

TABLE TOPICS MASTER

PURPOSE

Allows members the opportunity to practice impromptu speaking skills. It allows you the opportunity to practice the coordination of such an impromptu speaking session. You gain practice in picking a theme and developing suitable table topics for the members.

BEFORE THE MEETING

Select twenty to thirty topics or questions, which you feel, are suitable for a one minute impromptu speech. Also, you may consult the Communication and Leadership manual; it has information on preparing to be the Table Topics Master.

Briefly outline your explanation of the role that Table Topics plays in the Program.

AT THE MEETING

Select the participants from those present. Do not choose non-Toastmaster guests (you may offer them the opportunity, but do not force them). Try to select members who are not already filing major speaking roles. Briefly explain the role of Table Topics Master. Ask the timer to provide timing procedures for setting the lights.

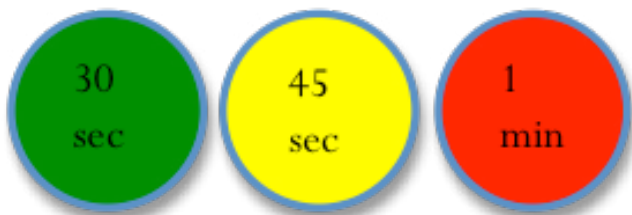


Table topics typically are not allowed to go longer than 2:00. After the last presentation, ask the audience to vote for the best Table Topics Speaker. Return control of the meeting to the chairperson.

TIPS AND TRAPS:

This is an excellent opportunity to allow your creativity to take hold. You are the one who comes up with the ideas that will become the table topics presented.

One trap to watch for is gauging the experience of the participant. Beginning toastmasters may need easier topics to get them started. More experienced speakers can be given harder topics which will be more of a challenge. One tip might be to make up a couple extra topics of easier and harder varieties. This can make it easier for you to fit topics to the people present at the meetings.

If the meeting has moved along faster than was expected, be prepared to throw out an extra topic to help fill the gap a little. The extra time can be used to advantage to give another member an opportunity to speak at the meeting. On the other side of the coin be prepared to shorten topic times and cut back on the number of topics if the meeting is running behind schedule.

Table Topics Master is a fun role since it allows you to be on the other side of the questions. Use this as a guide. Be sure the topics you hand out would be ones you would find challenging and fair given the experience levels of the participants.

Try to select members who are not already filing major speaking roles or are on the agenda.

“Put More Excitement into Table Topics”

A Workshop by Suzy Dickstein, CC

1. Show a picture, object, or a quote and explain or sell it:

- a. “Pass the Torch” – Created a paper/cardboard Olympic torch, paper "flames" with different subjects about the Olympics (from the economic impact the Games would have on our city to why frog jumping should be an Olympic sport), and pass the torch.
- b. “Show and Tell” – Bring things that your children have made or their toys and discuss.
- c. “Book Sale” – Have speakers bring their favourite book. They will “pretend” to sell it to the rest of the club by telling them why they love the book. If any speakers forgot to bring a book or there are guests, they get to “pretend” to make an offer for it and need to say why they want to buy it.
- d. “Variations on a Theme” – Choose any theme such as food, and then ask a multitude of questions on that theme, such as most memorable meal, favourite food, least favourite food, strangest food ever eaten, worst meal, strangest place ever eaten.
- e. “Fortune Cookie Game” – Each person chooses a real fortune cookie and explains the fortune. You can also choose to come up with weird or joke fortunes, such as “Virginity like bubble, one prick all gone”
- f. “Deal with It” – Each person takes a playing card. Each one has a different troublesome situation pasted to the back of it, which ends with the phrase "Deal with it.", such as “You enter a room and reach in to turn on the light switch. Suddenly your arm is grabbed by a six-fingered furry hand that you realize isn't human. Deal with it.” Explain what you would do next.
- g. “Out of this World News” – Take interesting articles from the not-so-true weekly tabloids (Weekly World News and National Enquirer are especially good). Each speaker is required to discuss, defend, or explain the amazing things reported, such as Man finds green glob in closet...and it eats his dog!
- h. “Pictures in the News” – Cut pictures from the newspaper of the day (be sure to remove the captions). Have each respondent choose a picture out of an envelope and give it a funny caption and an over-the-top intro/explanation.
- i. “Before They Were Famous” – Print out or cut up pictures of celebrities from before they were famous (e.g., from high school yearbooks, or even police mug shots!). Speakers need to explain who they think the famous person in the photo is and why. Also, they should share what they know or think about the famous person.
- j. “Shakespeare Quotes” – Write down a quote from a Shakespeare play including the person who said it and which play it is from on each slip of paper. Speakers can either act out the play or explain what they think the quote means.
- k. “Old Sayings” – Have old sayings on slips of paper. Have speakers explain them. Examples include “Fair words can buy a horse on credit” and “Life is one big experiment”. Try to choose funny and more obscure quotes and include the author. Also, if you can, provide the story behind it, but limit it to a sentence for an explanation.
- l. “Time Capsule” – Put slips of paper with objects on them or you can put real objects in a quiet bag. Speakers need to pretend that a time capsule has been opened from 20 years ago when it was 2010. They need to describe the objects from the past and if they can how it led to the new product that people now use.

2. Use Your Imagination:

- a. “If You Were” – Answer “If You Were...a building, what type of building would you be?; if you were a bird, what type of bird would you be?; if you were a song, what type of song would you be?”
- b. “Interesting Colours” – One envelope has some unusual or very descriptive colors like Day-Glo Orange, Pea Green, and Flamingo Pink and the other envelope has questions like tell us why you plan to paint your house this color or tell the person to your right why he/she should buy a car in this color.
- c. “Dictionary Words” – The envelope has obscure, but actual words from the dictionary. Each person tries to make up a convincing definition.
- d. “Three-Worded Story” – Write words on small pieces of paper and put them in an envelope. Have each speaker pick three pieces of paper and make up a story using all 3 words. You can also require using the "word of the day". Variations of the word are okay, e.g. If the word is "microscope", then "microscopic" may be used in the story.
- e. “Love Living Here” – Envelope has slips of paper with weird places to live on them. You must defend the place as a nice place to live. Places include next to a nuclear power plant, in a tree house, in a swamp, bottom of the Grand Canyon.
- f. “TV Ad Man” – Bring products from your house. Each speaker selects one of the items out of a quiet bag and has to do a TV commercial on that product.
- g. “Funny Facts” – Each slip of paper has a funny statistic or fact on it (should be true). Have speakers tell you why they think... “Only 30% of us can flare our nostrils” or “40% of women have hurled footwear at a man.”
- h. “Bumper Sticker” – Ask the speakers to come up with their own bumper sticker that they would put on their car and explain why. The funnier they are, the better, so give them a few minutes to come up with one. Examples are “Skater by Nature, doing Figures 8s in the Car” and “Hang Up and Drive”. Good for smaller clubs. Can also be done with personalized license plates or funny (coat) buttons.
- i. “Beaming with Positivity” – Each slip of paper has an unusual situation that would normally be considered bad news. Challenge your speakers to turn them into good news instead. Some examples are: You’re the mayor of Hamilton and Godzilla has just trashed the downtown area. Explain why that's good for Hamiltonians. Or Aliens just vaporised the Parliament Building. You're the Prime Minister. Make the first speech afterwards about why this is good news.
- j. “Scented Cotton Balls” – Hand out small plastic containers with cotton wool soaked in a scent – lime, perfume, etc... and ask speakers what memories the scent evokes.
- k. “Debate Yourself” – Each slip of paper has a contentious topic. Each speaker speaks “for”. Then when time is up, speaks “against”. Good for a small club. Can choose to have two separate timings or can force the speaker to switch sides at the green.
- l. “Time Travel” – Each member gets to travel back in time and meet either a family member or someone in history that they have always wanted to meet. They can either do a dialogue or describe what it felt like to meet that person.

3. Story Telling:

- a. “Liar Liar” – tell us about your “first date, first car, first”... but it needs to be a funny, over-the-top fabrication of the truth.
- b. “Murder Mystery Story” – Start telling a murder mystery, then have the next person continue until the time allotted, until the whole room has taken their turns. You may want to add in an interesting twist after every 5 people (such as adding a suspect, weapon, second murder) or give each person a suggested direction to take on the slips of paper).

- c. “Twisted Fairy Tales” – Each person gets a Fairy Tale title and needs to make up a funny and interesting version of the fairy tale.
- d. “Celebrity Sighting” – Each speaker tells about a time (real or imagined), but preferably real) when they ran into a celebrity.
- e. “An Amazing Story” – Each speaker is required to tell an amazing, over-the-top story about themselves. It can be truthful or a complete fabrication. The speakers then vote for each speaker as having told the truth or not. The speaker who fooled the most people either way wins.
- f. “Campfire Stories” – May want to do this near Halloween. You also may want to sit on the floor in the center of the room, turn off all the lights, and pass around a flashlight. Each person has to tell a scary story while shining the light underneath his/her chin.

4. Pretend To Be:

- a. “Declaration of Love” – Can be done for Valentine’s Day. Have men sitting next to women on purpose. The TableTopics Master brings in red carnations or roses. Each pair is given characters to play, such as Romeo and Juliet, 3rds graders who torment each other, but secretly liked each other, a couple celebrating their 50th anniversary, a father to his very young daughter. May want to have some extra ones designed for “man and man” and “woman and woman” pairings.
- b. “Toasting” – Pretend to be at an event and giving a toast, such as you're at your high school reunion and toast your favourite teacher, or your next door neighbours are celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary and toast their love.
- c. “Art Critics” – Give out sheets of paper on which children have drawn weird pictures. Pretend to be an Art Critic and try to discuss the significance of the work.
- d. “Sports Commentator” – Each speaker is told that he or she is the commentator at a specific sport with specific contestants and should start commentating on the game.
- e. “Single Person Role Playing” – A person is given a scenario to act out (which might be in-line with the theme of the evening) and has to do so convincingly. An example might be that he is trying to explain to his wife how a naked woman ended up in his bed.
- f. “Celebrity Impersonations” – Write down names of celebrities (can be fictional) and speakers must use gestures as emphatically as possible to convince the audience they are in fact the person in question. Examples include Marilyn Monroe, Miss Piggy, and Michael Jordan. You may want to suggest they mimic their voice if they want to.
- g. “TV News Reporter” – Each slip of paper describes a news report. Each speaker is asked to describe the scene as if they are a news reporter delivering the 6 o’clock news.
- h. “TV Fashionista” – Bring in pictures of celebrity fashion hits and misses. Each member pretends to be a fashion expert, and will start by saying whether they think it was as a “fashion hit” or a “fashion miss”, and will describe what went well or badly.
- i. “The UN in Hollywood” – Each member pretends to be a celebrity (e.g. Nelson Mandela, Wayne Gretzky, Madonna, and Richard Branson) at the UN. Each person tells their opinions on world peace using that person’s way of speaking and mannerisms. You can have the celebrities on slips of paper or you can allow the speakers to choose their favourite role model (and get to know them better).

5. Get To Know You:

- a. “Play Truth or Dare” – One envelope has truth questions and one envelope has dare questions (nothing too risqué). The envelopes need to be labelled as such and the person chooses which one to take from.
- b. “Dear Abby” – Cut out "Dear Abby" questions and have club speakers dole out advice.

- c. “Two Truths and a Lie” – Each person writes down two truths and a lie about themselves. Try to make them fun and interesting, such as “Was a Go-Go Dancer”, “Held a bear in Russia”. Allow everyone about 5 minutes to come up with three good statements. Each person repeats their 3 statements twice. Everyone votes on the second time. Great for a smaller club.
- d. “Preferences” – In the envelope, every slip of paper has an option on it, such as London or Fiji, Orchids or Roses, Romance or Mystery. Each speaker announces the option, which one he/she prefers, and why.
- e. “If You Had” – Speakers need to complete the sentence “What would you do if you had...?” Examples might be: a million bucks, had too much to drink last night, or are about to meet the parents of their fiancé(e) for the first time.
- f. “Birthplace Insights” – Pick a topic from an envelope, such as best museum, best ballpark, best delicacy and tell us about that item for where you are from.
- g. “Favourite Places” – Each slip of paper has a list of places. Examples include restaurant, sporting venue, book store, place to unwind on a Friday night, and place to take a visitor. Each member is asked, “Which is your favourite?” And finishes the question with their place and then answers the question.
- h. “Sexiest Person in Hollywood” – Each person needs to say who they think is the sexiest guy/girl in Hollywood. Can be from the past or the present.

6. The TableTopics Master Asks Questions:

- a. “Job Letter Game” – Each member asks the TableTopics Master for a letter (can’t choose the same one twice). The TTM announces a very interesting job title, such as Buckingham Palace Guard for “B” or Homicide Detective for “H”. The member needs to answer “What do you love about your job?”
- b. Play “Jeopardy!” – Come up with six categories and then make up five questions for each category. Take a poster board and make pockets for each question. Label the categories at the top of each column and have the speaker select from a category.

7. Guess What/Who It Is:

- a. “Top Canadian Inventions” – Have a listing of top Canadian inventions as listed by CBC. Describe them without saying what it is and get the club to guess what it is.
- b. “What’s in the Bag?” – An assistant (can be Santa Claus at Christmas time) provides each speaker with a non-see through bag with an object in it. The person can look at it and touch it, but then has to describe it and have the club speakers guess what it is.
- c. “Who Is It?” – Everyone writes down a secret about themselves that no one knows about and puts it in the envelope. Should be something funny or interesting or both. Each speaker takes one of the notes, reads it, and states who they think wrote the note and why.
- d. Play Charades – Each slip specifies the title (e.g. The Bible, Stairway to Heaven, Elvis Presley, and Gone with the Wind) and type (e.g. book, song, famous person, and movie). Each member starts by indicating how many words the phrase is by showing it on his/her hand. Next, the member holds up the finger to match which word they want to describe. Use standard gestures to help with type (you should explain these as the TTM). The speaker is trying to get the club speakers to guess the correct phrase.
- e. “Whose Baby Picture Is It?” – Speakers are asked to bring in their baby pictures or photos of themselves from early childhood. Speakers are given a photo to peruse, and then tell the audience who they think the person in the photo is and why.
- f. “Don’t Say It!” – Give each speaker a word or phrase and ask them to speak on it WITHOUT using the word or its variations, WITHOUT using any “ums” or “uhs”, or repeating themselves. If the speaker

does any of these, the audience knocks on the table and they need to sit down immediately they are disqualified).

8. Group Setting:

- a. “Noah's Ark” – Noah is about to embark on his ark and there is room for only one more pair of animals. Each speaker selects a piece of paper. On it is printed the name of an animal. The speaker then 'becomes' that animal and makes a case for why s/he and his/her mate should be selected for that last vacancy. Some ideas are peacocks, rhinos, rattlesnakes, kangaroos, mice, and alligators.
- b. “Police Station Scene” – Set the scene for an interesting story, such as a diamond necklace being stolen from a rich beauty queen or a drug trafficking using a circus elephant. Each person portrays the character they will play from the slips of paper in the envelope. They are being interrogated by the police and need to say who they are and what they know. The TableTopics Master will be the last person and will confess to the robbery (if no one else has stolen the part).
- c. “Wedding from Hell” – The happy couple are getting married. Each person chooses which character they will play from the slips of paper in the envelope. Someone will be the bride, groom, best man, drunken Aunt Rose, touchy feely Uncle Marvin, etc...

9. Accept Awards:

- a. “The Best of the Best” – Put accomplishments such as Best Underwater Shoelace Tier, Best Frisbee Thrower, and Fastest TV Remote Control Switcher on small pieces of paper in an envelope. Each speaker selects an award and must "award" it to another member. That member must get up and "accept" the award.
- b. “Holiday Party Awards” – Can be done near the holidays. In the envelope, place slips of paper with funny awards. Can actually print up certificates if you want to go the extra mile. Tell the speakers, “Imagine that we all work together in the same company and this is our Holiday party. You are going to be the lucky winner of an award and we would like you to give your acceptance speech.” For example, “The Loch Ness Award” is hereby presented “For Least Likely to Be Found”.
- c. “Guinness Book World Record Holders” – Each slip of paper has an interesting Guinness book world record, such as “Largest Hula Hoop Spun”. Each speaker pretends they are being awarded that record and being interviewed. They might want to explain why they decided to pursue this category, how important this is to them, what they are going to do next, etc... Would be nice if you also told the actual record, such as “The record for the largest hula hoop spun is 5 m (16 ft 5 in) and was achieved by Ashrita Furman (USA) in Jamaica, New York, USA, on June 1st, 2007.”

10. Person To Your Left:

- a. “Introductions” – Each person writes out a mini bio on themselves, passes it to the person on his/her left, and introduces the person sitting next to them.
- b. “Greatest Job in the World” – Each member writes down on a piece of paper the job that they would consider the greatest job in the world for them. They pass the paper to the person on their left. Each member then explains why the job on the paper in front of them is the best job in the world for them (not for the person that they took it from).
- c. “Roasting” – Each slip of paper has an accomplishment. Each speaker roasts the person next to them on his/her left for the accomplishment specified on the slip of paper
- d. “Debate Your Neighbour” – Have each member debate their neighbour, switch after each pair speaks. One has to be for and one against it. Provide the topic on a slip of paper. Examples include: “Did man land on the moon?”, “Are there UFO/aliens visiting earth?”, and “Is Elvis still alive?”