



## **Table topics master**

The TM program has a tradition – every member speaks at a meeting. The table topics session is that portion of the meeting which insures this tradition. The purpose of this period is to have members “think on their feet” and speak for a minimum of one minute and a maximum two minutes and thirty seconds [same as contest rules]. The table topics master prepares and issues the topics; originality is desirable as much as possible. Each speaker may be given an individual subject or a choice of subjects may be presented from which the members can draw at random.

### ***Prior to the meeting***

Find out who the prepared speakers, evaluators, general evaluator, and TME are so you can call on the other members first. Only if time permits at the end of the table topics session should you call on program participants (speakers last).

When choosing your specific questions: Select ones that will inspire the speakers to expound on them, give their opinions, etc. Don’t make the questions too long or complicated. Phrase them in such a way that the speaker clearly will know what you want them to talk about. Keep your comments short. Your job is to give others a chance to speak, not to give a series of mini-talks yourself.

Remember, table topics has a twofold purpose: First, to give everyone in the room an opportunity to speak – especially those who are not on the program – and, second, to get people to learn to “think and speak on their feet.”

### ***Upon arrival at the meeting***

Be certain that the timer knows how the timing lights/device works (if the timer hasn’t already done so). Inform the timer about minimum and maximum time. (1 and 2’30”)

### ***During the meeting***

When introduced briefly state the purpose of the table topics session.

Set the stage for your topics program. Keep your remarks brief but enthusiastic. Encourage the speakers to use the “Word of the Day”.

Keep the program rolling; be certain everyone understands the maximum time they have for their response.

State the question briefly – then call on a respondent. This serves two purposes: First, it holds everyone’s attention – each one is thinking of a response should he or she be called on to speak; and second, it adds to the value of the impromptu element by giving everyone an opportunity to improve his or her “better listening and thinking” skills.

Call on speakers at random. Avoid going around the room in the order in which people are sitting. Give each participant a different question. Don’t ask two people the same thing unless you ask each specifically to give the “pro” or “con” side.

Watch your total time! Check the printed agenda for the total time allotted to table topics and adjust the number of questions to end your segment on time. Even if your portion started late, try to end on time to avoid the total meeting running overtime.

At the end of the table topics session ask the timer to report those eligible for the best table topics speaker award. Then ask members to vote for the “best table topics speaker”. Make sure that their votes are passed to the vote counter.