

**Ask the Vice President Education to schedule you to give your first speech, “The Ice Breaker,”**

1. The Ice Breaker speech topic is you – something about your **life**, your **job**, your **hobbies**, your **unique interests**, your **family**, or any **combination** of these. You are an **absolute authority** on this topic, and everyone in the **audience** will learn something about you.

2. Begin to **conquer the fear of speaking** in front of a group. If you feel this **nervousness**, remember that a Toastmaster audience is always **supportive** and **understanding**. Nobody is **grading** you, and nobody will mind if you stumble through **99 Ums and Ahs**. If you get up, say something, and sit down, you have succeeded in this project.

3. Provide a **“base line”** of your current **strengths** and **weaknesses**. Some new members have **no public speaking experience**, while others have **years of presentations behind them**. No matter where you fit into this spectrum, your goal is to improve from your **starting point**. This first speech helps club members gauge your current strengths so that they can make **specific recommendations to help you improve**.

4. If you have a mentor, don't hesitate to ask them for help. If you don't, feel free to ask any other club member. Perhaps they can share what they spoke about for their Icebreaker. Perhaps they can help you select a topic. Perhaps you can practice it privately before the meeting. All other members have gone through the Ice Breaker before, and can provide words of encouragement.

You don't need to practice the **speech 35 times**, and you don't need to have it memorized. However, your nervousness will be reduced considerably if you give it a **couple of practice runs out loud** (even if your only audience is you).

The recommended time for the Ice Breaker speech is **four to six minutes**. It may seem like a long time, but in later projects, you'll start wishing you had much more time to deliver your message. Don't worry too much about going under or over time.

If you need notes, **use them**. If you don't need notes, **don't**. Either way, don't worry about it. It's **okay if you read** your ice breaker from a script (just try to look up once in a while), if you refer to cue cards, or if you talk without notes.

This is your first challenge. Nobody expects you to be a world-class orator. Just do your best. Once you have established your “base line”, then you can aim to **raise your skill level in future projects**.

Two common effects of **nervousness** are **mumbling** words and **racing** through the speech. Try to avoid these, but don't worry if you can't help it.

If you are comfortable incorporating humor into your ice breaker, go for it. The laughs from the audience will reduce your nervousness. (If nobody laughs, don't worry about that either... it's something to work on later.)

You may feel an urge to apologize to your audience (e.g. for uttering **too many Ums**, for losing your place, etc.). There is **no need to do so!** Often, the audience doesn't notice the little glitches, and it is much better for you to ignore them too.

### **Topic Ideas for Your Ice Breaker Speech**

Although your broad topic is yourself, there are numerous angles to take, and several ways to organize your speech.

Don't worry too much **about the organization** of the speech; **later speech projects** will focus more on that.

For many people, a series of **chronological snapshots** of their life is the easiest to write and deliver.

Discuss a series of elements of your life to provide a **“sampling” of your life**. For example, you could open up by talking about your **family**, then discuss your **career**, and conclude with your **hobbies**.

Select a common thread that runs through your life, and share brief stories where this **common element appears**. It might be a signature phrase, a philosophy that guides

you, or even something obscure like peanut butter. (i.e. imagine stories through your life where peanut butter played a role)

Focus on one critical event which took your **life in a completely different direction**. Explain the series of decisions or events that brought you “here”, where “here” might be the place you currently **live**, the **job** you currently have, the life you lead, or the decision to join **Toastmasters**.

When you're called on by the Toastmaster of the Evening, you will **go to the Lectern** to give your first speech.

**Study the booklet *Effective Evaluation*, which you received in the New Member Kit**. Every speech you give in the club will be evaluated by another member, and you also will be asked to evaluate others' speeches and leadership roles.

You also received two other publications in the New Member Kit: ***Your Speaking Voice*** and ***Gestures: Your Body Speaks***. You need not read these booklets now, but be sure to 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.

**Finally, begin preparing your first speech**. Carefully read 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 make you a better speaker.

### **Opening, body and Conclusion**

Like any good story, your talk needs a clear beginning and ending. Create an interesting opening sentence that captures the audience's attention. Memorize it, if necessary, and use it even if a better idea occurs to you just before you speak. Then devise a good closing and memorize it, too.

A memorized beginning and ending enable you to start and finish your talk with confidence and ease. In any speech, it's best to select a few main points (three or four at the most) and emphasize them by using examples, stories or anecdotes. If you merely state a fact and then continue, most of your audience will miss the point. You should make a point, say it again in different words, illustrate the point, and then state it once more in order to be clearly understood. This is a good skill to learn. Choose your points and illustrations carefully. Too much information may overwhelm the audience.

If you think you will need notes, write a brief speech outline on note cards, which you can place on the lectern. Refer to them only when you need them. Remember, you're speaking, not reading. Many speakers begin by writing out an entire speech, then breaking it into parts, with a key word for each part, and finally writing just the key words on one note card.

### **Preparing Yourself**

Now the talk is ready, but are you ready to present it? Practice the talk until you are comfortable with it. You won't need to memorize the body of the talk, since you already know all about the subject. As mentioned earlier, you should memorize the opening and conclusion.

Present the talk to a family member, a friend or your Toastmasters mentor. Ask for comments. They may give you some helpful suggestions. If you have a tape recorder, record the talk and listen to it carefully, making any necessary improvements. Using a tape recorder is one of the best ways to improving your speaking ability.

Instead of thinking of this presentation as “making a speech,” think of it as a talk before a group of friends, sharing information of interest. Don't be afraid of the audience. They have already experienced the same feelings you're having. They want you to succeed and they're eager to help you!

Appearance is important. Be well-groomed and appropriately dressed for your presentation. When you look right, you feel good about yourself. You'll then forget about your appearance and concentrate on your talk. You will have increased confidence because you know you've made a good first impression with audience.

### **Presenting Your Talk**

Once you've prepared and practiced your talk, relax. Nervousness is common to every speaker, no matter how experienced. In fact, you can put this nervous energy to work for you by using it to add excitement to your delivery. No one is going to notice a little quavering in your voice, and it will soon disappear anyway as you become involved with what you're saying.

While being introduced, take a deep breath and slowly exhale. This will help your voice sound resonant and natural. Begin by facing the Toastmaster and saying, "Mr. (or Madam) Toastmaster," then face the audience and say, "Ladies and gentlemen..." or "Fellow members and guests..." Pause, then begin with your memorized opening.

While speaking, make "**eye contact**" with various members of the audience, first looking directly at one person for a few seconds, then looking at another, so people feel included in your tale. As you do this, glance periodically at the timer. If the red light comes on while you're talking, move smoothly to your conclusion and finish quickly. Observe time limits whenever you speak.

Don't worry about what to do with your hands. Leave them at your sides if this makes you more comfortable. You'll have opportunities to practice "body language" later.

Finish with your memorized conclusion. Some speakers say "thank you" at the very end to signal to the audience that they are finished, but this is not necessary. Instead, after you say your concluding words, nod at the Toastmaster of the meeting and say, "Mr. (or Madam) Toastmaster" and enjoy the applause.

### **Your Evaluation**

After you finish, you'll probably begin evaluating yourself even before you return to your seat. You may think you left out some of the best parts. Every speaker thinks that. Just congratulate yourself on having delivered your first speech, then write down the things you did well and the things you want to improve to make your next speech ever better.

To supplement your self-evaluation, an experienced club member has been assigned to evaluate your effort. Before the meeting begins, give this manual to your evaluator so he or she may make notes on the evaluation page of this project. This gives you a permanent record of your progress. If you want the evaluator to observe something in particular, be sure to inform the evaluator in advance.

Ask other members for additional comments after the meeting (some may give you their own brief written comments during the meeting). All of these comments may not be useful to you, but you should consider them carefully. Remember, each evaluation is an *opinion* of how that person perceived you and your presentation. These opinions usually (but not always) will be helpful to your self-development.

### **SPEAKER'S CHECKLIST**

- Print and Bring the **Evaluation Form "Ice Breaker"** to the meeting.
- Review your presentation with your mentor.
- Discuss any special points with your evaluator before giving the speech.
- Give the evaluator the **Evaluation Form "Ice Breaker"** before you speak, so he or she can make written comments on your performance.
- Don't be discouraged if your evaluator "missed the point." Evaluators have varying degrees of experience in speaking, and evaluation is a "learn by doing" skill, just as speaking is.
- If you have not already done so, read **Effective Evaluation**. It will help you understand how to get the most out of the Toastmasters program.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

For your first speech project, you will introduce yourself to your fellow club members and give them some information about your background, interests and ambitions. Practice giving your speech to friends or family members, and strive to make eye contact with some of your audience. You may use notes during your speech if you wish. Read the entire project before preparing your talk.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- To begin speaking before an audience.
- To discover speaking skills you already have and skills that need some attention

"Nobody expects you to be a world-class orator. **Just do your best.**"