of "For his a jolly good fellow".

Keep raising the roof, and people will begin to wonder if something is wrong in your attic.

Outgoing President

Theme suggestion

Try a complimentary "roast", a la Dean Martin. Good time to invite spouses and other guests.

Table Topics

I'll always remember ... (incidents of the outgoing president's term). These could be "planted" for the benefit of the guests.

Speeches

Selected members "roast" the outgoing president, in a gentle manner, always ending in a complimentary tone. This can be interesting, if the president is popular enough to stand the hazing. This event could be combined with installation of new officeres.

Old Timers Roasting

Try to find a special interest of each old timer attending on invitation. Try to get members that were in the club at the same time to comment on each others special interests (or idiosyncrasies). The Toastmaster should be sensitive to the reception of the comments and change the subject if necessary to preserve good will.

Speakers could compare the club of yesterday to the club of today and point out the similarities between today's members and the retired members.

Procrastination is the thief of time .. but then, so are a lot of other big words.

Roast the moving Toastmaster

Careful! Roasts, even in fun can cause bad burns. They must end on a friendly note.

Topics should be specially prepared questions regarding the speakers impressions on the subject of predictions on how the club is apt to fare now that the subject is leaving.

At least one of the **Speeches** should be about the subject and can exaggerate his fights with the neighbours, his brushes with the law, his incompetence with his job and his total helplessness until the club took him on as a test case. The speech should end on an expression of light hope that the subject will continue to improve if he is lucky enough to find another club that is willing to put as much effort into his salvation as his current club. Present the subject with a scroll with friendly comments and best wishes of the individual member. Of course, give the subject a change to respond to the meeting. About 30 seconds should suffice.

Old timers' night

Theme setting

Invite all past members back fro a special occasion.

Possible programme events:

- ☀ Have a past member repeat an especially memorable speech that he once gave
- ☀ Highlights in the club's history, especially as related to significant past members
- ☀ Have old timers evaluate the present club's activities

- ☀ Special commendation or award to club's founder, oldest or earliest member, or other notable personality.
- ☀ Don't forget to invite the past members to join.

The human voice is our hardiest faculty: It begins at birth and functions beautifully right up 'till we stand up to speak in public.

Situations

Bartender Meeting

The Toastmaster acts as a bartender with a ll the speakers at a table with him. It is the speakers objective to get the bartenders attention to tell his story, sad or otherwise. A referee may be appointed to keep things in order. Any speaker not heeding the referee is eliminated.

Invite bartenders.

Predictions

Theme/Setting

Crystal ball, mystical signs of fortuneteller.

Table Topics

Responder makes predictions of future of the club, the country, the world, etc. with reasons for the predictions. ("As Administrative Vice President, I predict we'll have members by spring because ...")

Speeches

Either predictions (with reasons) or talks on famous seers like Mother Shipton, Jeanne Dixon, etc.

Think life's full of unpleasant surprises? Consider the pickpocket who stole a wallet and found his wife's picture in it!

Parole Board

Theme/Setting

Convict comes before "Parole Board" made up of several club members. They ask questions; then decide if the convict has rehabilitated on the strength of the answers.

Table Topic

Follow same theme, but here each responder tells how he/she got "railroaded" into the situation set up by the Table Topics Master. (Example: "The record says you stole a 1,000 pound safe and hauled it away: Is that true?" "I did it in a weak moment.") Some of the topics could be planted to liven up the meeting.

Speeches

In each presentation, the convict tells the "board" how it really happened, how he has reformed ("I just found a penny and spent 13C for a stamp to mail it to the police department") or how he'll never get caught again ("I'll be more careful"). In each case, the full audience, acting as the "board" votes to free or re-incarcerate him.

Alibi Ike Theme

Theme/Setting

Club is divided into two teams, and each team member has an opposite number. Each participant prepares a list of "charges" some set numbers such as 5 or 6. There are 3 judges.

Programme

A member accuses his opposite of the trumped-up charges, and the accused offers alibis. Then the role is reversed. The judges decide which team has the best alibis. The "charges" should be farcical and not close enough to any real transgressions to cause offence. (Example: "Can you explain how you amassed several million dollars while you were club treasurer?" "Yes. I stopped using deodorant: Until then, I didn't have a scent.")

Efficiency is doing the job right. Effectiveness is doing the RIGHT job right.

Speeches often use facts like a drunk uses a lamppost: for support; not for illumination.

Auction Meeting

Table Topics

Have each speaker auction some Toastmaster duty that he is willing to perform for some other member. For example, he can sell his service as timer to anyone willing to buy. The seller then serves in place of the buyer the next time he is scheduled. By agreement, the money collected can be donated to the Club funds.

At least one **Speech** should be devoted to the history and evolvement of auction sales. The club bulletin should announce the sale in advance with an old-fashioned auction sale notice. Invite another club for a joint meeting. It becomes even more exciting when cross purchases are made and members have to go to another club to fulfil their commitments.

The size of a man can be measured by the size of the thing that makes him angry.

Don't worry about adversity: The same wind that snuffs out small candles kindles great fires.

Panel Discussion

Theme/Setting

Several 'experts' discuss a theme and then answer questions from the audience.

Programme

The theme can be general; i.e. communications. One speaker would discuss written, one oral, one visual communications. Questions from the audience can be directed to the expert who has most knowledge in that specific area. Note that the leader of the panel should be a member who can apply the experience to the specific assignment in the Communications and Leadership Manual, but the entire club should participate as a theme.

Doomsday

Theme/Setting

You've just discovered that the earth has just a few hours before annihilation (collision with another planet, sun disturbance, whatever).

Table Topics

In the few hours remaining, what would you do? Each respondent could have the answer to that question, or the TTM could set up situations such as handling long-standing feuds, etc.

Speeches

How will the earth end? Each speaker could pick a way (pollution, war, famine, etc.) and describe what we might do to avert or postpone it. Good place for a philosophical talk on enjoying life while we can.

Those old Roman speakers must have been like some we hear today. They named the auditorium for Aldi (to hear) and Taurus (bull).

Barber Shop Philosophy Meeting

Table Topics can relate to trimmings, close shaves, singes, and washouts the members have received. They might also be evaluations of each member's personal barber ability as a discussion leader.

Encourage members to bring their barbers as guests. (Barbers make good Toastmasters). Prearrange with speakers to give humorous speeches during which they wear barber jackets and hold a pair of scissors and a comb in their hand, and speak to a pretend customer, complete with ear-lobbing gestures. **Speeches** should be humorously related to solving the ills of the world in typical Barber Shop style. Have guest barbers comment at the end of the meeting on the quality of the discussions compared to the ones that take place in their own shops.

Lawsuits Theme

To sue or not to sue. This is a good topic for panel discussion. Consider the element of a law suit and the advisability of seeking legal help. Consider also the situation which can be taken to Conciliation Court. Invite a lawyer to speak about his profession and invite him to give some guidelines for seeking professional help.

Table Topics

Topics can alternate "for" or "against" witness statements regarding some members who has been charged with a heinous crime.

Media Meeting

Topics

Use radios "Roving Reporter" approach. Hold short "question-answer sessions or interviews with the speakers. Pass the mike back and forth just like the street reporters do. To add an element of make believe, have Topics speakers describe the calamity (big fire, sinking ship, etc.) that is taking place before their eyes.

Assigned speeches should be on subjects such as

- ✿ How to appear on TV
- ✿ How to use a microphone
- ✿ How to write a press release

Invite the Media. Ask for their comments and suggestions.

100 Years from now Theme

Speeches and Table Topics are all based on concepts of the future. Although Table Topics is apt to be speculative, the speeches should be projections of theory based on research facts. Symbols of future life might be places at each table or displayed near the lectern.

Effective Communication Theme

Have three to five members leave the room while a specially prepared speech is delivered. Then have one of the members come back in the room and listen to a condensation of the speech by one of the members that stayed in the room. Then another absent members is called in to hear the first absent member try to repeat the condensation he had just heard. The objective of course is to try to maintain good transference of the message.

There will be a lot of laughs as well as a good lesson in effective (or ineffective) communication.

Some people are like blisters: They never show up until after all the work is done.

Small Claims Court Meeting

Topics can be “what if” situations that are personally pleaded by the plaintiff and the defendant in conciliation court. The Topics Master can appoint someone to serve as judge and the club can select the winner in each case.

At least one **Speech** should describe the kinds of situations that are settled in conciliation courts, the procedure for filing a suit, and the proper way to present a case in court. This session will be more meaningful if you can get a judge or lawyer to attend and then comment on the meeting and its meaningfulness and its accuracy.

Progressive Meeting

Toastmasters and spouses meet at a member’s home for cocktails and Table Topics. All travel to the next members home for the main course and a couple after dinner speeches. Then all travel to the next home for dessert, evaluations and awards. Be sure that the spouses who make their homes available get special recognition during the awards ceremony.

Embarrassment

Theme/Setting

How to deal with awkward to embarrassing situations. Limit incidents to the kind that can be handled verbally, i.e. forgetting a friend’s name, spilling drink at a party, wife finding lipstick on collar, etc.

Topics

My most embarrassing moment or assign an ‘embarrassing moment’ to the respondent.

Speeches

Embarrassing situations and how they handled them (Casey at the Bat, Custer at Little Bighorn, Napoleon at Waterloo, etc.). Why do we blush? What causes the discomfort of embarrassment? Cultural influences on our feelings.

An apple for the Teacher Theme

Topics can be discussion of the traits and personalities of the members past teach (for example: “my prettiest teacher”, “my crabbiest teacher”, “my forgetful teacher”, etc.)

Speeches can be complimentary or critical of today’s teaching methods. Encourage members to bring teacher guests. If critical speeches are made, allow teachers to respond. When awards are made, present each teacher with an apple and thank him or her for their part in making a better community.

Interview

Theme/Setting

Tape recorder and pad for interviews. Various members of the club appointed as “celebrities” to be interviewed, or persons who have done something unusual. The interviewers would know beforehand of the persons and events in order to prepare appropriate questions.

Programme

The “celebrity” knows why the interview is taking place; the ‘claim to fame’ or special event, but not the exact question. In other words, just as in a real interview. The interviewer does not know all the details of the celebrity’s story, and must get them in the interview.

Recognition

Programme to Honour Local Politician

Theme/Setting

Invite political figure whom all respect; and of course, permit him/her to speak. In most cases, some gentle ribbing might be acceptable (depending on the circumstances).

Table Topics

Any political topic that is not too controversial (culled from current news, as it should be topical). Is Parliamentary Procedure essential in politics? Should politicians be held responsible for upholding the policies of their voters, even when wrong?

Speeches

The differences between politicians and statesmen. The responsibilities of politicians in guiding their country. Pressure groups and lobbies: Good or bad, and what should be done. The good (bad) policies in general of the Political Party. Is the multi-party system good or bad?

Benefactors Theme

Almost everyone has a Benefactor who has helped him or her materially or with encouragement. Perhaps two or three members would like to thank these people publicly. Arrange a meeting where the Benefactors can be invited as guests, and the speakers give the VIP treatment including complimentary **Speeches** acknowledging their assistance. Tape the speeches and give them to the Benefactors.

Table Topics can be related to the positive aspects of doing things for others.

Area Governor Accolade

Invite the Area Governor as a special guest. Hand out TI organisation charts with the Area Governor’s position encircled in red. Ask each member to write on the back of the sheet how the Area Governor has helped him/ her or the club.

For **Table Topics**, have each member read his accolade to the Governor. Other appropriate comments should be made to let the Governor know you appreciate his/her service.

At least one **Speech** should outline the duties of the Area Governor and encourage club members who are eligible to seek the position.

Give the Governor a small remembrance and ask him/her to say a few words at the end of the meeting.

Programme to Honour Teachers

Theme/Setting

Invite local teachers (particularly any who have worked with Toastmasters). Ask in advance if one of them would like to say a few words. Suggest Youth Leadership or other ways to relate Toastmasters to youngsters in school. In addition to free meal, small basket of apples “for the teacher” might be appropriate.

Table Topics

“Spelling contest” or other fun “lesson”. Should religion be supported by the community school. The role of the teacher in instilling morality. Are today’s schools better? How can we improve them?

Speeches

The role of TV in the learning process. Should teachers be unionised? Should we take more interest in teacher’s problems? The passing of the community schoolhouse: its impact on learning and morality. The changing role of the teacher as community leader.

Honour the New ATM or DTM

Put up a big sign proclaiming the subjects achievement.

Table Topics should all relate to the subject in some way. Some should be especially laudatory, and others should be of a mild roasting nature. One of the speeches should point out what is required to achieve CTM, ATM, or DTM. It should encourage other members to strive for the ratings. Another speech – in a humorous vein should encourage the subject to raise his sights and go after bigger goals such as the Presidency of South Africa, or even chairmanship of the local PTA. Give the subject an opportunity to relate his reaction to the meeting.

Family (or spouse) Night

Theme Suggestion

Plan special event to honour spouses or other special family members.

Table Topics

Each member introduces and toasts his or her guest. Invited guests could be invited to participate, but only if they wish.

Speeches

Talk to explain Toastmaster organisation to guests. Speeches to honour family members or friends who have been most supportive or helpful.

We should stop saying that Toastmasters give us poise and personality. There are too many poison personalities in the world already.

Don't ever get the idea you're completely useless; you may be valuable as a bad example.

Local Communication and Leadership Award

Make this a community affair. Select a local non-member who is deserving of recognition for this communication and leadership expertise. The whole meeting should pertain to honour the individual. In place of **Table Topics**, call for spontaneous testimonials from the group. This will work best if a couple of Toastmasters are coached to set the stage. Invite the Major and the Club President with the winner. Make it an annual affair.

Youth Meeting

Invite all sons and daughters of Toastmasters. The programme should be geared to youth problems and activities. Involve the guests in Table Topics. The first time your club sponsors a meeting like this you may want to schedule Table Topics near the end of the programme. The guests will respond better after they have determined that you really are addressing their problems. For all similar meetings thereafter, the guests will appreciate a chance to “sound off” early in the meeting.

Programme to Honour Firemen

Theme/Setting

Invite members of local fire department to attend as guests. Or possible put on a mini-meeting at their facility.

Table Topics

Should fire alarms be made mandatory in all homes? What can the individual homeowner do to reduce fire hazards? If your own home caught fire in the night, how would you go about evacuating your family? After the family, what would be the first thing you'd save?

Speeches

Club members (or firemen themselves, if they wish) could talk on how to prevent fire in the home; how to plan evacuation in case of fire; updating your fire insurance, etc. Demonstration of fire alarm types possible also.

If you can't do big things, do little things in a big way.

Public Servants Accolade

Prepare a montage of newspaper clippings of local Public Servants. Display it prominently in the meeting room. Invite the Public Servants as guests and give them VIP treatment.

For **Table Topics** have each speaker discuss the roles of the local Public Servants and their values to the community.

Several **Speeches** should relate to public service. If any of the club members are Public Servants, they might consider humorous speeches about their associations with the invited Public Servants.

Programme to Honour Police

Theme/Setting

Although this is an Accolade Programme, most police appreciate some humour if it's not in bad taste. You could use a Sgt Friday monotone to begin the meeting, a police whistle for the timer, cardboard “deputy: badges, etc. to add background colour. Obviously, these effects should not be derogatory or offensive to the police force.

A local policeman could be invited to address the club, and a question-and-answer session might be in order; with some pre-assigned questions to keep it moving.

Speeches by club members: should be on positive note, and designed to compliment the police. Possible topics: Burglar-proofing your home; Police ID numbers for personal items; the 80kph speed limit, other things police are likely to sponsor.

Clergyman Theme

Invite the Clergy. Have Topics relate to members associations with the clergy in either humorous or serious situations. Have an assigned speaker discuss the organisation and the strong and weak points of his own Church Council. Have another discuss the procedures and the strengths and weaknesses of his Church's financial programme.

Ask the Clergymen to comment about the meeting. Be sure to invite them to join Toastmasters.

Companionship Theme

Everyone should bring a guest for this special meeting. It may be a spouse, a relative, or a good friend. Toastmasters should show their appreciation for their guest's friendship by making very special introductions.

Table Topics can explore the meaningful values in a friendship.

Speeches should relate to Companionship and can include topics such as "Historical Friendships" "Friendship is a Two Way Street:", or "The Priceless Values of Friendship"

The Unusual

Exaggeration (Liars) Theme

To prevent **Table Topic** Speakers from having too much preparation time, give each of them a special subject for their lies (Hole-in-one, Ten Strikes, My Uncle Bill, Smart Investments, The Great Hailstorm, etc.)

Speeches should be humorous longer versions of the same kind of subjects. Select the Liar of the meeting and give an appropriate special award. For extra fun, have the minutes and the Treasurer's report fit the theme for the evening.

Vacations Theme

Really use your imagination on this one. **Speeches** may be fantasy, dream vacation, or reviews of unexpectedly satisfying vacations.

Table Topics can be vacations of the future: A trip to the moon. An asteroid cruise. Climbing Everest with a Rocket Belt, etc.

Flattery is telling a man just exactly what he thinks of himself

Box Social Meeting

The spouses bring decorated boxes containing fancy lunches for two. Prize is given for the best decorated box. Members bid on boxes during an auction conducted by one or two clever auctioneers. Successful bidders share lunches with the spouses that prepared them.

For a little extra spice, pre-arrange secretly with the members that R1 bid is really only a R0.25 bid. Watch the spouses' reactions when the bids get up to the R20 range and higher.

This makes a great videotape programme. Have each couple introduce themselves on camera. Then take shots during the bidding, paying particular attention to reactions to the high bids. Play back the tape during the meal.

Don't be afraid to speak out about things you don't like: in this country, they can't try a man for blaming

Defence Plea

Theme/Setting

Courtroom, with "judge", lawyers, and the appropriate setting.

Table Topics

Pose “legal” situations (caught running stop sign, mistake on tax return, throw rock at bird but it goes through window, etc.). The “culprit” gives 2-minute defence plea for his actions.

Speeches

Mock trials, with defence and prosecution briefly stating positions: The culprit takes the stand in behalf of himself and pleads extenuating circumstances.

Brighter tomorrow

Theme/Setting

Think happy! Tomorrow will be better. Whole meeting on optimistic note.

Table Topics

For a brighter tomorrow, how should we handle these problems?

- ☀ Disagreements with each other
- ☀ Strife between nations
- ☀ Family problems, divorce, etc.
- ☀ National problems; pollution, unemployment, crime, others
- ☀ Individual problems, tensions, outlook on life.

Speeches

Talks on improving quality of life. Today, compared with yesterday. Ideas and slogans on optimistic outlook. Inspirational people and philosophies.

“Demosthenes” Theme

Theme/Setting

Based on famous Greek orator Demosthenes. Speaker could wrap sheet around for toga, and wear “laurel wreath” on head. Each speaker is given jellybeans, real beans, or other such objects to hold in the mouth while speaking. Speeches may be flowery and oratorical in the manner of the Greek style.

Table Topics

Is the rostrum stronger than the sword; or do actions speak louder than words/ Has the old style of oratory vanished: who still uses it? Has TV influenced our speaking style. Evaluate the styles of well-known speakers (Billy Graham, George Meany, Abram Lincoln, etc.)

Speeches

Lofty, elaborate speeches, with beans, marbles, etc. I the mouth. Possibly also a serious speech or two on use of dramatics in speaking.

Red Tape Meeting

For this one, type the **Table Topics** and seal them in pre-numbered envelopes. Pass out the envelopes in advance with instructions not to open them until called on to do so. Call for the numbers out of sequence and give complicated envelope exchange instructions before the speaker can open one and respond to the question. This gets funny when the Topics Master is hard pressed to remember who still has unopened envelopes.

At least one **Speech** should be a humorous lampoon of the bureaucratic red tape we have all experienced at some time or another. Want something closer to home? Have some member explain to a prospect what his dues will be if he joins at this meeting.

Scientists think they've finally found the link between the ape and civilised man. It's us!

Audience Swap

After each speaker comes to the rostrum, the Toastmaster announces who the “audience” will be for that speech. For example:

- A speaker on energy conservation might be assigned an audience of OPEC-nation Arabs
- A speaker on minority rights might get a KKK audience
- A pro-abortion speaker could get clergymen; anti-abortion speaker gets women’s libbers ... and so on

The audience is supposed to act the role assigned to it; and heckling is encouraged.

The **Speeches** are evaluated on how well the speakers adjust to the assigned audiences; and if they might have convinced that particular group.

Sound Off Meeting

Every member prepares a short speech on a controversial subject and after delivering it calls on some other member who has not yet done so to give a short rebuttal. Then the speaker is allowed one minute to rebut the rebuttal. Sound confusing? The idea is that each member gives only one speech and one rebuttal of some other member’s speech. Skip **Table Topics** since the rebuttals fulfil the impromptu aspect of Topics. If you have a large club, you may want to do this in two nights with 50% of the members speaking each time. Note: time is important and should be adhered to.

Toastmasters should listen to the advice of the smart lawyer who said “If you’ve got a way with words, you can get away with anything”.

Soap Box Meeting

Have members get on a “Soap Box” to sell ideas or items assigned by the Topics Master. The “Soap Box” can be an imaginary one, but the speakers will respond more in “soap box” oratory style if made to stand on a real box.

Speeches should be assigned to members who in the past have indicated strong feelings on particular subjects. Encourage them to “let loose”.

It’s better to remain silent and be considered a fool, than to speak and remove all doubt.

Surprise Meeting

This one works well for reduced summer meetings when attendance is intermittent. Don’t make any assignments. Have each member as they arrive draw for the role they will fill for the meeting – including the President’s position if you wish. This meeting can provide a good lesson in the value of preparedness for both the speakers and the audience.

Reincarnation Theme

Theme/Setting

Speakers (and others) could impersonate well-known persons of the past as their incarnate ancestors.

Table Topics

Why I do (do not) believe in reincarnation. Why I did it that way when I was (Custer, Napoleon, Hitler, Cleopatra, etc.).

Speeches

Each speaker relates his/her life as the impersonated ancestor. Pick especially interesting episodes, such as Waterloo, the French Revolution, etc. as setting.

Toastmasters should learn the importance of using just the right word. Remember the fellow who didn't know the difference between incant and arson? He set fire to this sister!

Holidays

Easter Theme

Small plastic eggs with each member's surprise assignment for the evening are at each place at the table. Mark the eggs in some way so that you do not give new members an assignment they are not ready to handle.

Award an Easter basket to the best Topic Speaker. **Topics** can be centred around a "renewal" or "rebirth" theme.

Birthday Theme

Theme Setting

Each member could wear his or her Zodiac sign, and be prepared to explain its influence.

Table Topics

How my family celebrates birthdays. My most unusual birthday present. Should employees give each person a day off for birthday? Do you believe in Zodiac influences. Impromptu reading of each other's "horoscopes" for the day.

Speeches

Background on Zodiac signs and meanings. My most memorable birthday. Famous people's birth dates; and how being born at the time made them famous. What happened on the day or year of my birth.

The experienced Toastmaster knows the value of using just the right word. It probably was a DTM who fell into quicksand and got fast help by yelling "FIRE".. Said he: "Who'd come running if I yelled "MUD".

Valentines Theme

This is a good time for a Sweetheart party.

Table Topics should include first love affairs, blind dates, broken hearts, etc. (without getting too personal). If sweethearts are there, Topics can be short presentations (and pinning) of corsages or boutonnieres. At least one of the speeches should be on the history and customs of Valentines Day.

Another variation for **Table Topics** is to provide a bag of candy hearts – the kind that have short messages printed on them. Each speaker takes three from the bag and then discusses the message he composes from the hearts.

Independence Day Theme

Declaration of "Dependence" is passed around to all members. Benefits derived from Toastmasters are the dependency elements. Anyone not wishing to sign should stand up and defend his position. Other members may wish to try to convince the independent to change his mind.

Speeches can be Declarations of Independence from jobs, home, society, etc.

Some Toastmasters give “brassiere” speeches: A point here and there, with a lot of loose material in between.

Arbour Day theme

Invite a Forester to this one.

Table Topics should pertain to trees and/or wooden things.

At least one **Speech** should cover the origin and meaningfulness of Arbour Day. Along with the travelling trophies, present each winner their own personal seedling or acorn.

Christmas

Theme Setting

Good time to plan a special occasion, with spouses and guests invited. Plan a speciality buffet, with samples of each family’s Christmas cooking. Or a giant punch bowl, with each bringing an ingredient.

Table Topics

Two in brief debate: Scrooge defends his life to Marlowe. My most unusual Christmas. Explain to wife why all the cards she gave you are still in your pocket. Switched gifts (wife got the perfume intended for your secretary: secretary got the diet book). How my family celebrates Christmas.

Speeches

How the Christmas tradition began. Christmas in other lands. Is Christmas too commercial? Christmas facts and legends.

New Year Theme

This one can be fun. Get the Topics Master to dress like the white bearded and bent symbol of the old year. Topics should be somewhat “crotchety” and indicative of scepticism for the New Year. The members very likely will take the opportunity to deride the Old year for his scepticism.

The Toastmaster should be one of the more optimistic members and his goal should be to motivate the club to do bigger and better things in the New Year. This would be a good time for speeches on membership and personal growth.

General Toastmasters

Officers’ Duties Theme

Many members are unaware of the duties of the officers. A special meeting is a good method for getting everyone “back in tune”. It is especially good for new officers, and since the teacher generally learns more than the pupil, assign the new officers the task of delivering a speech on the functions of their office and how they plan to accomplish them.

Table Topics should be related to encouraging the members to support the officers’ programmes and to run for office themselves in the next election.

To err is human ... but you’d better have a better excuse than that.

It’s not whether you win or lose .. it’s how you place the blame.

Auctioneer Theme

Theme/Setting

Actual products could be donated for auctioning to members of r club treasury, or the auction could be simulated. In any case, there should be bidding and the appearance of real sales.

Table Topics

Simulated auctioneering could be used to set the scene, with members pretending to pitch products but without the bidding.

Programme

Possibly a “White Elephant” sale, with actual bids and purchases. Many clubs have done this with considerable success for money-raising projects.

Some speakers like to use the horns of a dilemma: A point here and there, with a lot of bull in between.

We are all born equal, the trick is to overcome it.

When You Are Toastmaster Theme

Are your Toastmasters getting dull? Devote a whole meeting to provide training on “how to”. Even the old Dogs will learn some new tricks.

Table Topics can be practice in introducing people under different circumstances. The speeches should be related to the task of serving as Toastmaster. For example, one speech can cover the pre meeting planning that should take place to assure a good meeting. Another speech should cover the follow-up and back-up aspects of the job. A third speech should give some pointers for peppering-up the meeting and adding sparkle!

All speakers Meeting

Forego all but essential business and get right to the speeches because everyone speaks for five minutes (only). Speeches should be manual projects and members who have completed the C&L manual be assigned ice breaker speeches.

Dependant on the number of speakers, you may want to try some kind of selective process to determine which speeches are evaluated.

Unprepared meeting

Members draw for tasks on the programme as they arrive.

Table Topics

Audience take time to give Table Topics Master topics. Award to best table topic given.

Headlines

Personalise newspaper article headlines for **Table Topics**.

Speeches should relate to current news items.

Sources

- 🌟 District Six
- 🌟 Frances Boshoff, Vital Communicators #7056-74

🌻 Susan le Roux, Vital Communicators #7056-74