

THE TOASTMASTERS EXPERIENCE

Today you may be more comfortable communicating by electronic mail or telephone than communicating face-to-face. Speaking to large or small groups, or even one-to-one, may intimidate or frighten you. In Toastmasters you will learn how to successfully formulate, express, and sell your ideas and yourself and get rid of that nervousness you feel when called upon to speak. You will improve your ability to listen to and evaluate other people's ideas, and you will learn leadership skills along the way.

By joining your Toastmasters Club you have embarked on a journey that will greatly improve your life.

How It Works

The Toastmasters program is not a college, trade school, or other formal course in public speaking. There are no instructors, professors, or classrooms. No one's work is graded and no tests are administered. In Toastmasters, members learn by studying the manuals, practicing, and helping one another. Learning takes place in the Club environment. Club meetings are workshops where you study and practice communication and leadership skills with others who are there for the same reason as you. You learn by doing and by watching fellow Club members.

During Club meetings you will build "quick thinking" skills as you give one- to two-minute speeches on general subjects during table topics. You'll introduce speakers, conduct meetings, and perform other roles that will give you plenty of practice in a

variety of communication experiences, but your greatest learning will come from preparing and presenting speeches based on the projects in this manual.

This manual has 10 speech projects, each designed to develop your speaking skills one step at a time. Every project builds upon what you have learned in the preceding project, so you should present the speeches in numerical order. You'll begin with "The Ice Breaker" speech. Since it will be your first speech before the Club, it will be based on an easy subject – yourself. In subsequent speeches you will learn the importance of sincerity in speaking, how to effectively organize a presentation, how to use body language and voice to convey your message, word choice and props, persuasive speaking, and how to inspire others. Read each project and "Evaluation Guide" carefully before you

prepare your speech. This is your workbook, so you are encouraged to write in it.

Most of your talks will be only five to seven minutes. This will give you enough time to develop your topic while still keeping Club meetings a reasonable length, but the principles you learn in a five-to seven minute speech apply to a 40-minute formal address or a two-minute impromptu speech. You'll learn to speak with confidence, clarity, persuasiveness, and enthusiasm.

You will receive verbal and written feedback from an evaluator on every speech you present. The evaluator provides a personal opinion of your talk, pointing out its strengths and offering suggestions for improving your next speech. Evaluations have one purpose: to help you become a more effective speaker. Eventually, as you gain more experience, you will evaluate the speeches of others.

This manual teaches you the basics of public speaking. Once you have finished it, you can begin refining and enhancing your basic skills in the *Advanced Communication and Leadership Program*. This program features 14 manuals with five speech projects in each. Some manuals focus on career-related presentations, such as public relations and technical speeches, while others address such topics as interpersonal communication and storytelling. You choose the manuals you want to complete and the skills you want to learn. More information on the advanced program is on page 57.

Leadership Training

You will learn more than just communication skills in your Club. You'll build leadership skills when you organize and conduct Club meetings and motivate others to help you. You can develop additional skills by serving as

a Club officer, formulating and implementing plans to help the Club meet members' needs. You may also complete the *High Performance Leadership* program, working on a leadership project related to your personal or professional life. Serving in leadership positions at other levels of the organization also will help improve your leadership skills.

The Rewards are Many

Not only will you learn speaking and leadership skills, you will be recognized for your efforts. Once you've completed all 10 projects in this manual, you will receive the Competent Toastmaster (CTM) award, a certificate you can display at home or in the office. If you wish, Toastmasters International will also send a letter to your employer about your accomplishment.

There are other recognition opportunities, too. Toastmasters has two educational tracks: a communication track, in which you develop your speaking skills, and a leadership track, in which you develop leadership skills. When you participate in the communication track, you can be recognized as an Advanced Toastmaster Bronze, Advanced Toastmaster Silver, and Advanced Toastmaster Gold. When you participate in the leadership track, you can be recognized as a Competent Leader and an Advanced Leader. The tracks are not mutually exclusive. You can work in both tracks at the same time; in fact, you are encouraged to do so. The ultimate recognition is the Distinguished Toastmaster award, given to those who have worked in both tracks and have received the Advanced Toastmaster Gold and Advanced Leader awards.

You'll find an illustrated list of available recognition and requirements for each award on pages 64 and 65.

There's Lots More!

Toastmasters offers other learning experiences as well, from speech contests to speakers bureaus. See pages 66–68 for more opportunities available to you.

How Do I Get Started?

By now you realize just how much you can do and learn in Toastmasters, and you're eager to begin. You'll get a great start if you do the following:

1. Ask your Vice President Education for a mentor. A mentor is a friendly, experienced fellow member who will help you with your first few speeches and answer any questions you may have as you begin working in the Toastmasters educational program. The mentor was once a new member like you and knows how important help can be to someone just starting the program. A mentor request form is included in your New Member Kit. Complete the form and give it to your Vice President Education. If you've misplaced the form, simply ask your Vice President Education to assign a mentor to you.
2. Ask the Vice President Education to schedule you to give your first speech, "The Ice Breaker," which is Project 1 in this manual. If the schedule permits, most likely you will give your first speech at the next meeting or at least be assigned another meeting role that requires speaking. The sooner you begin speaking in the Club, the faster you will learn. Also ask the Vice President Education to orient you to the Club. During this orientation, the Vice President Education explains how the Club operates, the learning opportunities the Club provides, and your responsibilities as a member. Both of you also will discuss your goals and how the Club can help you achieve them.
3. Read the section, "About Your Club," on page 69. This section explains what happens at a Club meeting, as well as the meeting roles you will be asked to fill as a member and how to fill them. You will also learn about the Club's leaders and their responsibilities.
4. Study the manual *Effective Speech Evaluation*, which you received in the New Member Kit. Every speech you give in the Club will be evaluated by another member, and you will also be asked to evaluate others' speeches. Evaluations provide the feedback all members need to improve their skills, so it is important that you know how to evaluate. *Effective Speech Evaluation* reviews how to evaluate a speech and what to do with the evaluations you receive. You also received two other manuals in the New Member Kit: *Your Speaking Voice* and *Gestures: Your Body Speaks*. You need not read these manuals now, but keep them on hand. You will want to read them after you have completed two or three speech projects. Both will help you develop some key speaking skills.
5. Finally, begin preparing your first speech. Carefully read Project 1, including the "Evaluation Guide," and work with your mentor to develop a speech about yourself. Prepare thoroughly and practice your speech repeatedly. Preparation and practice, not only for this first speech but for every speech you give, will help you

overcome any nervousness you may have and also make you a better speaker.

One More Thing

More than three million people will confirm that the Toastmasters program works, but it

works only when you prepare carefully, actively participate, and speak as often as possible.

Apply yourself, and you will experience the benefits in all aspects of your life.