

# CONTEST MASTER Hints & Tips

*How to Be the Center of Attention  
Without Being the Center of Attention*

Spring 2012

This is a chronological outline of items to consider when you have been asked to serve as a Contest Master.

This document will hopefully help you to understand

1. The importance of FAIR CONTESTS
2. The purpose of the Contest Master
3. When to use the Contest Script
4. When to embellish the Contest Script
5. What's NOT in the Contest Script

If you have any questions, or need any help, please don't hesitate to ask your Area or Division Governors!

## Why do we have Contests?

- To provide contest experience and recognize the best speakers.
- As a learning experience for all. Public relations opportunities - Invite guests to your contest!

## What is meant by "FAIR CONTESTS"?

Consistent, identical treatment for all Contestants, as much as is possible.

## Which Contests are we having this Spring in District 50?

Table Topics  
International Speech

## What is my purpose as Contest Master?

Keep it FAIR  
Keep it FUN  
Keep it ON TIME  
Keep it FOCUSED on the  
CONTESTANTS

## You've been asked to be the Contest Master - NOW WHAT?

Get your Contest Chair name and contact information  
Verify the Day/Date/Time/Location of Contest.  
Download the Contest Script.  
Review it with your Contest Chair  
Is there a theme? If not, it's up to you!  
Should you have a Costume? Props?  
Remember - keep your material BRIEF!!

There are two places in the Contest for you to "Shine" (warm up the audience/get the energy up)  
When you are introduced at the Contest start  
When you start the second half of the Contest

Additional places to make it lively  
The required audience briefings  
Contestant Interviews  
The most interesting questions for the audience are about, or related to, the Contestants' contest speeches.

### Ideas/suggestions for Contest introductions

- Holiday Stories
- Songs
- Short Skit
- Inspirational Story

Keep it fun, positive, appropriate.  
You are warming the audience up, NOT providing the main attraction.  
Remember - keep it BRIEF!

Write it all down in the Contest Script.

### On Contest Day:

**Dress appropriately!**

**Get there early!**

#### You are part of the Contest Briefing!

- Meet Chief Judge (get his/her name and education level)
- Get speaking order and practice pronouncing contestant's names and speech titles with them.
- Be familiar with the Contestants' props/stage directions (*handled by Sergeants-at-Arms*).
- Talk with the Timers - make sure they time the minutes of silence and the break.
- Verify the Contestants' certificates are ready and in the correct order.

### Once the Contest starts:

You will be introduced after the Dignitaries  
You're on! Present your opening skit/monologue.  
Read the Audience Briefing as *presented in the Contest Script* (once you are familiar with it, you can spice it up). "Speech contests are..."  
Introduce the Chief Judge:  
"Has everyone been briefed?"  
Give the speaking order slowly and clearly and repeat for the JUDGES as needed.

### Table Topics Contest

Introduce each Table Topics the same way  
"Contestant Number ( \_ ),  
(Name of Contestant), (Table Topic Question),  
(Table Topic Question), (Repeat Name of Contestant.)"

DO NOT stumble over names  
DO NOT say "first" or "last but not least"  
DO NOT show any preference or distinction to any Contestant.

Remember to keep it FAIR.

### While Contestants are speaking...

Be unobtrusive and invisible - sit down in the front row of the audience, if possible.  
TAKE NOTES on the Contestant's answer for your interview questions.

### When Contestants finish speaking...

Do not anticipate the closing. Do not stand until the contestant acknowledges you.  
Do not favor the speaker in any way - comment, expression, gestures, etc.

Ask for the minute of silence between each speaker, and for timers to time it, and stand quietly. If needed, quietly shush the audience if they begin to converse during the minute of silence.

During the minute of silence, motion for the next contestant to approach the stage (quietly) and for the Sergeant-at-Arms to set up any props.

### When last Contestant is finished...

Ask for indefinite silence.  
Remind audience to remain silent during the indefinite silence. Wait patiently until the Chief Judge exits with ballot counters and signals or speaks "Mr. /Mrs. Contest Master"

**Now it's Interview time!!**

Call up Contestants (in speaking order) to thunderous applause.

*NOTE: Anyone competing in BOTH contests is not interviewed until AFTER they have competed in both contests.*

Have your interview notes and the certificates ready!

Ask the expected questions:

1. What Club (Area) are you representing?
2. How long have you been in Toastmasters?
3. What is your Toastmaster's educational level or how many speeches have you given towards your Competent Communicator?

Ask one or two personalized questions

The audience loves to know more about the contestant. Try to really give the audience more information about the contestants. Thank each contestant for competing; present the certificate shake hands and direct the contestant to the end of the line (but keep them on stage).

**Finishing Interviews**

Applaud all Contestants again,  
Then allow them to step down.

Introduce representative for conference announcements

Call for 10 minute break

Ask Timers to give you a warning when two minutes are left – have Sergeant-at-Arms announce two minute warning.

**During Break**

Review your notes/script/names for second contest.

Have certificates and speaking order ready.  
LOUDLY alert audience (if SAA does not) at the two-minute point and then again at one-minute.

**Open second half of Contest**

Warm up the audience again - get them re-energized and ready for the next contest! Give short audience briefing.  
Give speaking order.

**International Speech Contest**

Introduce each speaker the same way

Contestant number (#1)

{Contestant's Name}

{Speech title}

(Turn and extend hand)

{Speech title}

{Contestant's name}

DO NOT stumble over names

DO NOT say "first" or "last but not least"

DO NOT show any preference or distinction to any Contestant; remember to keep it FAIR.

**While Contestants are speaking...**

Be unobtrusive and invisible - sit down in the front row of the audience, if possible.

TAKE NOTES on the Contestant's speech for your interview questions.

**When Contestants finish speaking...**

Do not anticipate the closing. Do not stand until the contestant acknowledges you.

Do not favor the speaker in any way - comment, expression, gestures, etc.

Ask for the minute of silence between each speaker, and for timers to time it, and stand quietly. If needed, quietly shush the audience if they begin to converse during the minute of silence.

During the minute of silence, motion for the next contestant to approach the stage (quietly) and for the Sergeant-at-Arms to set up any props.

**When last Contestant is finished...**

Ask for indefinite silence.

Remind audience to remain silent during the indefinite silence if needed. Wait patiently until the Chief Judge leaves room with the ballot counters.

**Interview time!!**

Call up Contestants (in speaking order) to thunderous applause;  
*Anyone competing in BOTH contests is interviewed NOW.*

Have your interview notes and the certificates ready!

Ask the expected questions:

1. What Club (Area) are you representing?
2. How long have you been in Toastmasters?
3. What is your Toastmaster's educational level or how many speeches have you given towards your Competent Communicator?

Ask one or two personalized questions  
The audience loves to know more about the contestant. Try to really give the audience more information about the contestants. Thank each contestant for competing; present the certificate shake hands and direct the contestant to the end of the line (but keep them on stage).

Direct the contestant to the end of the line (but keep them on stage). Continue for each contestant. When done, applaud all Contestants again, and then allow them to step down.

**After interviews...**

Thank Contest helpers:

- Contest Chair (by name)
- Judges (stand for applause)
- Timers, Registration
- Sgt-at-Arms
- Other helpers (*can be thanked as a group*)

- Ballot Counters and Chief Judge  
(MAY BE OUT OF THE ROOM and may need to be thanked later).

Introduce Area Governor and/or Division Governor at a Division Contest. Sit down for a bit!

CHIEF JUDGE will hand you results when he/she returns. If there were any disqualifications, Chief Judge should inform you and review procedure.

**When you are called back up after District Announcements...**

If ballot counters and Chief Judge were absent earlier, ask them to stand and have the audience recognize them with applause.

Be aware of these rules regarding how many winners to announce:

*In contests with five or more contestants, announce third (optional), second and first place.*

*In contests with four or fewer contestants, announce only second and first place.*

Clearly, slowly, and carefully read the winners exactly as entered from the sheet given to you by Chief Judge. Smile for photos!

Remind everyone of the day/date/time/ location of the next level of competition. This Contest is ADJOURNED!

**Stay for the Contest Debriefing and pat yourself on the back for a job WELL DONE!**

**SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES:****For Combined Contests**

Review procedure with Chief Judge.  
Clearly announce when contest changes from one Area to the other.

Copies of this form and more resources are available at:

[www.d50toastmasters.org](http://www.d50toastmasters.org)