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## **Protocol for Special Events A Guide for Toastmasters**

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### **Contents Include Guidelines On How To:**

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## **Introduction**

Toastmasters International has a long-established tradition of respecting protocol, the formal customs of diplomacy, precedence and etiquette. In fact, when family, friends and business associates know you are a Toastmaster, they may assume you know the proper way to give an invocation or propose a toast, or how to host a special guest.

The following material provides a basic overview of proper procedures and etiquette, according to Toastmasters resources, experts on etiquette and protocol (including both American and Canadian protocol officers), and the authors' and editors' own experiences and understanding.

A quick review will give you the poise and confidence to conduct yourself with style and grace, and ensure an enjoyable time is had by all.

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### **1. Giving An Invocation**

An invocation is a form of prayer, praise or worship; it is distinctly spiritual in nature. The invocation is intended to secure blessing or favor for those present, express gratitude, or invite the presence of a deity. The speaker is speaking on behalf of the group, addressing the deity.

- Be brief – no longer than one minute.
- Keep it nonsectarian and non-doctrinaire, appealing to a universal spirituality.

Example: "Spirit, we reach beyond our human understanding for strength and guidance..."

- Generic forms of universal spirituality may refer to God, Father, Infinite Presence, Spirit, etc.
- Make reference to the specific occasion and the purpose for which the group has gathered. The invocation is set to unify and inspire the people in attendance. When the invocation is delivered before a meal (commonly referred to as "saying grace"), the invocation includes a blessing and thanks for the food.

Many people follow a basic four-step formula (per The Toastmaster, November 1988):

- 1.** Give recognition – Address a supreme creator.
- 2.** Unify – State the purpose of the meeting and make everyone feel welcome and included in the event.

3. Give thanks – An expression of gratitude may include the organization, its purpose, the people involved and desired results.
4. Release – A statement of conclusion or a simple "amen" is appropriate.

Example: "Giver of all things, as we gather for this banquet, we give thanks for the opportunity to gather in fellowship. May our friendships be strengthened and our lives broadened. We also give thanks for this bounty of food. Please bless it to our bodies and guide us in helping others be the best they can be. Amen."

Note: An invocation is not a meditation, which takes the form of contemplation or reflection, letting us reflect internally on our inner self or higher potential. If a meditation is conducted, rather than an invocation, it is recommended for the Toastmaster to introduce it as such.

Example: "I will now ask Sally Jones to begin our meditation."

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## **2. Proposing A Toast**

A toast is a tribute to a person or office. There are two types of toasts: The Loyal Toast (a toast to the appropriate Head of State) and social or business toasts.

### **General Guidelines**

- Preferred beverages are wine or champagne, although water or juice may be used. Always ensure that non-alcoholic beverages are available for those who prefer them.
- Ensure that everyone has a beverage at the proper time. Often the proposer will start the toast with something like, "Please charge (refill) your glasses as I propose a toast."
- A wine goblet or other glass is always used. Never drink from a bottle.

### **Loyal Toasts**

A tribute to a head of state (an office or person): in Canada, it is to "The Queen;" in the United States, it is to "The Office of the President" (never just "the President").

To formally propose the Loyal Toast:

- Standing, (the audience must always remain seated when you start the toast), say, "Ladies and gentlemen, please rise and join me in a toast to Her Majesty" (or "for the Loyal Toast").
- Pause for any noisy shuffling. Lifting your glass to eye level, say, "To the Queen."
- The audience responds, "The Queen" (not "to").

- Glasses are not clinked.

If you have a guest(s) or delegate(s) from the United States, it is appropriate to include a separate toast to "our American friends."

- Standing (the audience must always be seated when you start the toast), say, "Ladies and gentlemen, please rise and join me in a toast to our American friends."
- The audience responds, "Our American friends."
- Glasses are not clinked.
- The guest's country is toasted after the host country.

### **Social or Business Toasts**

- Tailor the toast to the specific occasion.
- Be prepared and choose your words carefully. Avoid clichés. Refine your basic idea into a short message of goodwill and, if possible, memorize it.
- Be brief, generally no longer than a minute or 90 seconds.
- Confirm the correct title and pronunciation of the person's name beforehand.
- For a Toastmaster, include the educational level of achievement prior to stating the person's name (e.g. "Distinguished Toastmaster Sara Smith").

### **A Four-Part Formula for a Toast**

1. Make a reference to the occasion or gathering.
2. Refer to the achievements of the toast recipient.
3. Express goodwill for the entire group.
4. Propose the toast formally by lifting your glass to eye level and saying, "Ladies and gentlemen, please rise (pause until all shuffling noise subsides) and join me in a toast to (name).

The correct response from the audience is to hold their glass at eye level and repeat the name of the honoree (not including the word "to"), and then take a sip of their drink.

Do not clink glasses.

### **Example:**

YOU: "Tonight we are pleased to honor the outstanding contribution of our International President. Her dedication, commitment to the ideals of Toastmasters, and her diligence in

meeting the demands of the office have strengthened our organization.”

“As she draws close to the end of her term, we thank her for her extraordinary contribution and wish her well in all her future endeavors. Ladies and gentlemen, please rise and join me, in a toast to our International President, Distinguished Toastmaster, (raise your glass to eye level) Pat Johnson!”

AUDIENCE: “Pat Johnson!”

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### **3. Serving as Sergeant at Arms**

As Sergeant at Arms, you are responsible for making everyone feel welcome at a Toastmaster function. You set the tone for the event.

- Be in position at least 10 minutes before the designated start time of the event. Position yourself at the microphone or designated place for the host of the event.
- Give a two-minute warning to the audience to take their seats before the program begins. If necessary, give a second, one-minute warning.

If the audience is still talking when it is time to begin, give the greeting (“Good afternoon”) and pause until the audience quiets.

Alternatively, you may state, “Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention please?” Pause until the audience quiets. Then continue with your opening remarks.

- Introduce yourself and welcome everyone to the function. Be enthusiastic and warm. Keep your remarks brief and pertinent to the occasion.

Example: “Good afternoon, fellow Toastmasters and most welcome guests! My name is Ted Black and I am pleased to be your Sergeant at Arms. Welcome to our awards luncheon!”

- Introduce the Toastmaster for the event, using the guidelines for making introductions (Section 5). Remain at the lectern while the Toastmaster comes forward. Greet the Toastmaster; once they have taken control, quietly leave the platform and return to your seat. Remain vigilant in case the Toastmaster requires assistance.
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### **4. Serving as Toastmaster**

Being a Toastmaster is one of the most important functions to be performed. The Toastmaster sets the tone for the event, acts as the genial host and facilitates the smooth flow of the program.

The capabilities and conduct of the Toastmaster are instrumental to a "classy" event and ensuring that all participants enjoy themselves. Here are some basic guidelines for all Toastmasters to follow:

### **A. Preparing for the Event**

- Know the details of the event for which you are responsible (e.g., what specific functions will be conducted, including the significance of those functions, during your portion of the program; who will be participating and who you need to introduce; when the functions are scheduled, including the start and conclusion of the program).
- Meet the people who will be participating in your program. If a Sergeant at Arms will be introducing you, ensure that they are prepared with an appropriate introduction for you, one that fits the occasion. Meet those responsible for the toasts, invocation, guests of the head table, award presenters, etc.
- Ensure that everyone's needs have been met. If there are any needs or concerns to be addressed, know whom to contact to make the necessary arrangements.
- Plan opening remarks that set an appropriate mood. Your opening remarks are to make guests feel welcomed and set the tone for the events to follow.

### **B. At the Event**

Give your greeting and acknowledge special guests and the audience. Always refer to the "Head Table Guests," not simply "the Head Table" and refer to the stand where you place your notes as the "lectern," not the podium. (The podium is a platform or stage that you stand on.)

When starting to speak, acknowledge special guests in their order of importance, stating their title correctly, e.g. "Your Worship; Madam International Director, fellow Toastmasters, ladies and gentlemen (or most welcome guests)."

Note: If there are a number of special guests, limit your salutation to the senior international guest and/or senior district guest (preceded, of course, by any religious, provincial or civic guests).

- Give your opening remarks with energy and enthusiasm appropriate to the occasion.
- Make gracious and concise introductions. (See the following section on introducing speakers.)
- Control and invite applause at appropriate times. Direct applause by asking people to hold applause when making a number of introductions at the same time, such as that of the head table guests. At other times, signal applause through your phrasing and inflection, then lead the applause.
- It is your responsibility to keep the program running on time. Continually monitor the timing of program events. Know (or determine) the timing for each event. If there are no timing lights, determine in advance a signal with each speaker to let him/her know when their time is ending.

- At meal events, do not stall the program because some people are still eating. Rather, ask for their indulgence as you continue the program.
- Prepare appropriate remarks before and after each event on the program. Remember you are not the speaker but the strand between the pearls.

### **C. After the Event**

- Make brief personal remarks about the success of the event.
- Thank everyone for being present.
- Express goodwill for the remainder of the time together. If it is the final event of the day, then you may wish people a good night and a safe journey home.

## **5. Making Introductions**

### Head Table Guests

- Seat the presiding officer and/or Toastmaster correctly. If there is a lectern, the presiding officer sits to the right of it. If there is no lectern and the number of guests is even, the presiding officer sits to the right of center.
- If there is a Toastmaster for the event (in addition to or in place of a presiding officer), the Toastmaster is seated to the left of the lectern (unless rank demands that this person be seated to the right of the presiding officer).
- Head table guests are seated in order of rank in one of two ways: alternate or straight line.

#### Alternate:

The guest with highest rank is seated to the right of the presiding officer, the next highest to the left of the Toastmaster (if there is one), with the rest alternating right and left. Those with no rank who are seated at the head table sit at or near the end(s).

#### Straight line:

The guest with the highest rank sits on the right of the presiding officer. Those of lesser rank are seated at the end(s). If spouses are seated at the head table, arrange for their seats to be next to each other.

- Guests at the head table are introduced in ascending order of rank, ending with those of highest rank. Some codes of conduct distinguish between the introduction of guests and speakers regarding the order in which they are introduced. Because our highest-ranked guests are usually our speakers, they are introduced last.
- However, if you are introducing guests in the audience, then you begin with the highest rank. For example, if past international presidents, past international directors and past district governors are in the room, you begin with the past international presidents, etc. Further, these

dignitaries are introduced in the order in which they held the office, ending with the most recent.

- Ensure that all titles and names are pronounced correctly.

The accepted order of precedence is:

1. Religious dignitaries
2. Government officials (federal, provincial, civic)
3. Guest speaker, if a non-member
4. International officers (President, Vice-Presidents, Directors)
5. International staff
6. Past international officers
7. District officers (District Governor, Lt. Governor of Education and Training, Lt. Governor of Marketing, Secretary, Treasurer, Public Relations Officer, Division Governors, Area Governors).

Note: If one officer or chairman of a certain level is acknowledged, all must be recognized.

Other protocol for the head table:

- The presiding officer or Toastmaster is required to remain at the head table until the event has concluded and the guests are dispersing.
- Arrive early for seating at the head table, especially if there is a march-in of the head table.
- Do not draw attention to errors in seating arrangements.
- Give your undivided attention to speakers. Remember, you are in full view.
- Personal items are not be placed on the table.
- Be prepared to stand up graciously when being introduced; push your chair back a little before the introduction is made.
- Guests and members do not begin to eat or drink until the presiding officer has taken the first bite or sip.

Speakers

- Invite the speaker to give you an introduction. Some professional speakers will also supply you with an outrow.
- If creating speaker introductions make sure the introduction is brief and appropriate to the occasion. Length may vary from 30 seconds to no more than two or three minutes.



- Stress those aspects of the speaker's background and qualifications that will establish credibility on this topic.
- Avoid the biographical recitation as an organizational pattern.
- Think about the personal qualities the speaker exemplifies and build your remarks around them. An appropriate quote or question can launch your discussion of these.
- Add a personal touch. If you know something unusual, interesting and relevant about the speaker, consider using it. Ensure that the speaker would be comfortable with you sharing this information. As a rule of thumb, unless it is pertinent to the topic, avoid references to family, etc.
- Showcase the speaker – not your talents or personal relationship with the speaker (this isn't about you!).
- Don't overdo the introduction with too many superlatives, flowery adjectives or "schmaltzy" phrases. These tend to lack credibility and embarrass the speaker.

**When making the introduction, follow five steps:**

1. Give opening remarks that grab the audience's attention, make them aware of the significance of the upcoming speaker and set the mood for the speech.

Ensure your introduction answers four questions:

- Why this subject?
- Why this speaker?
- Why this audience?
- Why this time?

2. Present the speaker, welcome the speaker and pronounce their title and name correctly. State the name of the speaker last. At a Toastmasters event, state the educational designation that the speaker has attained prior to giving the speaker's name.

Example: "Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming our International President, Distinguished Toastmaster, Michael Nataro!"

3. Lead the applause and continue until the speaker arrives at the lectern. Greet the speaker with a firm handshake and warm smile. Return to your seat.
4. Following the last words of the speaker, and when signaled by the speaker, return to the lectern and greet the speaker with a firm handshake and a warm smile.
5. Express your appreciation to the speaker for their contribution to the program. Keep your remarks brief, personal and pertinent to the significance of the speaker's topic. If a recognition item is to be given, give it at this time unless other arrangements have been made.

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## **6. Hosting Visiting Toastmaster Officials at Your Club**

Special courtesy is always extended to Toastmaster officials (Area Directors, Division Director, District Club Growth Director, District Club Quality Direct, District Director, International Director, and Past District Governors, etc.) visiting your club.

This starts with assigning a club officer or other senior member to host the visitor and ensure the visitor is introduced to other members – especially the Toastmaster of the Day.

The host must also provide a proper introduction of the Toastmaster official at the beginning of the meeting (unless this is being done by the club president or other club officer). It is usually appropriate to add a few words of explanation regarding the individual's role and purpose of the visit (e.g. "He's here for his semi-annual club visitation and to meet with our president,") and perhaps a context (e.g. if introducing a district officer, you might add: "Our district, District 21, extends throughout the province of British Columbia and is made up of 285 clubs.")

During the meeting, all members are required to include the visitors in their salutation (e.g. "Madame Toastmaster, Area Director, Toastmasters and Guests...") before their presentation.

Note: Regular visitors to your club can be simply addressed as "Guests," "Welcome Guests" or similar. Terms such as "Honoured Guests," "Special Guests," etc. are reserved for those occasions when there really is a special guest (such as a Toastmaster official) in attendance.

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## **7. Displaying Flags**

At all times, flags must be treated with dignity and respect and flown or displayed properly. Protocol requires that all flags be in good repair and that all flags being displayed are of the same size.

When flags are displayed on a speaker's platform, the host country's flag is flown to the right of the speaker. For additional guidance please check with your country's protocol office.

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## **8. The National Anthem**

- The national anthem of the host country is played first followed by the national anthem of any guest country.
- During the anthem: stand, face the flag and remain standing at attention during the national anthem(s), including that of the guest country.

- Memorize the words and sing your own national anthem. Singing a foreign country's anthem is optional.
  - Do not smoke, chew gum or talk while an anthem is in progress.
  - Men remove headwear.
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## **9. Hosting a Dignitary, Keynote Speaker, or Sponsor**

When you are assigned as a host for a dignitary, you are acting as a diplomat for the Toastmasters organization. Your conduct is critical to the impression made on behalf of the organization. The following guidelines will help make your job enjoyable and easier while ensuring that proper protocol is observed.

Be on time, preferably ahead of time, to greet your guests. Stand near the place of arrival. If you have not met the guests before, when they arrive, go forward, extend your hand, state their name(s), and then introduce yourself.

Example: "Mr. Black? (Wait for the response.) How do you do? My name is Sally Smart (if present, introduce your escort too). I'm (we're) pleased to be your host(s) for this evening. Welcome to our banquet."

Escort your guests to the cloak room or area where coats may be left. Alternatively, take your guest's coat to the cloakroom. If your guest has traveled a distance, they may wish to visit the restroom before meeting other guests.

If the guest is present during the cocktail hour, offer a cocktail to your guest, then retrieve the same. Arrange for complimentary cocktail tickets ahead of time with the Convention Committee. Never leave your guest alone. Ensure that your guest has met at least one other person(s) before you excuse yourself to retrieve cocktails or look after any other needs.

Introduce your guest to a few people at a time. Ensure the guest is introduced to the Toastmaster and other dignitaries who will be joining the guest, such as the International Director. Ensure the name and title of your guest is given correctly.

In making introductions, observe the following:

- One person is always introduced to another person by first saying the name of the most honored person. "John Smith, I would like to introduce to you Jane Smith."
- Use a friendly relaxed manner when introducing people. Remember to smile.
- Note: Generally, the first name is included, although strict etiquette manuals caution that you do not use the first name in a number of situations such as "to a superior in one's business."

Include an item of interest to facilitate further conversation. The item may pertain to the reason the

person is a special guest, a particular accomplishment, hobby, etc. As with any introductions, be discreet and do not say anything that would embarrass the guest or those being introduced.

General guidelines regarding introductory situations:

- The younger person is introduced to the older person.
- A man is introduced to a woman.
- A less honored person is introduced to an honored person.
- A younger couple is introduced to an older couple.
- An untitled person is introduced to a titled person. For example, "Mr. President, may I present Mr. Gregory Black."
- Use titles, unless requested not to, such as in the case of a doctor.
- For those who live together, give each person's full name. No explanation is necessary.
- For husbands and wives with different names, introduce the wife first and give their full names.

Example: "Anne Walker and her husband, John Smith."

- If you forget someone's name, apologize briefly and wait for the persons involved to volunteer their names.

Make conversation with your guest. If you do not know your guest, learn some information in advance to allow you to carry on a conversation. Avoid sensitive, personal or potentially embarrassing topics.

Suitable topics include hobbies and subjects where the guest has expertise. Local news stories may be of interest, but be cautious when discussing any political or religious stories – its strongly suggested to avoid such topics, unless the guest brings up the subject; then resort to listening to the guest's opinions on the topics and be sensitive in offering your own.

If you don't know the information about a topic, or a question asked, say you don't know rather than giving wrong information or saying something inaccurate. Refrain from gossip. Remember, great minds discuss ideas and events. Explain or clarify the proceedings to the guest for the event.

Escort the guest to the appropriate place. This may involve a march-in for the head table guests, or a place at a separate table of honour. If you are seated with your guest, ensure that the guest is served first. Be alert to any needs that your guest may have.

Before the event concludes, thank your guest for being in attendance, and offer compliments or congratulations for their role in the event. Let them know how much you appreciated their attendance and getting to know them. Wish them well. Escort your guest(s) to the door and assist them in retrieving their belongings.

If required, ensure that transportation arrangements have been made for the guest.