



## From the District 28 Director

### Greetings Fellow Toastmasters:

The corona virus (COVID-19) is affecting many facets of life, including events in Toastmasters. All districts are facing challenges. We are under directives from Toastmasters International World Headquarters. This email will update you with what is known today. Toastmasters World Headquarters will continue to update both District Leaders and Club Leaders. **Please watch your email for these messages.**

### Dues

Toastmasters International has extended the deadline for club dues until April 30, 2020. An email, dated March 17, 2020, was sent to Club Officers with details. The notice will be posted on the District website.

### Events & Conference

The following decisions have been made by the Board of Directors regarding current and upcoming District events, effective immediately.

**Area, Division, or District events can no longer be conducted in person, on or prior to June 1, 2020. As an alternative, we encourage Areas, Divisions, and Districts to host events online to help clubs and members through this difficult time.**

Based on this directive from WHQ, our April 17 and 18, 2020 conference has been cancelled. The District 28 Finance Manager, Brian Laskey, will arrange for refunds to members who registered for the conference. Credit card payments will be refunded automatically by Brian, and registration payments by check will be refunded by a District check. If you paid cash, please contact Brian directly at [finance@d28toastmasters.org](mailto:finance@d28toastmasters.org).

### Club Meetings

While areas, divisions and the district may not hold any in-person events, **this does not apply to clubs.**

#### From WHQ:

**Due to the evolving impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the Board of Directors has made the following exceptions, effective immediately and until further notice:**

- **All clubs in all Districts can meet entirely online, as needed.**

Toastmasters International recognizes that clubs are separate entities and may make their own decisions. Clubs may decide to continue in-person meetings or move to online meetings. If your club chooses to move to an online meeting, members must vote to approve this change. It is not the decision of any one member. Please see Article 5 in the Club Constitution for more information.

<https://www.toastmasters.org/leadership-central/governing-documents#ArticleIVMeetingsandNotice442>

#### From WHQ:

For the purpose of conducting club-level business, members who attend club meetings online are considered to be present at the club meeting for the purposes of quorum. Each club must determine the online platform and equipment to be used at their own discretion and expense. Each member must also provide their own technology and equipment at their own expense. We empower clubs to create their own personal best practices when establishing and conducting online meetings since each meeting environment is different; what may work for one club, may not work for another.



- Use your club's communications tools to discuss how your club will successfully facilitate online meetings.
- Determine which online platform to use—Skype, GoToMeeting, and Zoom are used successfully by clubs.
- Review the Toastmasters [Online Club Attendance webpage](#) for information about clubs that allow some members to attend online.
- Connect with members on the Official Toastmasters International Members Only Facebook page to see their best practices and tips for what has been beneficial for their club.

## Resources for Online Meetings

There are several resources available to help clubs conduct successful online meetings. Possibilities include zoom.us, freeconferencecall.com (they have a free webinar service). Below is a link to Lifewire and their list, and assessment, of the Internet's best free webinar software and tools.

[Zoom Information](#)

[Information freeconferencecall](#)

[Lifewire 10 Best Free Webinar Software and Tools](#)

As the message from TI states, each club environment is different. Take a look at the various choices to see which might work best for your club. For clubs with funds in the treasury, a one month subscription to Zoom is \$14.99. Membership votes to approve this expense.

You may have challenges with some of the free programs, at least initially, due to the high demand on these services. With so many people needing this alternative form of communication, they are experiencing a high volume of users. Don't give up, keep trying.

Advice from freeconferencecall is to schedule your meetings or call to avoid the rush at the top of the hour, and on the half hour. For example 10:05 or 10:15 am will avoid the 10:00 a.m. rush.

## Learning to Conduct Online Meetings

Once you choose your platform, look for tutorials, and practice with club members to see what challenges you may face. Try dry runs with club members to learn the software and how to make smooth transitions between speakers. Here are some resources that may help in establishing online meetings. Where known, credit for these resources is provided.

Posted on [March 16, 2020](#) by [David F. Carr](#)

Online Presenters members presented this workshop for District 47 (South Florida and the Bahamas), where many clubs are having to learn in a hurry how to conduct meetings online. This workshop was led by club President Lois Margolin, DTM, a District 47 leader. The program included participation from other Online Presenters members from District 47 and throughout the world, giving a mini-meeting demonstration. David Carr, who led Online Presenters to charter in 2017, shared technical how-to tips.

YouTube: [How to Host Online Toastmaster Meeting](#)



Our Region Advisor has suggested this scheduled webinar on March 19, also presented by David F. Carr.

This webinar will provide guidance for Toastmaster leaders who have suddenly found themselves compelled to move meetings, contests, and other events online.

Thursday 3/19  
7:30 pm- 9:00 pm EST

<https://zoom.us/j/4747471963>

Another resource for online meetings, from within District 28, presented by John Salalila will be scheduled, with details forthcoming.

Topic: Video Conferencing, Toastmasters, and You

Join us for this half-hour workshop on how video conferencing might be used in a Toastmasters setting. John Salalila, DTM, PDG will guide Toastmasters through what video conferencing is, why has video conferencing become a much more important resource, and how to navigate through the basics! The same presentation will be given using all of the specified platforms. These workshops are not sponsored by any of these platforms.

Resources will be available on our District 28 website. Please check often as new information and updates will be added as available. We have started off with **Successful Online Club Meeting Tips** Adapted From Cornerstone Communicators Advanced Toastmasters.

[COVID-19 District 28 Website](#)

The District is setting up a temporary help desk to answer questions.

Send your questions to: [d28leaders@gmail.com](mailto:d28leaders@gmail.com)

If possible or appropriate, please indicate in the subject line whether you need technical help with your webinar platform, or help in conducting your meeting. Questions will be answered as quickly as possible.

### **Other Online Meeting Tips**

- Ask members to join the meeting 10 to 15 minutes before the start time.
- In Zoom, MUTE all attendees until it is their time to speak. Control is passed from one speaker to another by simply starting and stopping speaking. Background sounds can trigger a change of speaker. Avoid a member popping up on the screen while another member is delivering their Table Topic or their speech. This is caused by background sounds - a cough, the dog barking or other noises. Muting all but speakers will prevent this.
- Practice displaying and removing the meeting agenda on the screen.
- Audio feedback may occur if an attendee chooses both computer and phone for audio. Ask members to choose only one method for audio.
- Consider asking non-speakers to turn their webcam off, or cover their camera unless, or until, it is their time to speak. Activity of members on camera while another member is speaking may be distracting. Members may forget they are on camera. Alternately, remind members to sit quietly as



they would at an in-person meeting to show respect to the speaker. There is a benefit to the speaker when they see the audience.

- Assign a Tech Master to control muting and the webcam.
- Assign a Chat Master to watch for questions in the Chat Box that need attention.
- If a member must move from their seat during the meeting, it is an appropriate time to turn their webcam off.
- Family members or pets in the background are distracting. Find a quiet, private, if possible, spot when attending the meeting.
- Maintain eye contact by looking directly at your web camera.
- Practice speaking while standing and work to position yourself to be seen by the other members. This may require some experimentation with your computer and the camera position.
- If using the free version of Zoom, currently the maximum time for a meeting is 40 minutes. It may be necessary to create two or three meetings, cascading the start time by 40 or 45 minutes. Assign a Time Master to be sure the meeting isn't abruptly ended in the midst of a speaker's time. Perhaps, schedule a short break between each 40 minute segment. Members will join the next segment as the current one ends, with a short break, if scheduled.
- Set up practice sessions/dry runs with some, or all club members, before scheduling your first online meeting
- Notify recent guests that meetings are now online and include them in your invitation to join the meeting.
- Consider inviting another club to your online meeting. Work together to learn the best methods for successful meetings.
- In the midst of making arrangements for online meetings, consider a free conference call account to stay in touch with members. While it is not ideal for a meeting, there are some activities that could be accomplished by phone such as Table Topics. Stay in touch. [freeconferencecall.com](http://freeconferencecall.com) is easy to use, and it's free.
- Remember, wherever you are located during the online meeting, you are at a Toastmasters meeting. Take care to maintain meeting protocol and respect for your fellow Toastmasters.

### **And, last**

Don't forget to update your marketing sites with the news about online meetings. With numerous business and other closures within our district, we don't want potential guests/members to assume that Toastmasters is also closed. Let people know that your meetings will continue.

Update your **Meet Up** listing, and put full information on your **Free Toast Host**, or other, club website.

VPs of Membership or Public Relations (or any officer) can log on to the Toastmasters International website and use Club Central to update your meeting information for the **Find A Club** feature. One suggestion is to enter EFFECTIVE (THE DATE) ONLINE MEETINGS in the first address line for meeting location, and



preferred method of contact in the second address line, EMAIL FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, for example. The change will generally show up in 24 hours.

Toastmasters International is continually monitoring the impact of the corona virus (COVID-19) on clubs and members. For updated information, please go to [www.toastmasters.org/covid19](http://www.toastmasters.org/covid19).

Your health and well being is top priority of District 28 Leaders, as well as of Toastmasters International. Please take all precautions to safeguard your health, and look forward to the return of our life activities, and of course, once again, greeting your Fellow Toastmasters in person.

With warm regards for all,

*Kim*

Kim Purohit  
District 28 Director

If you have other questions, please email [director@d28toastmasters.org](mailto:director@d28toastmasters.org).

I may not have answers, but if that is the case, I will collect questions and concerns to submit to our Region Advisor, who in turn, will submit to World Headquarters.