



## Orienting New Members

### Getting new members off to a good start

The first few weeks of any member's Toastmasters career are the most critical. Clubs lose more members at this level than any other. Why? When new members are left to "sink or swim" without special attention and guidance many lose interest and never become actively involved in the Toastmasters program.

New members need to feel welcome. They need to sense that their fellow members really want to help them. They need reassurance that their decision to join Toastmasters was a good one. They need more information about Toastmasters than what they observe during their first few meetings. They need help in setting goals for themselves. And, above all, they need to begin benefiting right away from their Toastmasters membership.

By putting a little extra effort toward propelling new members off to a good start, Lewisham Speakers Club can turn apprehensive new members into dedicated, enthusiastic Toastmasters. The New Member Orientation is a critical part of this simple four-step procedure:

1. **Tell them about Toastmasters.** The club vice president education conducts a two-way 'Orientation' interview with each new member. This permits the new member to discuss his/her needs and expectations. It also provides club leaders with an opportunity to explain how Toastmasters works and what is expected from each member.
2. **Coach them to excellence.** A "mentor" is selected for each new member. This is an experienced, knowledgeable Toastmaster who provides guidance, support and assistance in setting and achieving the new member's self-development goals. This briefing document is to describe your role as a New Member Mentor.
3. **Induct them with flair.** Joining Toastmasters is an important event in an individual's life, and a meaningful induction ceremony underscores this fact. It also strengthens a new member's commitment to excellence and sense of belonging.
4. **Get them speaking.** Schedule each new member's Icebreaker speech as soon as possible, so he/she can begin to gain immediate benefits. Assign your club's best evaluators to evaluate new members' speeches. Give new members lots of positive reinforcement and make them feel good about themselves.

## New Member Orientation

### Why Conduct an Orientation?

People who join your club usually have a problem or a need relating to public speaking or leadership and are convinced that Toastmasters can help solve the problem or meet the need. It's now time to begin delivering the benefits of Toastmasters membership.

Before new members can become integral components of your club's membership, they must confront two types of anxiety. One is the idea of standing before an audience and presenting a speech or leading a meeting. The second anxiety is the normal human concern associated with joining any unfamiliar group and seeking acceptance.



New members need an opportunity to discuss their problems and needs before embarking on a self-development program. They need reassurance that they have made the right decision in joining a Toastmasters club. They need specific information about the Toastmasters program: how it works, how to get the most from it, what is expected of them, etc. Finally, they need to feel welcome and at ease—to sense that the club really cares about them and wants to help them.

An orientation helps make new members less anxious and more confident so they can solve their problems and meet their self-development needs. New members who understand the club's purpose and structure will identify more readily with the club and its members. They will also develop a sense of pride and belonging. If they feel that the club cares about them, they will instinctively associate themselves with the club's goals and will be less likely to leave.

### **Creating a "Social Contract"**

Whether you think of it in these terms or not, the act of someone joining your Toastmasters club implies a social contract. No papers are signed and no formal agreement is made, yet both the new member and the club assume certain obligations.

When it accepts a new member, your club is agreeing to provide an enjoyable environment in which the member can learn, grow and achieve. In return, the new member is expected to behave in a certain way.

When both parties live up to this social contract, your club will have a loyal, valuable member who will obtain meaningful benefits from membership. If either party breaks the social contract, the member-club relationship will be neither satisfactory nor long-lasting.

The orientation is an excellent opportunity for both the member and the club to learn what is expected of them. A good orientation can, without mentioning it as such, establish a social contract that is firm, satisfying and mutually beneficial.

### **Toastmasters Orientation Interview**

One of the key responsibilities of the VP Education is to orient new members and get their Toastmasters careers off to a good start. The attached New Member Profile Sheets are designed to help you provide new members with a thorough orientation to Toastmasters.

When a new member joins your club, arrange for the two of you to get together informally. Appoint an experienced club member to serve as the new member's mentor; try to include that person in your interview. Begin by establishing a positive rapport with the new member. You may wish to explain how participation in Toastmasters has benefited you.

Most new members join Toastmasters because they want to learn to speak more effectively. Yet each new member has a unique set of needs, goals and anxieties. Your task during the orientation interview is to determine a new member's speaking-related goals, translate them into Toastmasters goals, and instill in the new member confidence that his or her goals will be attained through participation in your club. You should also:

1. Discuss the contents of the New Member Kit mailed to each new member from World Headquarters. It includes the Competent Communication and Competent Leadership manuals, Effective Evaluation, and manuals on voice and gestures.
2. Schedule the new member's Ice Breaker assignment as soon as possible. If he or she hasn't yet received the New Member Kit, loan the member a Competent Communication manual from the club's supply, or provide a Toastmasters and You Kit (Item 1167) which includes a copy of the Ice Breaker assignment.
3. Explain the club's meeting procedures, the duties of the key participants and administrative policies, including dues and attendance.



4. Explain how evaluation works and emphasize its helpfulness in self-improvement.
5. Motivate the new member to work hard toward meeting his or her goals. This includes attending all club meetings, preparing diligently for speeches and learning from experienced speakers as they deliver their speeches. Motivate the new member to achieve Competent Communicator or Competent Leader awards, as these represent the first successful educational accomplishments in Toastmasters.

### The Orientation Interview

The recommended format for the new member orientation is a two-way interview led by you, as Vice President Education. If you wish, you may include the new member's sponsor or the Toastmaster you have assigned to serve as the New Member's Mentor.

An orientation interview not only benefits the new member and the club, it's also an excellent opportunity for you to develop your interviewing skills. Here are some tips for a successful orientation interview:

- **Create a favorable climate.** Don't conduct an orientation interview during a club meeting. Instead, hold it in a quiet, pleasant place where all participants feel comfortable and at ease. The interview doesn't have to be lengthy-15 or 20 minutes should be adequate.
- **Develop a personal rapport.** Take a few minutes to get acquainted. You may wish to share with the new member some of your own Toastmasters experiences and discuss how your club membership has benefited you.
- **Be attentive and show genuine interest.** This is a key to convincing the new member that your club cares about him/her and wants to help.
- **Be positive and enthusiastic.** Enthusiasm is infectious. If you reflect confidence that Toastmasters can significantly benefit the new member, some of your confidence will rub off. The new member's negative anxieties will be replaced by positive self-confidence.
- **Be knowledgeable.** Prepare yourself for the questions a new member might ask about Toastmasters or your club.

### Conducting the Orientation Interview

There are four major steps to a successful new member orientation interview.

- **First**, you **determine why the individual has joined** Toastmasters and what that person seeks to gain from membership in your club.
- **Second**, you **establish a social contract** by discovering the member's objectives and relating specific obligations assumed by the member and the club.
- **Third**, you **explain the Toastmasters program**—how it works, how meetings are run, how the club operates, and what each member's role is. And
- **Fourth**, you conclude by **taking specific actions** designed to actively involve the new member in the club's programs and insure that the member begins to benefit immediately.

Checklist of materials include:

- New Member Profile Sheet
- New Member Bio/Introduction Sheet
- Competent Communication and Competent Leadership Manual,
- Advanced Communication manuals
- Club newsletter and



- Membership roster.

### **STEP ONE: Determine the Member's Needs**

After taking a few minutes to get acquainted, focus on the reasons the new member has joined Toastmasters. Summarize the responses on the New Member Profile Sheet. (After the interview, make three copies of this sheet and distribute them as follows: original to club file and copies to you, the new member and the new member's coach/mentor.)

Your first task is to identify what can be called the "performance discrepancy." Simply put, this is the difference between how someone would like to appear before a group of people as a speaker or leader and how that individual actually performs now. This discrepancy is multifaceted—there are several areas in which improvement is warranted. Ask questions from the Profile Sheet.

### **STEP TWO: Establish the Social Contract**

This step involves three processes.

- **First**, you relate the new member's **performance discrepancy** to participation in your club's programs and activities.
- **Second**, you **explain what the club will do** to help narrow or eliminate the discrepancy.
- **Third**, you **discuss what the club expects** from each member.

The first process is probably the most difficult part of the orientation interview, because you can't prepare for it. You will essentially be reacting to what the other person has said during the first step. As you listen to the new member, ask yourself, "Is it reasonable to expect the results this person seeks? Can Toastmasters training help this individual become the speaker or leader he or she wants to be?" In most cases, the answer will be affirmative.

Be positive yet realistic. For example, if the new member has recently been promoted to a job that requires delivering a verbal report at the company's weekly staff meeting and wishes to do so in a clear, concise manner, you can feel confident that Toastmasters can help meet this person's needs. On the other hand, if the new member wants to be a well-paid performer on the speaking circuit within one year, it's unlikely this will occur unless the individual is already a highly skilled speaker.

The second process is an explanation of the club's responsibilities in the social contract, although you shouldn't describe it in these terms. Instead, explain that the club will help the new member achieve results by:

- Providing the member with **opportunities to speak and lead**.
- Providing helpful, supportive **evaluations**.
- Providing a **positive atmosphere** that builds self-confidence and helps members overcome fear and nervousness.
- Providing **educational programs** that are stimulating and enjoyable.
- Providing each new member with **a mentor**, who is an experienced Toastmaster assigned to guide the fledgling Toastmaster through the first few assignments.

In the third process, you complete the social contract by explaining what the club expects from each member. Upon joining the club, members are committed to:

- **Attend meetings regularly and fulfill all assignments**. They must notify the club in advance when they cannot attend a meeting.



- **Work from the manuals** and fulfill the objectives of each manual assignment. The Toastmasters manuals comprise a professionally engineered progression of learning experiences.
- **Achieve the educational awards.** The Toastmasters recognition system is the means to measure members' self-development success.
- **Participate in all club programs and activities.** A group can be successful only when each member supports it.
- **Evaluate others** in a positive, constructive manner. As Toastmasters, we improve by helping one another, and we take pride in each other's accomplishments.
- **Build open, friendly relationships** with fellow members. Spirit, camaraderie and genuine caring are the catalysts that make meetings both educational and enjoyable.
- **Help bring new members** into the club. It is each member's responsibility to keep the club strong and dynamic. It is also satisfying to share the benefits of a Toastmasters membership with others.

### **We ask you to share and increase the benefits you gain through Toastmasters by...**

- **Assisting fellow members** in developing their communication and leadership abilities as you develop your own.
- **Helping your club maintain** the Toastmasters standard of excellence in programming and administration.
- **Providing leadership** in the club at every opportunity.
- Utilizing your Toastmasters experience to **take an involved role in community** affairs.
- **Sharing your Toastmasters experience** by telling others about the program and inviting them to join.
- **Making Toastmasters an enjoyable and worthwhile experience** for yourself and others by projecting the Toastmasters image in everyday business, social and community situations.

### **STEP THREE: Explain How Toastmasters Works**

In this step, you provide the new member with the "nuts and bolts" of Toastmasters. Cover the following topics, using your own words.

- **Toastmasters International** – TI is a worldwide organization devoted to helping men and women learn to communicate and lead more effectively. Toastmasters was founded in 1924 by Dr. Ralph C. Smedley and is headquartered in Rancho Santa Margarita, California, U.S.A. Toastmasters offers its members a "learn-by-doing" workshop in which they can learn and practice skills that are directly related to success in business and other areas of life.
- **New Member Kit** – Each person who joins Toastmasters is mailed a set of educational materials. The new member kit contains the Competent Communication and Competent Leadership manuals, Effective Evaluation, and manuals on voice and gestures. These materials are mailed immediately when a new member application is received at World Headquarters.



- **Manuals** – Show the new member the Competent Communication and Competent Leadership manuals, explaining their purpose and usage. Each contains 10 assignments, which incorporate the skills learned in previous projects.
- **Educational Awards** – Describe the communication and leadership tracks and the awards available, emphasizing that the awards are worthwhile self-development goals.

### Communication Track

- **Competent Communicator (CC)** To qualify for the Competent Communicator (CC) award, a member must complete the Competent Communication manual
- **Advanced Communicator Bronze (ACB)** To qualify for the Advanced Communicator Bronze (ACB) award, a member must have earned the CC award and have completed two Advanced Communication manuals.
- **Advanced Communicator Silver (ACS)** To be eligible for the Advanced Communicator Silver (ACS) award, a member must have received the Advanced Communicator Bronze award, completed two additional advanced communication manuals (may not be those completed for any previous award) and conducted any two programs from The Better Speaker Series and/or The Successful Club Series.
- **Advanced Communicator Gold (ACG)** To qualify for the Advanced Communicator Gold (ACG) award, a member must have received the Advanced Communicator Silver award, completed two additional advanced communication manuals (may not be those completed for any previous award), conducted a Success/Leadership Program, Success/Communication Program or a Youth Leadership Program (may not be those conducted for any previous awards), and coached a new member with the first three speech projects.

### Leadership Track

- **Competent Leader (CL)** To be eligible for the Competent Leader (CL) award, a member must have completed the Competent Leadership manual.
- **Advanced Leader Bronze (ALB)** To qualify for the Advanced Leader Bronze (ALB) award, a member must have received the Competent Leader award, received the Competent Communicator award, served at least six months as a club officer (president, vice president education, vice president membership, vice president public relations, secretary, treasurer or sergeant at arms) and participated in the preparation of a Club Success Plan while serving in this office, participated in a district-sponsored club officer training program while serving this officer, and conducted any two programs from The Successful Club Series and/or The Leadership Excellence Series.
- **Advanced Leader Silver (ALS)** To qualify for the Advanced Leader Silver (ALS) award, a member must have achieved the Advanced Leader Bronze award, served a complete term as a district officer (district governor, lieutenant governor, public relations officer, secretary, treasurer, division governor, area governor), completed the High Performance Leadership program, and served successfully as a club sponsor, mentor, or coach.
- **Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM)** To be eligible for the Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM) award, a member must have received the Advanced Communicator Gold award and the Advanced Leader Silver award. Distinguished Toastmaster is the highest award a member may receive.



**Your Club** – Briefly explain how your club operates, when and where it meets, its administrative policies, dues structure, etc. Some clubs provide new members with printed handbooks and/or copies of their bylaws; if your club does, now is an appropriate time to do so.

**Meeting Assignment** – Describe the various functions performed by members at each meeting: Toastmaster, Table Topicsmaster, General Evaluator, Grammarian, etc. Explain the standard agenda for a club meeting. Discuss how often every member fulfills each of these assignments.

**Club Officers** – Briefly describe the duties of each club officer. Explain that members are encouraged to seek these offices, each of which offers leadership training that relates to vital management skills.

**Evaluation** – Explain the Toastmasters evaluation system: who performs evaluations, how long they are, their structure and the elements of a good evaluation.

**Involvement Opportunities** – Describe the many additional opportunities available to members, including speech contest participation, district and regional conferences, the International Convention, Speechcraft courses, and leadership opportunities above the club level (area governor, etc.).

### **Benefits of Toastmasters**

- **A unique means of learning** and improving your communicative abilities within an atmosphere of fellowship and fun with your fellow Toastmasters club members.
- **Unlimited opportunities** for personal and occupational advancement based on improved abilities and expanded experience.
- **Experience in leadership** development through training and club involvement.
- **Professionally prepared educational materials** and resources on speaking, listening, discussion, parliamentary procedure, audio-visual techniques and conference and meeting procedures.
- The **Toastmaster magazine** - every month the Toastmaster provides new insights on communication techniques, ideas and opinions.
- **Continuing practice and exposure** to sound communication techniques. Increased confidence, ability to organize logical thought and present it self-assuredly, and a better understanding of human relations. Affiliation with an internationally renowned educational organization.

### **STEP FOUR: Take Action**

1. Assign an experienced club member to serve as the new member's mentor. Arrange for the two to get together prior to the new member's Ice Breaker speech.
2. Schedule the Ice Breaker speech, and give the new member a copy of the Ice Breaker assignment (included in the New Member Orientation Kit).
3. Schedule the first few evening roles and Competent Leadership projects.
4. Schedule the new member's induction ceremony, and notify the club president.
5. Arrange for a follow-up interview after the fourth manual speech. This will be a brief discussion of the member's progress and a reaffirmation of his/her commitment to continued self-development.

### **New Member Orientation Kit for Clubs—A Valuable Tool for Your Club**

Toastmasters International has a New Member Orientation Kit for Clubs (Item 1162) designed to provide your club with everything it needs for orienting and inducting new members—orientation



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guidelines, mentor guidelines, induction ceremony script, copies of the Ice Breaker assignment, membership certificates and much more. The kit is available for just \$5.50 from World Headquarters.



## New Member Profile Sheet

### Biographical Data

Occupation and Employer .....

Accomplishments and Interests .....

Personal and Career Goals .....

Name of Sponsor.....

### Communication and Leadership Goals

What objectives do you hope to accomplish as a member of this club? .....

Is public speaking a requirement of your job or profession? .....

How would you describe your current skill level as a speaker? .....

Do you have any specific fears relative to public speaking? .....

Why did you choose to join a Toastmasters club? .....

What can the club do to help you accomplish your goals? .....

### Do you wish to improve your ability to... (please tick whichever box applies)

Persuade and convince others?.....  Yes /  No

Put ideas across clearly and understandably?.....  Yes /  No

Improve your self-confidence?.....  Yes /  No

Think quickly and clearly under pressure?.....  Yes /  No

Other (specify) .....  Yes /  No

Other (specify) .....  Yes /  No

Effectively lead teams and groups?.....  Yes /  No

Listen effectively and critically?.....  Yes /  No



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Tactfully evaluate someone else's presentations? .....  Yes /  No

Gracefully accept helpful criticism? .....  Yes /  No



## How would I like to be introduced

Whenever you speak, you are the star of the show, therefore, it is important that you are given an appropriate introduction. By providing the following information, you will be assured of a proper introduction.

This information is kept on file with the Club, to be used each time you deliver a speech. Feel free to update this information whenever necessary.

NAME: .....

BIRTHPLACE: .....

CURRENT RESIDENTIAL AREA:.....

SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENTS:.....

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HOBBIES:.....

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WORK EXPERIENCE:.....

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EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND: .....

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FAMILY:.....

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I JOINED TOASTMASTERS BECAUSE:.....

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