

THE TOASTMASTERS EXPERIENCE

You may be more comfortable communicating by electronic mail or telephone than in person. Speaking to large or small groups, or even one-to-one, may intimidate or frighten you. Yet good communication skills are vital if you want to be successful. Corporate leaders say that the ability to communicate well orally is one of the most important skills their recruiters look for in job candidates. Businesses want people who express themselves clearly and confidently, and are persuasive and comfortable communicating with a wide range of people, from top executives to assembly-line workers.

Most schools and universities don't offer this type of training. Toastmasters does. In Toastmasters you'll learn how to formulate, express, and sell your ideas and yourself with poise and confidence. You'll improve your ability to listen and evaluate others' ideas, and you'll learn leadership skills along the way.

By joining your Toastmasters club, you've embarked on a journey that will greatly improve your life.

HOW IT WORKS

The Toastmasters program is not a college, trade school, or other formal course in public speaking. You'll find no instructors, professors, or classrooms. No one's work is graded and no tests are administered. In Toastmasters, members learn by studying the manuals, practicing, and helping one another. Learning takes place in the club environment. Club meetings are workshops where you study and practice communication and leadership skills with others who are there for the same reasons you are. You learn by doing and by watching fellow club members.

During club meetings you'll build "quick thinking" skills as you give one- to two-minute speeches on general subjects during Table Topics. You'll introduce speakers, conduct meetings, and perform other roles that will give you plenty of practice in a variety of communication experiences. But your greatest learning will come from preparing and presenting speeches based on the projects in this manual.

This manual has 10 speech projects, each designed to develop your speaking skills one step at a time. Every project builds upon what you've learned in the preceding project, so you should present the speeches in numerical order. You'll begin with "The Ice Breaker" speech. Since it will be your first speech before the club, it will be based on an easy subject—yourself. In subsequent speeches you'll learn the importance of organization, speech purpose, proper word usage, body language, and vocal variety. You'll also learn how to do research, use visual aids, speak persuasively, and inspire others. Read each project and Evaluation Guide carefully before you prepare your speech. This is your workbook, so you may write in it.

CENTRAL AUSTIN TOASTMASTERS

2008 Justin Lane, Austin TX

centralaustin.org / Join us on Meetup!

Most of your talks will be only five to seven minutes long. This gives you enough time to develop your topic while still keeping club meetings to a reasonable length, but the principles you learn in a five- to seven-minute speech apply to a 40-minute formal address or a two-minute impromptu speech. You'll learn to speak with confidence, clarity, persuasiveness, and enthusiasm.

An evaluator will give you verbal and written feedback on every speech you present. The evaluator provides a personal opinion of your talk, pointing out its strengths and offering suggestions for improving your next speech. Evaluations have one purpose: to help you become a more effective speaker. Eventually, as you gain more experience, you will evaluate the speeches of others.

This manual teaches you the basics of public speaking. After you finish it, you can begin refining and enhancing your basic speaking skills with the *Advanced Communication Series*. This series consists of 15 manuals with five speech projects each. Some manuals focus on career-related presentations, such as public relations and technical speeches, while others address topics such as interpersonal communication, humor, and storytelling. You choose the manuals to complete and the skills you want to learn.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

You'll learn more than just communication skills in your club. You'll build leadership skills when you complete the 10 projects in the *Competent Leadership* manual. You can develop additional skills by serving as a club officer, formulating and implementing plans to help the club meet members' needs. You may also complete the *High Performance Leadership* program, working on a leadership project related to your personal or professional life. Serving in leadership positions at other levels of the organization also will help improve your leadership skills.

THE REWARDS ARE MANY

Not only will you learn speaking and leadership skills, you will be recognized for your efforts. At any club meeting, you may present one speech for award credit. Once you've completed all 10 projects in this manual, you will receive the Competent Communicator award, a certificate you can display at home or in the office. If you wish, Toastmasters International World Headquarters will also send a letter to your employer about this accomplishment.

But that's only the beginning. Toastmasters provides two educational tracks: a communication track, in which you develop your speaking skills, and a leadership track, in which you develop leadership skills. When you participate in the communication track, you can be recognized as an Advanced Communicator Bronze, Advanced Communicator Silver, and Advanced Communicator Gold. When you participate in the leadership track, you can be recognized as a Competent Leader, Advanced Leader Bronze, and Advanced Leader Silver. The tracks are not mutually exclusive. You may work in both tracks at the same time, and you are encouraged to do so. The ultimate recognition is the Distinguished Toastmaster award, given to those who have worked in both tracks and have received the Advanced Communicator Gold and Advanced Leader Silver awards.

CENTRAL AUSTIN TOASTMASTERS

2008 Justin Lane, Austin TX

centralaustin.org / Join us on Meetup!