



## **Successful Online Club Meeting Tips**

Adapted From Cornerstone Communicators Advanced Toastmasters

### **What to expect in an online meeting**

You can have a warm welcome and a supportive learning environment. Online meetings operate in much the same way as “regular” Toastmasters club meetings. In addition to developing skills in online meetings, club members also benefit from being able to interact with people across multiple countries, time zones and cultures.

### **How this document can help you**

This document is designed to help you get the most out of attending online meetings. It assumes that you’re already familiar with Toastmasters club meetings and roles such as Toastmaster, Speaker, Grammarian and Evaluator. The tips listed below provide advice on how to adapt those skills to the online environment, and at the end you’ll find advice about how to use the online meeting software effectively.

### **General tips for online meetings (all roles)**

- Practice using the camera on your computer, phone or laptop. You can do this at any time prior to the meeting
- Familiarize yourself with the meeting software and its features.
- Plan your lighting so that your face is well lit. Avoid sitting with your back to a window or other source of light and be aware that some overhead lighting can also make it difficult to see you clearly.
- Position yourself so that your upper body is visible, not just your face. This will allow you to be more expressive when speaking.
- If you are using a phone or tablet, ensure that it is placed on a stable surface.
- Ideally, position the camera so that it is at eye level when you are looking forward. This makes for better “eye contact” with the audience.
- When speaking, make “eye contact” by looking directly at the camera lens. This can feel uncomfortable at first and takes practice, but it makes a significant difference to the effectiveness of your online communication.
- If you wear glasses, be aware of reflections and glare that may be distracting. You may be able to eliminate this by adjusting your seating position, the angle of the camera, the angle of your glasses or making the source of light more diffuse.
- Join the meeting early so that you can make sure that your video and audio are working properly.
- Remember to use the “mute” feature when you are not speaking to eliminate background sounds.
- Applaud enthusiastically for each meeting participant. Since you and others attending may be on mute, doing “jazz hands” is common in online meetings as an alternative to clapping.



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### **When you are a Speaker (including Topicsmaster)**

#### **Before the meeting**

- For a prepared speech, contact your assigned evaluator to ensure that they understand your objectives and that they have a copy of the evaluation form. You can access your speech evaluation resource in Pathways, either in your project or by clicking on the Speech Evaluations tile on the Base Camp home page. You can also access them on the Toastmasters website here: <https://www.toastmasters.org/resources/resource-library?c=%7B01B94FC3-FC65-4308-8CB2-6193718ED156%7D>
- Let the Toastmaster of the meeting know if you are planning to share your screen, for example to show a slide presentation

#### **On arrival at the meeting**

- Join the meeting early so that you can make sure that your video and audio are working properly. This also allows you to network with other club members and answer any last-minute questions from your evaluator.
- When your assigned evaluator joins the meeting, you can use the “chat” feature of the meeting software to send them a private message with your email address. That will make it easier for them to send you their written evaluation after the meeting. They can also attach it and send it to you in the chat as well.

#### **During the meeting**

- When it is your turn to speak, turn off the “mute” feature so that people can hear you
- Switch the “gallery view” so that you can see the audience
- Be aware that large gestures such as opening your arms wide will not fit on the screen, and that quick gestures may appear blurred to the audience. You can try practicing clearly defined and intentional movement
- On camera, your face will be more visible than in a large room. Use this as an opportunity to use facial expressions to convey meaning, ideas and emotions
- Remember to check for signals from the timekeeper as your speech progresses

#### **After the meeting**

- Make contact with your Evaluator to thank them for their feedback and ensure that they are able to return their written evaluation to you
- If you have completed a Pathways level or have qualified for an award under the traditional education programme, contact your club’s VP Education.



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### When you are an Evaluator

#### Before the meeting

- Make contact with your assigned speaker to ensure that you understand their speech project and objectives. Check that you have a copy of the evaluation form. You can access all of the Pathways evaluation resources by clicking on the Speech Evaluations tile on the Base Camp home page. You can also access them on the Toastmasters website here: <https://www.toastmasters.org/resources/resource-library?c=%7B01B94FC3-FC65-4308-8CB2-6193718ED156%7D>
- If you are going to type the evaluation directly into the speech evaluation form, make sure to save the file to your device first and then open it in Adobe Acrobat, so that what you type in the form will be saved when you save the file.

#### On arrival at the meeting

- Join the meeting early so that you can network with other club members and greet your assigned speaker.
- When your assigned speaker joins the meeting, use the “chat” feature of the meeting software to send them a private message with your email address. That will make it easier for you both to follow-up after the meeting.

#### During the meeting

- For speech evaluations, make notes using the evaluation form as the speech progresses.
- For Table Topics evaluation (if you do this in your club), make notes so that you can provide feedback to each speaker.
- Using the “gallery view” can help you see the reaction of the audience to the speech.
- When giving your verbal evaluation, remember to include feedback on the effectiveness of the speech in the context of an online meeting.

#### After the meeting

- Type up your notes as soon as possible using the evaluation form (after saving it first) if you did not type in the form while preparing for the evaluation. If you wrote on the form, scan the form, and send the form to the speaker.

### When you are the Timer

#### Before the meeting

- Familiarise yourself with the agenda so that you know the timings for each speech and agenda item.
- Find large coloured cards or brightly coloured items that you can hold up to the camera to indicate the timings. Remember that it can be difficult for speakers to see the timer, so there’s no need to be subtle.

#### On arrival at the meeting

- Join the meeting early so that you can network with other club members and test out your timing props.



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- Practice using the meeting software by sending a private chat message to the Toastmaster of the meeting.

### **During the meeting**

- Use a stopwatch, smartphone or other timing device to keep track of the times.
- At the appropriate times, send a one-word private “chat” message to the speaker to indicate the timing. For example, type “green” at the minimum expected time and “red” at the maximum expected time.
- Remember to hold up your timing prop so that it is clearly visible to the camera.

## **When you are the Table Topics Master**

### **Before the meeting**

- Plan Topics that are fun and engaging, and will work well in the context of an online meeting.
- For extra challenge, think of ways in which other impromptu speaking formats could be incorporated. For example, debates, interviews, talking about a prop or press conferences.

### **On arrival at the meeting**

- Join the meeting early so that you can network with other club members.
- Identify the people that you plan to ask to participate in Table Topics. Try to pick people that do not have significant speaking roles in the meeting. Or call on volunteers and ask participants to raise their hand and call on them.

### **During the meeting**

- Present your theme and invite the participants to respond to your Topics.

## **When you are the General Evaluator**

### **Before the meeting**

- Review the meeting agenda so that you are familiar with the planned meeting agenda and roles.
- Familiarize yourself with these tips and other materials on how to participate effectively in online meetings.

### **On arrival at the meeting**

- Join the meeting early so that you can network with other club members and ensure that assigned evaluators are present.

### **During the meeting**

- Make notes on the effectiveness of the meeting and each participant’s preparation, delivery and performance of duties.
- Deliver your evaluation at the end of the meeting, including tips on how future meetings could be improved.
- Ensure that meeting guests and first timers have had an opportunity to introduce themselves and provide feedback.



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### **When you are the Grammarian or Ah-Counter**

#### **Before the meeting**

- Review the meeting agenda so that you are familiar with the planned meeting agenda and roles.
- As grammarian, prepare the “word of the day” and either print it, write it in large letters or display it on a slide and share it. You could also post it in the chat for participants to refer to during the meeting.
- As ah-counter, prepare a sheet to keep track of members using filler words.

#### **On arrival at the meeting**

- Join the meeting early so that you can network with other club members.

#### **During the meeting**

- As grammarian, present your “word of the day” by holding up your sign to the camera, or sharing the slide and by typing it into program chat. Make notes on each participant’s use of grammar and fluency of speech, and deliver your report when called upon to do so.
- As ah-counter, make notes on filler word usage and deliver your report when called upon to do so.

### **When you are the Toastmaster**

#### **Before the meeting**

- Ensure that all meeting roles are filled and that the meeting agenda is accurate.
- Familiarize yourself with these tips and how to use the meeting software effectively.
- If you wish, propose a theme for the meeting.

#### **On arrival at the meeting**

- Join the meeting early so that you can network with other club members and ensure that all meeting attendees are present.
- As each person joins the meeting, check that their audio and video are working correctly.
- Check if any speakers plan to share their screens/present. If so, check that they are familiar with how to do so.
- If possible, appoint a meeting “host” to help people with any technical difficulties during the meeting.

#### **During the meeting**

- At the start of the meeting, walk the attendees through the key features of the meeting software. This should include the use of mute, switching between gallery and speaker view and how to pin a specific speaker’s video.
- If any of the speakers will be using screen sharing, demonstrate how this will be used and explain how to use “split screen” mode.
- Introduce the meeting “host”, if available.
- As you introduce each meeting participant, check that their video is working and that their audio is not muted.



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### **Using the Zoom meeting software**

#### **Testing Zoom**

Once Zoom is installed on your computer, smartphone or tablet, you can use it immediately. This will allow you to practice using the software before the club meeting.

To join a test meeting at any time, go here: <https://zoom.us/test>

This will allow you to check that your video and audio is working correctly.

Further help is available here: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/categories/200101697>

#### **In the meeting**

Once you have joined the meeting, you should be able to see and hear the other meeting participants. If you have any difficulty, try adjusting the settings:

#### **Video layouts – active speaker or gallery view**

There are two useful video layouts: active speaker or gallery view. In active speaker view:

- You will see a large video of the person that is currently speaking
- You can switch to gallery view by clicking the “gallery view” option (top-right on a PC)

In gallery view:

- You will see smaller videos of everyone in the meeting. Dependent on the size of your screen, you may also see scroll bars that allow you to see more participants
- Click on the three dot at the top-right of any of the participants to see further options. This includes the “pin video” option. This will make them the “active speaker” for you, irrespective of who is actually speaking. The same menu also allows you to send a private chat message
- You can switch to speaker view by clicking on the “speaker view” option (top-right on a PC)

#### **Sending chat messages**

Click the “Chat” option to open the chat window. You can choose to send the message to “Everyone”, or to a specific person

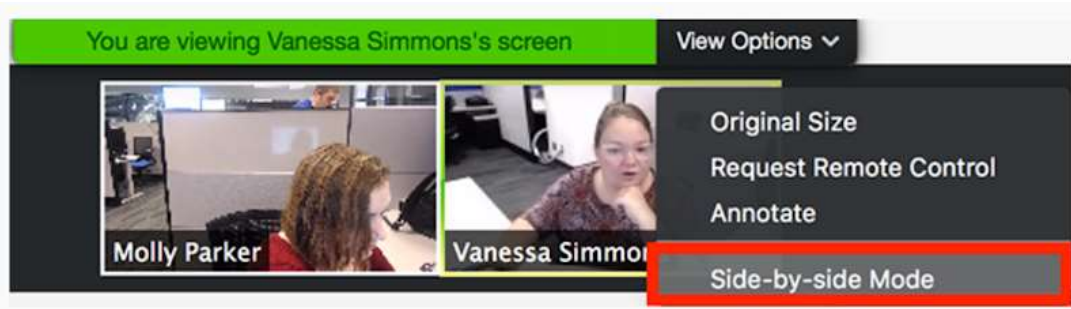
#### **Side-by-side mode when viewing a shared screen**

If someone is sharing their screen (e.g., a presentation), you can enable side-by-side view to allow you to view both the presentation and the speaker. To do this, choose “side-by-side mode” from the “view options” menu



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Once you are in side-by-side mode, you can use the vertical bar to the left or right in order to change the size of each section.