



SPECIAL OCCASION **SPEECHES**

TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL

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**WHERE LEADERS
ARE MADE**

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HOW TO USE THIS SERIES

Each of the advanced manuals in this series assumes you already know the basics of speech – organization, voice, gestures, etc. – but not necessarily that your skills are fully developed. Refer to your **Competent Communication** manual if you need to review some of the principles of speech.

These advanced manuals are designed around four principles:

- ▶ The projects increase in difficulty within each manual, beginning with an overview of the subject and then becoming more specialized as you progress.
- ▶ Each subject incorporates what you have learned from the preceding ones, and it is assumed you will use these techniques whether or not they are specifically referred to in that section.
- ▶ The projects supply more information than you need to complete each particular assignment. This will give you ideas for future talks.
- ▶ It is the speech preparation and delivery that teach you, not just reading the project in the manual.

BE SURE TO

- ▶ Read each project at least twice for full understanding.
- ▶ Make notes in the margin as you read.
- ▶ Underline key passages.
- ▶ Repeat projects as necessary until you are satisfied with your mastery of a subject.
- ▶ Ask for an evaluation discussion or panel whenever you wish, especially if few of your club members have completed the *Competent Communication* manual.
- ▶ Credit up to two speeches per manual given outside a Toastmasters club if:
 - 1) your vice president education agrees in advance
 - 2) a Toastmasters evaluator is present, completes the written project evaluation, gives a verbal evaluation
 - 3) you meet all project objectives.
- ▶ Have your vice president education sign the Project Completion Record in this manual after you complete each project.
- ▶ Apply for Advanced Communicator Bronze, Advanced Communicator Silver, or Advanced Communicator Gold recognition when you have completed the appropriate manuals and met the other requirements listed in the back of this manual.

INTRODUCTION

Occasionally you may be called upon to give a special kind of speech, one presented in honor of a friend, relative, or co-worker. Perhaps a loved one has passed away and you will be saying a few words at the service. Or you have been invited to a formal awards banquet at which you will be a recipient.

Speeches such as these can be difficult to give because they often involve sentiment or special decorum. If the occasion is a sad one or even a happy one, you may be hesitant to speak for fear of becoming upset or inadvertently saying something that will offend. Perhaps modesty and embarrassment also contribute toward making you hesitant to accept an award.

Such speeches are indeed challenging, but you can give them successfully. This manual contains five speaking assignments which will help you develop the necessary skills for giving special occasion speeches. In the first project, you will present a special occasion toast. Project Two requires you to give a speech in praise of another individual. In the third project, you will have fun participating in a "roast." The project following asks you to present an award to someone. Finally, you will learn how to accept an award with style and ease.

Skills such as these can come into play not just during the dramatic events of your life, but during day-to-day experiences when a special comment or reply is required. However you apply the skills acquired from the following assignments, you will be sure to expand your presentation skills and become a proficient special occasion speaker!

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Weddings, anniversaries, and other celebrations often call for a toast. A toast bestows best wishes as well as hopes for health, happiness, good fortune, and other positive thoughts. A good toast has an opening, body, and conclusion and fits the occasion in both mood and language. When giving a toast, take care not to embarrass anyone and be sensitive to your audience and to the occasion.

OBJECTIVES:

- Recognize the characteristics of a toast.
- Present a toast honoring an occasion or a person.

Time: Two to three minutes

MASTERING THE TOAST

What is a toast? Whenever you raise your glass and drink a toast, you are participating in a custom that dates back to the times when citizens of ancient Rome and Greece drank to honor their gods. The concept of the toast, in fact, originated with the Romans, who were accustomed to browning their bread in the fire. When the bread became too hard to chew, it was placed at the bottom of wine kegs and tankards to collect the sediments. The toast concept eventually expanded to include the drink in which the bread had been soaked – and even the person in whose honor the drink was about to be consumed. Hence the term, “the toast of the town.”

Toasting customs vary from country to country. The English gave them on bended knee. Brawny Scotsmen, on the other hand, stood on chairs and put one foot on the table. The French brought civility to the custom with a bow. It is a Western custom to raise one’s glass and then touch the glasses of all others assembled.

Today toasts are offered for a variety of occasions: engagement parties, weddings, birthday celebrations, going-away parties, anniversaries, retirement banquets, and dinner parties, to name but a few. And in keeping with changing mores and customs, toasts do not necessarily involve wine or other alcoholic drinks; water, tea, coffee, juice, and other beverages also are acceptable for toasting.

Toasts generally make reference to the occasion and/or to the person being honored and offer some thought or perspective on the occasion. A typical toast will bestow best wishes as well as hopes for health, happiness, and good fortune, and other positive thoughts. Some offer advice. All can be as serious, witty, sentimental, or poetic as the giver wishes.

You are probably most familiar with the simple toasts – “Cheers!” or “Here’s to you!” But a well-done toast requires more thought, as illustrated by this toast to friends:

*“Here’s a toast to the future,
A toast to the past,
And a toast to our friends, far and near.
May the future be pleasant;
The past a bright dream;
May our friends remain faithful and dear.”*

Toasts generally make reference to the occasion and/or to the person being honored.

PREPARING THE TOAST

Any number of books on toasts may be found in libraries and bookstores; most of them will offer a selection of toasts for a variety of occasions. The nicest toasts are those that are personalized by the giver for the recipient or for the occasion. Such toasts often include personal stories about the recipient or the occasion and perhaps an appropriate quote. A well-done, personal toast requires careful thought, as in this toast to a bride and groom:

The nicest toasts are those that are personalized by the giver for the recipient or for the occasion.

Our bride and groom both are musicians. Elizabeth is an accomplished violinist, and Brian a pianist.

Elizabeth and Brian, we hope your life together will be similar to the music you love. May you both always play in the same key and may your troubles be minor and your joys major. We hope for a harmony, with no sharp words or flat moments. Take turns playing the solo part and occasionally lend the other an accompaniment. Remember to keep your tones balanced properly, so one instrument does not drown out the other. Sometimes a duet can produce harsh notes, but strive with your skills not to play them. Always avoid the shrill and strident chords.

Now let us drink to our two musicians. May Elizabeth and Brian make beautiful music together!

When preparing a toast, remember the following:

- ▶ Prepare an opening, body, and conclusion. A toast is a speech.
- ▶ Make sure it fits the occasion in both mood and language. For formal gatherings, the toast should be dignified, although some humor is appropriate. For informal occasions, where guests are likely to be acquainted with one another, toasts can be lighter in tone and phrased to fit the relaxed atmosphere.
- ▶ Avoid clichés. Tired expressions such as “Down the hatch!” or “Here’s mud in your eye!” are the last refuge of the uncertain toastmaster.
- ▶ Be sincere. The best toasts are heartfelt.
- ▶ Don’t embarrass anyone. Be sensitive to your audience and to the occasion.
- ▶ Use vocal variety; the same techniques used for a speech are applicable to your toast.

TOASTING ETIQUETTE

Timing is important when giving a toast. Generally, the best time is after the chosen beverage has been poured for all guests and the room is relatively quiet. For large public occasions such as banquets, stand and look about the room until you have everyone’s attention. If a few people continue to talk, gently tap a glass with a spoon to suggest the sound of a toast. Then, when you have everyone’s attention, say, “I wish to propose a toast to (the person or occasion).” At this time everyone should lift their glasses. When all have done so, give the toast, making eye contact with guests around the room. If toasting one or more people, finish your toast as you look at each of them.

For formal occasions, ask the guests to rise with you in drinking the toast. If the toast is being directed to a particular person or to several people, the individuals remain seated and do not drink with the others; after the toast is drunk, they rise and briefly thank the others. For informal occasions, all remain seated as the toast giver lifts her glass, pronounces the toast, and then leads the assembled company in gently clinking glasses together before consuming their beverages. Again, if the toast is made to a particular person or to several people, those people do not drink with the others; they simply thank them afterwards and then drink.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

For this project speech, prepare, rehearse, and deliver an original two- to three-minute toast in honor of the occasion or person of your choice. For example, you could toast the winner of your club's membership-building contest, or the anniversary of your club's formation. Or you could role play the toast. In a role play, you imagine a specific situation involving you and your audience, and then you act out the given situation. For example, you could pretend to toast your friend at his retirement party; for this situation, you would designate one member of your audience to act as your friend and the others to act as guests. If you prefer, you could simply toast someone, living or dead, whom you admire. For example, you could toast William Shakespeare. You could also toast an occasion from history.

Your toast should clearly state the occasion or person being honored and be personalized with a relevant story. Remember to consider the guests in attendance as you compose and deliver your toast. If you are role playing a situation, be sure to explain this to your listeners and instruct them in their roles beforehand.

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **MASTERING THE TOAST**

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: The purpose of this project is for the speaker to present a two- to three-minute toast in honor of a person or special occasion. The toast is to be original, and the audience is to serve as the guests at the toast. The toast must clearly state the occasion or person being honored and be personalized through stories, anecdotes, or quotes relating to the subject. It is suggested you read the entire project before the presentation. In addition to your verbal evaluation, please give written responses to the questions below.

- ▶ How well did the speaker indicate the occasion or person being honored?

- ▶ Describe how effectively the speaker personalized the toast.

- ▶ Were stories, anecdotes, or quotes used?

- ▶ How effectively did the speaker use vocal variety and eye contact in presenting the toast?

- ▶ Was the toast appropriate for the occasion or person being honored?

- ▶ What could the speaker have done differently to make the toast more effective?

- ▶ What did you like about the toast?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At some time you will be called upon to speak in praise of someone – perhaps at a retirement banquet, anniversary celebration, or the funeral of a friend or family member. The most successful speeches of praise are inspirational, pointing out the meaning of another person's life and relating that meaning to our own lives. Talk about the individual and his or her accomplishments, including the qualities that made the person worthy of praise and the lessons we may learn from the person.

OBJECTIVES:

- Prepare a speech praising or honoring someone, either living or dead.
- Address five areas concerning the individual and his/her accomplishments.
- Include anecdotes illustrating points within the speech.

Time: Five to seven minutes

SPEAKING IN PRAISE

As you continue to grow and develop your speaking abilities as a Toastmaster, it is more than likely that you will be called to speak at special functions or during certain occasions. Next month's banquet honoring a retiring co-worker, for example, will require someone to stand and say a few words. Or you may be asked to speak at an anniversary or birthday party, or perhaps at the funeral of a friend or family member.

These types of speeches generally require you to speak in praise of the individual being honored by reviewing their positive qualities and characteristics. Such speeches are sometimes referred to as eulogies and can be difficult to deliver, particularly if the situation involves loss. A funeral is by nature an emotionally draining event; speaking about a recently departed loved one can intensify these emotions and cause even the most experienced Toastmaster to lose confidence and poise. Likewise, a farewell party, retirement banquet, or anniversary or birthday party are potentially sentimental events that can make presentations difficult.

DIFFERENT METHODS

The most successful speeches of praise are inspirational. They point out the meaning of another person's life and relate that meaning to our own lives. This can be accomplished in one of two ways.

When using a biographical approach, the speaker mentions the major influential events of the individual's life in chronological order, discussing how each event shaped that person's life. The danger in this approach, of course, is that the speech may become too much of a biographical sketch, with a dull, lengthy recitation of facts.

In the second method, the speaker selects one or two specific attributes that best describe the individual and then elaborates on those attributes. For example, if the individual had a developmentally disabled child, was concerned about the lack of community facilities and programs for the disadvantaged, and worked to start a community program for disabled children, you could discuss this concern for disabled children, the contributions the individual made that improved the situation in the community unit, obstacles that were overcome, and the individual's place in community history.

The most successful speeches of praise are inspirational.

SELECTING MATERIAL

Whatever approach you choose in selecting material for the speech, remember to personalize it. Talk about the individual and his or her accomplishments, including:

- ▶ the qualities that make or made the individual great or worthy of praise
- ▶ the individual's source of power or inspiration
- ▶ the debt we owe the individual
- ▶ the inspiration we may receive or the lessons we may learn from the individual
- ▶ the individual's place in history

Illustrate these points with personal stories of events you may have witnessed that demonstrated such qualities as wisdom, concern, or sense of humor. Be honest and sincere. But avoid dissembling. Instead, use the person's idiosyncrasies and peccadillos to emphasize his or her humanness and to point out that despite weaknesses or shortcomings the individual still was – or is – a good person. If possible, include some humor.

A funny anecdote about the individual can help provide some relief for a stressful event. Again, be sincere and avoid roasting the individual. (You will have the opportunity to roast someone in Project Three.) If an extra quote or poem illustrates a particular point you are making, be sure to include it.

If parts of your speech cause you to become upset during rehearsal, leave them out.

KEEPING IN CONTROL

As you prepare your speech of praise, pay careful attention to your opening and closing, especially if the speech is to be given at a funeral or other stressful occasion. Create an opening statement that is free of emotion-arousing thoughts or words – one that you know you will be able to say with ease – and continue in this fashion for a few more sentences. This will allow you to build confidence and poise as you begin to speak. Be sure to rehearse your speech. If any material causes you to become upset during rehearsal, leave it out, and retain only the material you know you can deliver. Conclude your speech with a positive statement, anecdote, or quote that fits the occasion and the message you are conveying.

If your voice begins to quaver during your presentation, pause and take a deep breath. Focus on your words, not on the occasion or your feelings. Remember, too, that a shaky voice does not mean you must stop delivering your message; it simply adds to the poignancy of the moment.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

For this project, you will prepare and present a five- to seven-minute speech that is in praise of someone. The occasion could be a funeral, retirement banquet, anniversary, or farewell party. The individual being praised may be a friend, relative, or co-worker. You may also role play. You could also speak in praise of a famous person or someone whom you admire, living or dead. For example, you could speak in praise of Elvis Presley at the opening of a museum dedicated to him, or in praise of Dr. Martin Luther King on the anniversary of his birth or death.

Be sure the Toastmaster introducing you mentions the occasion for which your speech has been prepared to the audience.

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **SPEAKING IN PRAISE**

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: The purpose of this project is for the speaker to present a five- to seven-minute speech praising someone. The occasion has been selected by the speaker. The speech is to be inspirational, pointing out the qualities of the individual and the meaning of the individual's life, as well as relating that meaning to our own lives. In addition to your verbal evaluation, please give written responses to the questions below.

- ▶ How well did the speech suit the occasion?

- ▶ What parts of the speech were most effective?

- ▶ How effectively did the speaker identify and illustrate the individual's qualities, accomplishments, power, and inspiration sources, and his/her impact on society and history?

- ▶ How did the speaker use this individual's qualities and accomplishments to inspire the audience?

- ▶ How well did the speaker use stories and anecdotes concerning the individual to illustrate points?

- ▶ What could the speaker have done differently to make the speech more effective?

- ▶ What did you like about the speech?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

A roast is another way to honor or recognize a person. Unlike the speech of praise in Project 2, a roast relies on wit, humor, and satire to convey its message. The guest of honor must be agreeable and capable of handling the jokes. Carefully select jokes and anecdotes that relate to the guest of honor, making sure that your material will not hurt the guest of honor's feelings. Rehearse your stories and jokes and make sure your punch lines can be heard.

OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ Poke fun at a particular individual in a good-natured way.
- ▶ Adapt and personalize humorous material from other sources.
- ▶ Deliver jokes and humorous stories effectively.

Time: Three to five minutes

THE ROAST

Used in the speaking sense, the word “roast” implies that heat is being applied to someone – that someone is being “cooked” or embarrassed in some way. Actually, a roast can be considered a positive recognition, in which an individual and his or her achievements are honored by friends, co-workers, and family. However, unlike the speech of praise, a roast relies on wit, humor, and satire to convey the message.

Retirement, farewell, promotion, and anniversary parties can all be occasions for roasts. Most often the individual being honored is roasted by numerous others, each delivering several minutes of material. This roast material generally consists of jokes and anecdotes about the honored guest's person, accomplishments, escapades, and eccentricities. The jokes and anecdotes are good natured – not mean-spirited – and may not even be true! But they are funny. And, best of all, at the end of the roast the recipient is given an opportunity to respond.


PREPARING THE MATERIAL

A successful roast begins with a willing guest of honor. This individual must be agreeable and capable of handling the verbal abuse with grace and cheerfulness. Also, you – and everyone attending or participating in the roast – must know and like the person well enough, or the roast simply won't be funny.

Once it has been established that the guest is willing and is known fairly well by all who will attend, you are ready to begin assembling your roast material.

Begin by making a list of everything you know about the guest of honor, such as:

- ▶ family
- ▶ education
- ▶ employment
- ▶ personal characteristics (including appearance and mannerisms)
- ▶ hobbies
- ▶ travel experience
- ▶ outstanding achievements
- ▶ personal philosophies



A roast relies on wit, humor, and satire to convey a message.

If necessary, talk to the individual's family and friends to fill in any missing information. It is important to find out as much as you can, since this information will serve as the basis for your material.

Next, select several of the above areas which have the most promising information and to which most of your audience can relate. Then begin collecting jokes and anecdotes that address these areas. You will find a great deal of material in joke

The success or failure of material largely depends on its delivery. The key to success is rehearsal.

books, newspapers, and magazines. Then adapt the material to your guest of honor. Don't neglect to include original jokes and stories and events that actually happened.

As an example, consider this scenario: The person you are roasting, Ed, is a co-worker, known for both his determination and for meeting deadlines against all odds, and the occasion is his promotion to vice president. One of your jokes could be, "We experienced some delays in Project X, and Ed was very upset. I said, 'Ed, Rome wasn't built in a day.' He replied, 'I wasn't in charge of that job.'" You could then talk about Ed's contributions to the company, saying, "Ed takes credit for a lot of accomplishments . . . mine mostly."

Remember, since this is a good humored roast rather than a sober testimonial, your jokes need not be reality-based. Instead, start with a kernel of truth, then exaggerate it or distort it to unbelievable levels. Or your story could be completely fantasy-based.

Whatever jokes or anecdotes you select, be sure they suit you. You must be comfortable with them, and your audience must be comfortable hearing you tell them. For example, if you are normally a reserved person, no one is likely to accept a story from you about the time you and Ed performed in a rodeo together. But they would accept your story about the marriage advice Ed once gave you.

Above all, be sure your material will not hurt the feelings of the guest of honor. Generally, it is safe to poke fun at things that the guest of honor kids himself about. For example, if the guest of honor often jokes about her terrible tennis game, you can safely joke about her tennis abilities as well. Even so, ask someone close to the guest of honor to review your material beforehand to determine if anything might be offensive. If something is questionable, rewrite or eliminate it.

In all cases, use good taste and avoid using profanity or "blue" material; you risk offending or embarrassing not only the audience but the guest of honor as well.

YOUR DELIVERY

Are you uncomfortable telling a joke? Do you think that some people are just born to be funny – and you're not one of them? The truth is, people can tell a joke if it is right for them, if they are familiar with it, and if they have overcome their nervousness through rehearsal and coaching.

Some of the best jokes come from surprise and incongruity; when shy, quiet Nancy delivers a knockout joke, the audience will roar.

The key is rehearsal. Delivery can make or break the best material in the world. Practice your roast so thoroughly that all clumsiness, false starts, and mumbled punch lines are eliminated. And remember to be yourself. Too often novice humorists try to imitate their favorite comedian, the usual result being an uncomfortable silence from the audience. Avoid such embarrassments by telling your stories and jokes in the same way you normally speak. Enunciate properly and speak slowly, remembering always to project your voice. Don't rush through your material – especially your punch lines! Always maintain good eye contact with your audience, and use gestures naturally.

Once you feel your material is ready, rehearse your delivery with family or friends. Ask for their advice. Should you pause in certain places for effect? Gesture a certain way? Change a joke or anecdote?

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

For this project, you will create and present a three- to five-minute roast.

The occasion – e.g., retirement banquet, anniversary, or farewell party – will be selected by you. The speech is to be humorous, including jokes and anecdotes about the honored guest that may be adapted from other sources. The presentation should be good-natured and not offend the individual or the audience.

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **THE ROAST**

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: The purpose of this project is for the speaker to present a three- to five-minute roast. The occasion – retirement banquet, anniversary, farewell party, etc. – has been selected by the speaker. The roast is to include jokes and anecdotes adapted from other sources to apply to the honored guest. In addition to your oral evaluation, please give written responses to the questions below.

- ▶ How well were the jokes and anecdotes adapted to the occasion and to the individual being roasted?

- ▶ How did the speaker's delivery contribute to or hinder the effectiveness of the humorous material?

- ▶ How effective were the jokes and anecdotes?

- ▶ How did the speaker's body language and vocal variety add to the impact of the roast?

- ▶ What could the speaker have done differently to make the speech more effective?

- ▶ What did you like about the speech?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

How an award is presented conveys to the audience and the recipient how important the award and the accomplishments it recognizes are. Be sure to explain the purpose of the award, why the organization presents it, and what the recipient did to deserve it. Point out the recipient's dedication, sacrifices, and contributions, and give examples. Keep your remarks brief. The star of the event should be the award recipient, not the presenter.

OBJECTIVES:

- Present an award with dignity and grace.
- Acknowledge the contributions of the recipient.

Time: Three to four minutes

PRESENTING AN AWARD

Presentations of awards require just as much grace, dignity, and sincerity as award acceptances. In addition, presenters must include words that express the spirit of the award and the event.

Occasions for presenting awards vary. Awards can be given for business or community service (for example, someone who has been with a company for 25 years often receives a service award) or in recognition of accomplishments (the most sales in a year) or contributions (appreciation for donations and support).

When preparing a presentation speech, refer to the occasion. Remind everyone why they have gathered. Explain the purpose of the award you are about to present, and emphasize how the award is a symbol of the real appreciation of the contributions the recipient has made, or of the high regard in which the recipient is held.

Then pay tribute to the recipient. Explain the recipient's dedication and sacrifices as well as the contributions. Illustrate your statements with examples; the audience should clearly understand why the recipient deserves this award. If appropriate, explain the criteria the recipient fulfilled to receive the award and any other reasons the recipient deserves the award.

A presentation speech may sound like the following:

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to our annual "Employee of the Year" ceremonies. Each year the Acme Company recognizes the one employee whose work, dedication, and enthusiasm has helped move our organization forward. The selection process is not easy. With more than 5,000 employees and many qualified people, identifying the one person who is most deserving is difficult.

The selection process begins at the department level. Each department manager in the five divisions nominates one person. These nominations are forwarded to the division vice president. Each of the five division vice presidents working with a special committee then chooses one person from each of these nominees. Out of these five finalists the Acme Company Employee of the Year is chosen.

This year's Employee of the Year was chosen for several reasons. She made a suggestion that saved this company more than \$15,000 this year. She also was instrumental in preparing the proposal that helped us to obtain the Wilson Power Plant contract, which is worth more than \$5 million to Acme Company. Her enthusiasm and drive are amazing. When the state government moved up the deadline for the proposal,

Pay tribute to the recipient explaining his or her dedication, sacrifices, and contributions.

then changed the specifications, she didn't complain. Instead, she said, "Let's get started!" and worked seven days a week until the proposal was finished. Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in honoring this year's Employee of the Year, Elizabeth Jones, from our New Business Development Division.

Keep your remarks brief. The star of the event should be the award recipient, not the presenter.

PRESENTING THE AWARD

The presentation of the award itself should be carefully planned and the presentation area set up. Make sure the award is displayed where everyone can see it – perhaps on a table next to the lectern. If possible, meet with the recipient before the ceremony and brief him or her on the presentation process, including where to stand and how to hold the award.

Now you are ready for the actual presentation. After you have explained the award and paid tribute to the recipient, pick up the award and, holding it where the audience can see it, call the recipient to the stage.

Standing with your side turned slightly toward the audience, present the award with the hand nearest to the recipient. Address the recipient by name and present the award, mentioning again that it is a token of your organization's gratitude or high regard. Once the award has been transferred, provide time for the recipient to give an acceptance speech. Step away from the lectern while the recipient speaks; if the acceptance speech will be several minutes long, return to your seat.

**Keep your remarks brief.
The star of the event should
be the award recipient, not
the presenter.**

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

This project will involve the presentation of an award to someone and should be three to four minutes long. Assign the award's presentation on behalf of a company or organization of your choice. If possible, ask another member working in this manual to accept the award, as described in Project Five. Otherwise, you may ask the Toastmaster introducing you to mention the occasion for which you are presenting the award. Be sure to have some type of award on hand to use as a prop during your presentation.

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **PRESENTING AN AWARD**

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: The purpose of this project is for the speaker to present an award with dignity, grace, and sincerity. The presentation speech should be three to four minutes in length. The speaker will explain the purpose of the award and why the recipient deserves it. In addition to your verbal evaluation, please give written responses to the questions below.

- ▶ Did the speaker clearly explain the purpose of the award?

- ▶ How effectively did the speaker convey the reasons the recipient deserved the award?

- ▶ How sincere was the speaker in his/her praise?

- ▶ What could the speaker have done differently to make the speech more effective?

- ▶ What did you like about the speech?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Accepting an award graciously requires thought and preparation. Your acceptance speech should sincerely display your gratitude to the organization giving the award and acknowledge the organization's work and its importance. Be modest and dignified. Keep your acceptance speech brief. As you accept the award, stand slightly sideways toward the audience, reach for and take it with the hand nearest the presenter, then hold it in full view of the audience.

OBJECTIVES:

- Accept an award with dignity, grace, and sincerity.
- Acknowledge the presenting organization.

Time: Five to seven minutes

ACCEPTING AN AWARD

The Oscars, the Grammys, the Tonys, the Emmys . . . just about everyone has watched at least a few minutes of the awards programs that show up with increasing frequency on television sets worldwide. Or maybe you have attended an awards presentation of some kind yourself. What did you observe about the award recipients?

Most likely you saw one recipient sob hysterically while gushing, "Thank you, thank you, thank you" over and over again. Another recipient responded with a laconic, "Thanks, but I really don't deserve this." And still another read from a list of at least 20 names, with the following introduction, "I owe everything to these people – they should be receiving this award, not me."

By the end of the evening, you and everyone else in attendance had concluded that the honorees lacked grace, dignity, tact, and charm as they accepted their awards, and you were absolutely right.

GRACIOUS ACCEPTANCE

Accepting an award graciously requires some thought and preparation. Here are three ingredients that every acceptance speech should include.

Gratitude. Always thank the one or two people who played a major role in your achievement.

For example, the local natural history museum is presenting you with its "Volunteer of the Year" award. In your acceptance speech you could say, "One person is responsible for my efforts on behalf of the museum. After I retired from Acme Company, my friend and museum curator Janet Jones telephoned me and said, 'Jim, you have too much talent to waste sitting at home. Why don't you volunteer here at the museum? We sure could use you.'

Janet, I thank you for your encouragement; you opened up a whole new world for me."

If more than two were helpful, don't address each by name. Instead, issue a general acknowledgement and later thank each one privately. Remember that a long list of names quickly becomes boring for your audience. And consider the feelings of those giving you the award; they gave the award to you, not to your friends.

Recognition. Recognize the organization giving the award. Tell about its work and its importance to others and to you. Show your appreciation, but don't grovel. For example, as you accept the "Volunteer of the Year" award, you could say, "This museum is an important part of our community. It helps our children learn about the

► **Accepting an award graciously requires thought and preparation.**

past and enables them to prepare for the future. Members of the museum staff, it is your actions and efforts that make this happen."

Sincerity. The best thanks an audience or organization can receive is an honest and unexaggerated expression of gratitude. Never gush, but don't be reluctant to convey your own feelings, briefly stated, regarding your appreciation of the award and all that it represents. Each person possesses a style uniquely his or her own; your objective is to succinctly communicate the genuine pleasure you take in being recognized.

In most cases, your acceptance speech can and should be brief. Sometimes, however, when the recipient of the award is announced before the presentation ceremony, the recipient is expected to speak for five or 10 minutes. Should this be the case, you may expand your speech to include an anecdote or two, or perhaps discuss your plans for the future as they are connected with the award or the work associated with it.

MIND YOUR MANNERS

When accepting an award, don't say, "I really don't deserve this." Such remarks question the judgment of the organization presenting the award. After all, they gave careful thought and consideration to their award recipient; accept their decision graciously.

Likewise, stating that, "I've wanted this for so long!" is also unflattering. In effect, you are telling your audience that you did what you did just to get this recognition. Are you that shallow and conceited?

Always remember to be modest and dignified. Don't review everything you did to achieve the award. Most people already know about your effort. And don't be arrogant or extremely proud, or eagerly bound onto the stage as they announce your name. You could make them sorry they gave it to you.

RECEIVING THE AWARD

When the award presenter announces your name, approach the stage or rise and step toward him or her if you are already on the stage. If you approach from the audience, come forward promptly, but don't rush or leisurely stroll to the stage. On stage, stand near the presenter but avoid blocking the award. Do not stare at the award anxiously or reach for it before the presenter extends it to you. When accepting your award, stand slightly sideways toward the audience, then reach for and take it with the hand nearest the presenter. This way you avoid reaching in front of yourself or turning your body away from the audience. After receiving the award, hold it in full view of the audience. If it is too large or heavy to hold, place it on the lectern, step to one side, and begin your speech. When you have finished speaking, carry the award in your hand as you return to your seat.

Briefly convey your appreciation of the award and all that it represents.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

For this project, you will be giving a five- to seven-minute award acceptance speech. The award can be from the company or organization of your choice for an accomplishment of your choice. If possible, ask another member working in this manual to present the award to you, as described in Project Four. Otherwise, ask the Toastmaster introducing you to mention the occasion upon which your acceptance speech is being made. Be sure to have an item on hand to use as a prop. Do not use notes.

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **ACCEPTING AN AWARD**

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: The purpose of this project is for the speaker to accept an award with dignity, grace, and sincerity. The acceptance speech is to be five to seven minutes in length and given without notes. The speaker is to acknowledge those who helped him or her and recognize the importance and work of the presenting organization. In addition to your oral evaluation, please give written responses to the questions below.

- ▶ How effectively did the speaker express gratitude to the organization presenting the award?

- ▶ How did the speaker recognize the organization presenting the award?

- ▶ How sincere was the speaker in his/her thanks and gratitude?

- ▶ Did the speaker appear comfortable and gracious while accepting the award?

- ▶ What could the speaker have done differently to make the speech more effective?

- ▶ What did you like about the speech?

APPENDIX

Project Completion Record **SPECIAL OCCASION SPEECHES**

PROJECT	SPEECH TITLE	DATE	VICE PRESIDENT EDUCATION'S INITIALS
1. Mastering the Toast			
2. Speaking in Praise			
3. The Roast			
4. Presenting an Award			
5. Accepting an Award			

Save this page to verify your completion of the projects in this manual. Submit the Project Completion Record form from the appropriate manuals when applying for the Advanced Communicator Bronze, Advanced Communicator Silver, or Advanced Communicator Gold awards.