



District 36 Toastmasters

How to Be a Contest Chief Judge

Jay Moore, DTM, District 36 Chief Judge 2007-2008

Before the Contest Day

You should read the contest rules and be sure you understand them. You should coordinate with the Contest Master to ensure the necessary equipment will be available. You will need a set of timing lights, backup timing cards, and two stop watches. You will also need all the contest forms¹ to include:

- Contest judging forms, as appropriate
 - Humorous Speech—Fall
 - Table Topics—Fall
 - International Speech—Spring
 - Evaluation—Spring
 - Tie Breaking Judge forms
- Timing forms
- Ballot Counter's forms
- Contestant Eligibility forms

Chief Judge Responsibilities

The Chief Judge does not vote, but you are responsible for:

- Appointing and briefing the contest judges, ballot counters, and timers.
- Providing the eligibility and judging forms to be used for the contest.
- Selecting a Tie Breaking judge.
- Briefing the contest audience when directed to do so by the Contest Master.
- Coordinating with the Contest Master to determine who will brief which topics to the audience before the contest begins.
- Overseeing the ballot counting.
- Providing a list of winners to the Contest Master.
- Handling protests.

Selecting Judges

When selecting judges for a contest, there are several things to keep in mind. You want judges that are knowledgeable and know the contest rules. You want judges that will be accurate, fair, trustworthy, and good listeners. And above all, you want judges who will eliminate their biases as much as possible. At each level you should select judges who have judged previously at the

next lower contest level. Ideally, you want Area judges who have judged at least at the Club level and Division judges who have previously judged at the Area level. Judges must be members in good standing, and at Area level and above for the International Speech Contest should have completed at least six manual speeches and been a member since July 1 of the previous year.

At the **Area** level, there should be at least five judges. Although it is preferable to have judges who are not members of a club with a contestant, this is usually not possible at the Area level. When using judges from clubs with a contestant, you should have the same number of judges from each club. At the **Division** level, there should be a minimum of seven judges and equal representation from each Area within the Division. No judge should be a member of a club represented by a contestant. You will also need a Tiebreaking Judge, two timers, and three ballot counters. A member still competing in the same contest, even if competing in another Area, Division, or District cannot be a judge or Chief Judge.

Designating the Speaking Area

Technically, this is the responsibility of the Contest Master, but sometimes the Chief Judge does it. Both you and the Contest Master need to be clear on the speaking area and brief the contestants and judges on it. What to define as the speaking area will normally be obvious from the set up of the room. If there is a raised platform or stage and it is large enough for a speaker to move about freely, then I would designate that as the speaking area. If not, then pick an area that keeps the speaker in front of the audience and is wide and deep enough for the speaker to move about freely. It may be from the wall behind the speaker to about 3 feet in front of the audience and the width of the audience. You do not want the speaker walking down an aisle into the audience or being right in someone's face.

Briefing the Judges

The Chief Judge should call together all the judges, timers, and ballot counters, and brief them at the same time the Contest Master briefs the contestants. The Chief Judge should cover the following items during the briefing:

- Ensure none of the judges are still competing in the contest they are judging.
- Review the contest rules.
- Review and explain the judging form.
- Advise the judges against bias of any kind.
- Remind the judges not to consider timing in their voting.
- Review the speaking area. Remind judges a speaker can be marked down for stepping out of the speaking area, but it is not a disqualification.
- Remind the judges to sign their ballot.
- Remind the judges that they must break their own ties and should select a first, second, and third place winner.
- Review who can protest and how.

- Remind the judges to score based on the best performance tonight. Do not consider past performances or whether they have heard the speech previously.
- Remind the judges that all judging is confidential and no details should be given to contestants or anyone else, even after the contest is finished.
- Remind judges there will be a minute of silence between each speaker.
- Brief the Tie Breaking judge that he must rank **ALL** contestants on his ballot, not just the top three. Do not let others know who you have selected as the Tie Breaking judge.

Briefing the Timers

The Chief Judge will normally brief the timers right after the judges are briefed and should cover the following items:

- One timer should operate the timing signal and one operate the stop watch.
- The timing starts with the first verbal or non-verbal communication with the audience.
- The timing ends when the speaker acknowledges the Contest Master or when it is obvious that the speech is finished.
- If the speaker is still speaking when the red light comes on, the red light stays on until the speaker is finished speaking.

Briefing the Audience

When the Contest Master introduces you and asks you to brief the audience, you should have already conferred with the Contest Master to determine who will cover what. All of the following should be covered by either the Contest Master or Chief Judge:

- Explain the contest timing and have the timers demo the timing lights.
- Describe the speaking area.
- Remind the audience to turn off cell phones, pagers, etc.
- Remind the audience there will be no photography while a contestant is speaking.
- Remind audience not to enter or leave the room while a contestant is speaking.
- Explain the minute of silence between each contestant.

After the Contest

Either the Contest Master or the Chief Judge should brief the winners and alternates about the next level of the contest. Let them know when and where if that information has already been determined. Also, remember that you cannot divulge details about the contest judging to anyone, including contestants.

Additional Rules

Here are some rules that may come into play and that the Chief Judge should be aware of:

- A contestant does not have to be present at the briefing, but he is disqualified if he is not present by the time the Contest Master is introduced.
- Announcement of contest winners is final unless the Chief Judge, ballot counters, or timers immediately interrupt to correct the error.
- If there is a technical failure of the timing lights, the speaker is allowed an extra 30 seconds before being disqualified.
- Protests can only be lodged by a contestant or a judge and must be made before the winner is announced. If there is a protest regarding originality you should gather all the judges. The contestant must be given the opportunity to respond and a majority of the judges must agree before the contestant is disqualified.

You should also have a copy of the contest rules¹ with you, in case something comes up for which you do not know the answer.

¹The 2010 Speech Contest Rulebook can be found on the Toastmasters International website at <http://www.toastmasters.org/rulebook.aspx>.