

# Introduction to Humorous Contests

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## Background

1. Competitions are held in 4 categories currently; Humorous, Evaluation, Table Topics and International (Prepared).
2. The purpose of these events is not to establish any sort of superiority as such but rather to provide Toastmaster members with a suitable forum to showcase their skills and stimulate new, higher levels of speaking achievement.
3. Best professional ex Toastmaster speakers are contest winners. There are 3 in Auckland

## Scenario

4. The winners of the club competitions compete at an Area competition. Winners then compete at Division and then if successful, District (National) contests.
5. 3 Judges - The winning placings are determined by their ballots.
6. Judges are allowed one minute cogitation time between speeches two minutes after the final entry and 5 minutes (+/-) after the ballots are collected by the Tally counter to confer. The final 5 minute break isn't mandatory it is a local convenience.

## Your Entry

7. Entries should have all the usual speech features eg:
  - \* Structure: Beginning, Middle & End
  - \* Body Language & Gestures
  - \* Eye Contact
  - \* Volume, Pitch Pace & Pausation
8. Write your speech with the Judging Form criteria in mind - 55% for Content plus 15% Language means 70% of the points are about your material rather than your delivery. Probably the actual marking isn't quite weighted like that but **good content** is important. Watch the **time** - wrap up, deliver your ending, at the Yellow Light – you go through a Red Light at your extreme peril.

Time 7 minutes - 5 – 6 – 7 **NB** Under 4½ minutes or over 7½ minutes = *disqualified*

9. Props etc; you, not the Contest Chair will need to set these up. Without being distracting, where set up is necessary try to do this in the judging interval immediately prior to your speech. Suggestion: the KISS principle is always good.

## Required

10. Your content:
  - Avoid the objectionable (excessive sex, politics, religion) or offensive. Irreverent is fine but objectionable is not.
  - Substantially original (and if you borrow material, give credit to the original).
  - Thematic (not one-liners). There needs to be a logical connection between the elements of your content.

# HUMOROUS SPEECHES

Just as the contest name suggests – it's your usual 7 min TM speech that is essentially funny.

## Features

1. Humour delivery can rely a lot on timing – rehearsal helps a lot.
2. Inserting yourself in the content is good especially if you are the target of any fun making. Avoid making the audience the butt of any joke.
3. The usual structure of a funny story embodies the unexpected or a twist and comprises:

**Set up** – set the stage.

**Pause** – gathers tension before you drop the closer.

**Punch line** – the unexpected phrase or sentence that creates the humour

**Punch word** – is the one word in the punch line which makes the punch line funny and may need emphasis or exaggeration.

**Pause** - but only very briefly and let the joke sink in and audience react. If the audience doesn't react you won't have created 'dead air'. However, if they do react, pause longer and share the moment but move on as fast as seems decent to maintain momentum.

4. KISS – complex humour is hard to deliver effectively.

“My car is so fast the payments are three months behind.”

5. Always give the audience time to enjoy your material, don't rush on without them. Smile by all means but don't be the first (and possibly the only one) to laugh at your jokes.

6. The need to have a theme throughout your material (be thematic) does mean that you can collect jokes that are related and weave a story around them. You aren't allowed to just deliver a string of jokes and one liners but you can build a speech from them if they are thematic

“The economy is so bad that CEO's are now playing miniature golf.”

“The economy is so bad that:if the bank returns your check marked "Insufficient Funds," you call them and ask if they meant you or them”

How does the economy affect you?

7. Every now and then we all deliver a “clunker” – a line that falls flat. Don't panic, just smile and move on. Just possibly your audience will think you were being serious or are laughing inwardly or think there's more to come later.
8. .Consider employing a strategy:

**Target** - aim you material at something or someone.

**Hostility** - make fun of the target

**Realism** - real life can be amusing. Understatement can be effective.

**Exaggeration** - expand and distort or associate ideas that would appear to be related. Grossly inflate something such as a scenario or a description.

**Emotion** - establish rapport by getting your audience seeing your view.

**Surprise** - the unexpected is at the core of humour. Your story, your punch line – they need surprises.

Examples of Target: A blonde enters a store that sells curtains. She tells the salesman: "I would like to buy a pink curtain in the size of my computer screen"

The surprised salesman replies: "But, madam, computers do not have curtains ....

And the blonde said: "Hellooooooooooooo.... I've got Windows.

Jay Leno - "Apple will now offer a free iPhone case for all iPhone users. It's not going to help reception, but it protects the iPhone after you throw it against the wall."

Example of Surprise/Twist: Presently our government is looking at a way fix the road accident statistics; 25% of all accidents are caused by drivers who have been drinking. They are looking to change the blood – alcohol permissible levels. They have got it all wrong. They should make it compulsory to drink before you drive – that would fix the 75% of accidents caused by sober drivers.

9. Never let the truth get in the way of a good story.

10. Remember that 73% of all statistics are made up.

11. Don't apologize for anything – just move on.

"The teacher said; Tommy, this is the fifth day this week you've had to stay after school. What have you to say for yourself?

I'm certainly glad it's Friday, said Tommy."



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Sources :

Advanced Communication and Leadership series, "Humorously Speaking" manual.

"The Lost Art of the great Speech" Richard Dowis