



THE ENTERTAINING **SPEAKER**

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

People like to be entertained. The popularity of books, movies, television programs and DVDs is strong evidence of this. Entertaining speakers are in demand as well. The purpose of an entertaining speaker is simply to offer listeners a pleasant diversion. Conventions and civic, professional, and social club meetings always need entertaining speakers for their programs.

There is a misconception among some people that entertaining speakers have to be funny. This isn't necessarily so. While some entertaining speakers include humor, a speech need not always be funny in order to entertain. The movies you watch may not have a single funny line in them, but you enjoy them. Audiences can be just as entertained by stories of your travels, hobbies or special interests as they are by funny stories or jokes.

This manual will help you learn to give different types of entertaining speeches. In project one you'll learn how to draw on your own personal experiences to create an entertaining speech. In project two, you'll use material from other sources and adapt it for your own speech subject. Project three challenges you to create and deliver an entirely humorous speech and strengthen the speech by adapting humorous material from other sources. The next project provides information on creating a dramatic talk, and for project five you'll prepare an entertaining after-dinner talk incorporating all of the skills learned in the previous four projects. The Appendix contains information about using pauses in your jokes, stories, and anecdotes, as well as information about what to do if your humor falls flat. Most of the projects require five- to seven-minute speeches. If you believe you need more time, discuss the matter with your vice president education well before the meeting to see if the club's program will accommodate a longer speech.

As you'll learn in the projects, your success in telling jokes, stories, and anecdotes may often rely on your vocal variety. Be sure to read the Toastmasters International manual *Your Speaking Voice* (Item 199) for more information about how to use your voice effectively. This manual was included in your New Member Kit. If you have misplaced it, you may purchase another copy from World Headquarters.

The assignments are challenging, but they will provide you with valuable experience in entertaining an audience and you will learn skills you can use in other types of presentations as well.

PROJECT 1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

An entertaining speech need not be funny. It simply gives the audience an opportunity to enjoy themselves in some way. The speech may have a message, but the message is not the major focus of the speech. Relate your talk to the audience and its interests, incorporating personal experiences. Be positive, avoid lecturing, and strive for simplicity. The audience should not have to work too hard to follow your presentation.

OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ Entertain the audience by relating a personal experience.
- ▶ Organize an entertaining speech for maximum impact.

Time: Five to seven minutes

THE ENTERTAINING SPEECH

Entertainment is a universal human need, more in demand today than ever before. Conventions and civic, professional, and social club meetings always need entertaining speakers for its programs. Many speakers assume that entertaining is easy and end up boring their audience to tears. Taking time to learn and practice the fundamentals will help you project that lighthearted relaxation audiences love.

A speech that entertains is like the sizzle in a steak. It is not substantial within itself and it is not meant to be. Its value lies in the enjoyment of the audience. People do not want to work hard mentally, and they don't want to hear anything negative or gloomy.

While some entertaining speeches include humor, a speech need not be funny in order to entertain. The dramas you watch on television, for example, may not have a single funny line in them and yet you thoroughly enjoy them. Your audience may be entertained by your presentation of interesting information or the story of your recent trip. Hearing a dramatic narrative can be just as pleasurable as a humorous talk.

Whatever your approach, keep in mind that you are not there to give the audience deep understanding. Your purpose is to provide an interesting diversion. This doesn't mean the speech can't have a message. But the message should not be the major focus of the speech.

SELECTING A TOPIC

Consider what you do in your free time, what you enjoy reading about, your general interests and use these subjects as the basis for your talk. You could also speak about a common experience with which your audience is familiar. For example, you could talk about driving, shopping, or other day-to-day experiences your audience will have shared.

If the group you will be speaking to has a specific purpose, relate your talk at least loosely to the group and its purposes. For example, if you will be speaking to a gardening club, your talk should be related to gardening and your gardening experiences. When a speaker is personally involved with a topic, most likely the audience will become involved as well. The more personal involvement, interest, and enthusiasm you bring to a speech, the more likely your audience will respond positively.

ORGANIZING YOUR SPEECH

An entertaining speech is more loosely organized than most other types of speeches, but it still should have the following structure:

The more personal involvement, interest, and enthusiasm you bring to a speech, the more likely your audience will respond positively.

- ▶ **Opening.** The opening should provoke an immediate response from the audience, setting the mood for the talk.
- ▶ **Body.** There should be a general direction to your speech, but it need not be rigidly organized into points and transitions. Make the body of the speech a sequence of little buildups to a climax or punch line, followed by a breathing space for the audience to get ready for the next buildup. The construction may be loose and casual, but it should never be careless. Keep the momentum going all the way to the end.
- ▶ **Conclusion.** The conclusion should be brief, sudden, and definite. Save some of your best material for last. Your conclusion should not be an anticlimax. Avoid leaving the impression that you have suddenly run out of material. The audience should feel that your intention has been accomplished and you have reached a natural stopping point.

HAVE A GOOD TIME

If you want your audience to enjoy themselves, you must appear to be enjoying yourself. Be good-natured and optimistic. Avoid focusing on negative things except to make fun of them. The audience does not want argument, persuasion, or lecture. They want to be entertained and they expect you to be their leader. As you construct your speech, keep these points in mind:

The audience does not want argument, persuasion, or lecture. They want to be entertained and they expect you to be their leader.

- ▶ **Simplicity.** The audience should not have to work too hard to follow your presentation. Keep your thoughts and speech organization simple.
- ▶ **Vividness.** Choose your words carefully and make them have impact. For example, instead of saying, "He stood up," say, "He leaped from his chair, his eyes blazing." Strive to create images so real they will linger in listeners' minds.
- ▶ **Twists.** The secret of a successful story is the use of unexpected twists and turns. Your audience is ready to be delighted and thrilled by the unexpected, just as if they were in an amusement park. Don't disappoint them by plodding along in a straight line.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

For this project, prepare, rehearse, and deliver a five- to seven-minute speech whose purpose is simply to entertain the audience. Relate some personal experience. Build up the aspects of the experience to keep the audience entertained. If you wish, assume that your Toastmasters club audience represents some specific group, and practice your ability to relate your talk to their purpose and interests (be sure to advise the Toastmaster of the meeting of this fact).

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **THE ENTERTAINING SPEECH**

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: The speaker is to entertain the audience in a five- to seven-minute talk by relating a personal experience. Pay particular attention to the structure of the talk. Although it will not be as rigidly organized as other types of speeches, it should have some readily apparent organization. In addition to your verbal evaluation, please give written answers to the questions below.

- ▶ What indicated to you that the audience was entertained?

- ▶ Briefly describe the talk's organization as you perceived it.

- ▶ How effectively did the speaker use vivid descriptions and anecdotes or stories?

- ▶ How did the conclusion relate to the rest of the talk?

- ▶ How could the speaker improve the talk?

- ▶ What would you say is the speaker's strongest asset in entertaining speaking?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Stories and anecdotes are an entertaining speaker's lifeblood. Collect and file stories and anecdotes so you can select the right one for every occasion. Then adapt it to make it your own, reflecting your personal speaking style. Make sure your stories and anecdotes relate to your speech topic, are believable, and add to your message.

OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ Draw entertaining material from sources other than your own personal experience.
- ▶ Adapt your material to suit your topic, your own personality, and the audience.

Time: Five to seven minutes

RESOURCES FOR ENTERTAINMENT

Most entertaining speakers are storytellers. They illustrate and support their points with entertaining stories, quotes, and anecdotes. They know that long after a speech is forgotten, the audience will recall these memorable illustrations and thus remember the message that was conveyed.

Stories and anecdotes are powerful tools because they reduce broad or abstract topics to a human level that anyone can understand. Most listeners are far less interested in facts, problems, and trends than in how those things affect the lives of people like themselves. Armed with an array of stories, an entertaining speaker can provide an enjoyable diversion and communicate a message at the same time.

Although an entertaining speech is usually constructed less rigidly than other types of presentations, it requires just as much preparation perhaps more. If you want to be a successful entertaining speaker, you will need to compile a repertoire of material and be able to select just the right anecdote, story, or quotation for the right speaking situation.

You should be able to adapt your material so it fits the audience, the occasion, your topic and your own personality. You should learn each story and practice it, then test it on someone else. Only then are you ready to incorporate the story into an entertaining speech.

FINDING SUITABLE MATERIAL

The first step in preparing your speech is finding material that suits your purpose as an entertaining speaker. Where do you find it? Most likely, you are exposed daily to stories and situations you could adapt to your speaking needs. The key to finding suitable material lies in learning to recognize it when you hear it or see it. As

an entertaining speaker, you should be conscious of the need to find speech material and be aware that it is an ongoing process.

A good entertaining speaker reads extensively. You can find hundreds of stories, anecdotes and interesting quotations in books, newspapers, magazines, and on the Internet. Most libraries and book stores have dozens of books filled with stories and quotations. Biographies of famous people are rich sources of anecdotes. Another excellent source is the conversation that takes place around you every day. Listen to what other people say. Talk with interesting people. You can also take material used by other speakers and adapt it to your own needs and personality.

Other sources include radio, television, movies, and comedy routines.

When you search for material, keep the following in mind:

Finding suitable material lies in learning to recognize it when you hear it or see it. As an entertaining speaker, you should be conscious of the need to find speech material and be aware that it is an ongoing process.

1. **A story should be understandable.** If its point isn't apparent to you, don't use it.
2. **It should have entertainment value.** A dramatic story should be poignant or touching. If it's supposed to be humorous, it should be humorous to you. If you don't see its humor, your audience won't either.
3. **It should suit your personal style and outlook on life.** If you aren't comfortable with a story, your audience will notice and be uncomfortable as well.

When you find a story or anecdote that appeals to you, write it down. Many entertaining speakers carry a small notebook or pocket electronic organizer just for this purpose. Use your personal computer to catalog and cross-reference material you collect, or create paper files. Again, building the catalog is an ongoing project.

LEARN YOUR MATERIAL

The rule for using an entertaining story is to make it your own. Whether your story is dramatic or humorous, you should tell it in your own words – language you use in normal conversation.

Adapting your material is especially critical when you use humorous stories. When using a humorous anecdote about a famous person, you need only rewrite it to suit your personal speaking style. But with other anecdotes, you may want to reconstruct them.

The key to humor is believability. Humor is essentially the buildup and release of tension.

By making a story sound as if it happened to you, or by structuring it so that it involves the audience and the speaking situation, you add the magic ingredient of suspense. The more believable your story, the greater the impact when you release the tension with the punch line.

Once you've adapted a piece of material, memorize it and practice until you're comfortable with it. If possible, record it on tape and evaluate yourself. Test it on family or friends to be sure it's as good as it can be.

The more believable your story, the greater the impact when you reach the punch line.

MAKE IT FIT

For your stories and anecdotes to succeed, they must be relevant to your speech. Tailor your stories to your message – not vice versa. When you deliver an important point on the heels of drama or humor, your message will be magnified. On the other hand, a story that doesn't relate to the topic detracts from the overall effectiveness of the speech. Your material should also suit the audience and the occasion. When selecting material, aim squarely at the group and the setting to achieve maximum impact.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

For this project, prepare, rehearse, and deliver a five- to seven-minute speech containing material taken from sources other than your own personal experience. You'll need to collect material, then adapt it to your own style and speech topic. Although your primary objective is to entertain, your speech should be organized around a central theme or message, and the stories, anecdotes and quotations you use should support the message. In presenting the speech you should strive to be convincing and enthusiastic. Use appropriate body language and vocal variety to add flair to your presentation.

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **RESOURCES FOR ENTERTAINMENT**

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: The speaker is to entertain the audience through the use of entertaining stories or anecdotes in a five- to seven-minute presentation. The speaker is expected to draw material from sources other than personal experience and adapt it to his or her own speaking style. The speech should have a central theme or message, which is supported by the use of entertaining stories, anecdotes, or quotations. In addition to your verbal evaluation, please answer the questions below in writing.

- ▶ What indicated to you that the audience was entertained?

- ▶ What was the theme or message of the speech? How effectively was it supported by stories, anecdotes, or quotations?

- ▶ How comfortable did the speaker appear when telling the stories, anecdotes, or quotations? Was the material presented in the speaker's own words and suitable to his/her personality?

- ▶ What parts of the speech were most effective? Which, if any, did not work well? Why?

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

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

▶ PROJECT 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Humor is an ideal way to attract and hold an audience's attention. You can also use humor to build rapport, emphasize points, convey a sensitive point, or deal with unexpected incidents that occur during your talk. Humor includes some kind of unexpected twist that pleasantly surprises the audience. Practice delivering the material until you can do so smoothly, pausing before the punch line to create tension.

OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ Prepare a humorous speech drawn from your own experience.
- ▶ Strengthen the speech by adopting and personalizing humorous material from outside sources.
- ▶ Deliver the speech in a way that makes the humor effective.

Time: Five to seven minutes

MAKE THEM LAUGH

Humor is the spice that will add interest and excitement to virtually any speech. Effective use of humor is a skill worth developing because it will mark you as a speaker who should be invited back again. Although this project calls for a strictly humorous speech, the principles explained here can be used in almost any speech you give.

WHY USE HUMOR?

As a speaker, your first objective is to attract and hold the attention of the audience. Humor is an ideal way to do this. By amusing the audience, you make them willing to listen to the more serious parts of your talk, and that helps you maintain their attention. Keep in mind that the adult attention span is only a few minutes at a time. Punctuate the speech with regular injections of humor to retain your audience's attention.

Humor also helps you build goodwill with your audience. If an audience is not familiar with you, they will have concerns about you and your presentation. Listeners are wondering if they will like you, if you will have something interesting to say and if they will agree with what you say. You must first earn their support and positive feelings. Humor can ease their initial tension and convince them that you are worth listening to. You will attract their attention and relax them.

Humor can ease their initial tension and convince them that you are worth listening to. You will attract their attention and relax them.

Humor also can:

- ▶ Emphasize or illustrate points
- ▶ Help you convey a sensitive point
- ▶ Help you deal with unexpected accidents that may occur during your talk
- ▶ Establish a bond with your audience.

WHAT MAKES IT FUNNY?

Many novice speakers are afraid to use humor in their presentations. Some believe they can't tell a joke. Others are afraid their attempts at humor will fail. However, you can learn to use humor in your presentations with study and practice.

Basically, humor includes some type of unexpected twist that pleasantly surprises the audience. It can be broadly divided into two categories: jokes and stories. A joke is brief – usually a conversation between two people, climaxing in a punch line.

Or a joke can consist solely of the punch line itself, called a “one-liner.” You may have seen stand-up comedians on television or on stage who deliver a string of one-liners. They are funny, but can become tiresome after a few minutes. A story is longer than a joke, includes more background information and has a punch line, too. Unlike a joke, a story can build one segment upon another – each with its own punch line – until the audience is exhausted from laughing. A story can include jokes if they fit the subject of the story and help propel it toward its high point. As a speaker, you probably will be more interested in telling humorous stories than in telling jokes.

There are several types of jokes or stories. Experiment with each of these to find where your special talent lies:

- ▶ **Exaggeration** (We were crowded so tight that when one person inhaled, everyone else had to exhale.)
- ▶ **Understatement** (The father, upon seeing his smashed car, asks the son who had borrowed it whether anything unusual happened while he was out driving.)
- ▶ **Twisted Definition** (A consultant is someone who is called in at the last minute to share the blame.)
- ▶ **Pun** (He has a will of his own – and she’s trying to have it made out to her.)
- ▶ **Parody** (He likes to eat his cake and have yours, too.)
- ▶ **Misunderstandings** (The policeman tells the driver she can’t turn around in the middle of the block, to which she replies, “Oh, I think I can.”)

ADAPTING OTHERS’ MATERIAL

You do not have to write your own jokes and humorous stories, although you may do so if you wish. However, most speakers do not write their own humorous material. Instead, they adapt jokes and stories they have obtained from other sources. In Project 2, you were asked to create a file of stories and anecdotes that you can use in your speeches. You should expand this file to include jokes and humorous stories. Then you can adapt the funny material to your own presentations.

When you hear or read a good joke or story, first separate the “theme” from the “peg.” Any story has a theme – the essential point to the story – and a “peg,” which is the context in which the theme is presented. The theme is usually fixed, while the peg can be changed to fit the needs of your particular talk. For example, a story theme might be gambling, while the peg may be your spouse playing roulette or you losing a million dollars on the stock market. When you search for material, you are looking for a particular theme to make your point. You can change the peg used in the original story to suit your own purpose.

Now, having redesigned the story to fit your own purpose, practice telling it. Put it in your own words. And don’t be afraid to embellish on it – perhaps adding some details. By telling it in your own words, you will be more sincere and believable.

Whenever possible, put yourself in the story. Audiences like to hear about the speaker’s personal experiences – real or fabricated. Tell stories as though they happened to you. Use words like “I,” “last week,” “my son.” Refer to local people and places.

Always check to make sure your story will not offend anyone in your audience. If you have doubt about any story, omit it.

When you hear or read a good joke or story, first separate the “theme” from the “peg.” Any story has a theme – the essential point to the story – and a “peg,” which is the context in which the theme is presented.

DELIVERY AND TIMING

Even if you have the funniest material in the world, if you deliver it poorly it will fail. Practice the material so much that all clumsiness and false starts are eliminated. After a while you will have practiced it so many times it may no longer seem funny to you. But if you thought the story was funny when you first heard it, most likely your listeners will, too – no matter how tired of it you may be.

Following are some tips for telling your joke or story:

- ▶ Speak slowly and clearly enough so your audience can understand you.
- ▶ Tell the joke or story from memory – don't read it.
- ▶ Use body language to act out the story.
- ▶ Make sure the jokes and stories are relevant to your speech purpose.
- ▶ Make fun of yourself. Listeners like speakers who don't take themselves too seriously.
- ▶ Pause before the punch line to create tension in the audience.
- ▶ Don't laugh at your own story.
- ▶ Be confident.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

For this project, prepare, rehearse, and deliver a five- to seven-minute humorous speech using original material drawn from your own experience as well as material from other sources, adapted to fit the talk. Possible topics you may use are:

- ▶ Embarrassing experiences
- ▶ Explaining a complex subject, making humorous mistakes as you do so
- ▶ Trying to cope with an unusual situation
- ▶ Making fun of yourself

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **MAKE THEM LAUGH**

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: The speaker is to deliver a humorous speech in five to seven minutes, using original material drawn from his or her own experience as well as material from other sources, adapted to fit the talk. The speech should have some degree of unity and theme and be in good taste. Since this may be the speaker's first attempt at humor before an audience, be encouraging even if the attempt is less than successful. Please give a written evaluation below in addition to your verbal evaluation.

- ▶ What indicated to you that the audience was entertained?

- ▶ What made the speech humorous?

- ▶ How well did the jokes and stories fit the theme of the talk?

- ▶ How well did the speaker deliver the jokes or stories?

- ▶ How comfortable and confident did the speaker appear to be while telling the jokes or stories?

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

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

- ▶ What did the speaker do well?

▶ PROJECT 4

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Dramatic stories are another way to entertain an audience. Through drama you create images in listeners' minds, which enhance and add interest to your message. Vocal variety is critical in a dramatic talk. Vary the volume, pitch, and rate of your words. Also convey drama through your body language and facial expressions. Make sure your voice and body language reinforce, not dominate, your verbal message.

OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ Develop an entertaining dramatic talk about an experience or incident.
- ▶ Include vivid imagery, characters, and dialogue.
- ▶ Deliver the talk in an entertaining manner.

Time: Five to seven minutes

The most important part of a dramatic speech is the imagery you evoke in the minds of the audience.

A DRAMATIC TALK

In addition to using humor, an entertaining speaker needs to develop a sense of the dramatic, both as a means of delighting the audience and of holding their attention. Drama can be made part of any speech through what you say, how you say it, and what you do while saying it.

Dramatic speaking is different from acting. An actor pretends to be someone else. A dramatic speaker does not. Instead, a dramatic speaker interprets material, allowing listeners to recreate the character and situation in their own minds.

WHAT YOU SAY

The most important part of a dramatic speech is the imagery you evoke in the minds of the audience through the words you select. The audience should receive an image of the scene you are describing through reference to their senses: they *see* the clearing in the forest; they *hear* the gentle breeze through the trees; they *smell* the fresh mountain air; they *feel* the morning chill; their muscles *tense* with the crack of a branch.

These images contribute to the talk in three ways:

- ▶ They invite the listener to participate with you in the experience you are relating
- ▶ They give your talk originality and help make it memorable
- ▶ They allow listeners to relate what you are describing to their own experiences, thus making the described situation seem even more real.

Another important part of a dramatic talk is the characters who participate in the situation you are describing. People like to hear stories about people. Give these characters emotions. Describe how they are reacting to what is happening in the story.

Another part of drama is use of build-ups and sudden twists. The audience doesn't want to know in advance how the story will end. They want to be surprised. You should carefully design your speech so the tension builds steadily toward an unexpected and satisfying ending. The surprise need not be shocking, but it should have a twist that the audience will enjoy, much like the stories of author O. Henry.

YOUR DELIVERY

Like a humorous story, a dramatic talk's success depends on its delivery. Vocal variety will convey much of the drama of the situation you are portraying.

Vocal variety refers to variations in the volume, rate, rhythm, and pitch of your speaking voice. A monotone delivery bores the audience. Voice volume should be varied to add emphasis or impact. Pitch should be varied to convey emotion. Low pitch

indicates gloom or foreboding. A high pitch indicates joy or excitement. Use your voice to distinguish the different characters in this story. If your story is about very different personalities, modify your voice in ways consistent with their personalities. For example, if a character is a frail, elderly male, you should be able to vocally sound like a frail, elderly male.

You should also convey the drama through your body language and facial expressions. The audience will be watching you closely as you speak, trying to pick up your feelings and reactions to what is occurring in the story as you tell it. Make sure listeners receive the signals you intend. If you are telling a story about a tragic accident, you shouldn't be smiling. Instead, use your body language and facial expressions to convey the sense of tragedy. For example, suppose you are telling a story about a young boy who is being corrected by his strict father. To portray the angry father, you would tense your posture and have a stern facial expression.

Keep in mind that your facial expressions and body language should simply reinforce, not dominate, your verbal message.

When you have finished your story, maintain your posture and mood for a moment before returning to your seat. This allows your audience time to enjoy and reflect on your story's ending.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

For this project, prepare, rehearse, and deliver a five- to seven-minute dramatic speech, including narration, as you set the scene and describe what is taking place, and dialogue between characters. Use your own experience or imagination. Your speech purpose is to entertain.

As you develop the story, keep these points in mind:

- ▶ Describe the setting (time, place, circumstances) quickly and concisely; omitting unnecessary details
- ▶ Make clear the nature of the conflict or difficulty that had to be overcome
- ▶ Personalize the story to attract and maintain listeners' interest
- ▶ Build realistic images and characters through imagery
- ▶ Establish a mood of excitement and drama from the beginning
- ▶ Keep the story moving and building
- ▶ End with a powerful climax

Make sure listeners receive the signals you intend. If you are telling a story about a tragic accident, you shouldn't be smiling.

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **A DRAMATIC TALK**

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: The speaker is to entertain the audience with a five- to seven-minute dramatic speech. The speech material is to be drawn from the speaker's personal experience or imagination. The speaker should not act out the incident, but rather interpret it for the audience, using narration and dialogue. In addition to your verbal evaluation, please give written responses to the questions below.

- ▶ What indicated to you that the audience was entertained?

- ▶ Describe the dramatic impact of the talk upon you.

- ▶ How well did the speaker build in your mind vivid images of the situation being described?

- ▶ How did the speaker's use of vocal variety, body language, and facial expressions add to the speech?

- ▶ What parts (if any) of the speech did not work well? How could the speaker improve them? What parts of the speech seemed most effective?

- ▶ How well did the speaker build to a powerful climax?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

After-dinner talks are challenging. The audience has just dined and they are becoming drowsy. Your talk should be light, lively, positive, and entertaining. Reflect on the occasion. Personalize the talk by referring to earlier events or people on the program and building on them. Use humor and drama.

OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ Prepare an entertaining after-dinner talk on a specific theme.
- ▶ Deliver the talk using the skills developed in the preceding projects.

Time: Eight to ten minutes

SPEAKING AFTER DINNER

One opportunity nearly every speaker encounters is the after-dinner talk. This is the time for you to shine as an entertaining speaker. You can use humor, drama, and insight all in the same speech.

WHAT TO SAY AFTER DINNER

Your audience has just dined. They sit back, relax, and digest their food. Their minds are a little foggy and they are drowsy because of the meal. Many of them are becoming tired of sitting and will start fidgeting in a few minutes.

Your challenge is to attract their attention, entertain them for a while with humor and/or drama (perhaps even leave them with some worthwhile thoughts), then release them just at the point when they are ready to stand up and stretch.

From this point of view, all after-dinner talks are alike. The audience has enjoyed themselves and had good fellowship during the meal. They are now ready for the same experience from you.

Although after-dinner talks will vary in subject, such speeches are similar in mood. This is no time to attack the audience's beliefs or arouse them to crusading zeal for a cause. Instead, you should pick up the atmosphere of relaxation and fellowship and reflect them in your talk.

However, your range of subject matter is broad. In most cases, the group is gathered for a specific reason, and your talk should reflect that in some manner. The group may be celebrating an anniversary or other milestone or trying to motivate its members. Keep the purpose for the gathering in mind as you prepare your talk and refer to it in your speech. That will make the audience feel you are one of them, enjoying the same fellowship as they are.

Choose speech subjects that you know well enough to present from a fresh point of view. Base your talk on a single theme related to the speaking occasion and make sure your jokes, stories, and anecdotes are related to this theme. If possible, personalize the talk by picking up on remarks and events from earlier in the program and build on them.

After you have selected your subject, create a loose speech outline that still includes an introduction, body, and conclusion. The introduction should attract listeners' attention and prepare them to be entertained. The body should follow a

Keep the purpose for the gathering in mind as you prepare your talk and refer to it in your speech. That will make the audience feel you are one of them.

single theme, reinforced by stories, anecdotes, and/or jokes. The conclusion should end on a high point, but should not be a summary or call to action.

Even if the occasion or message is serious, you should enliven the talk with stories, anecdotes, and humor. Your listeners want liveliness and variety to help hold their interest and ward off drowsiness.

MORE TIPS

Keep your talk brief. The typical after-dinner speech lasts about 15 to 20 minutes. A one-hour talk is too long for a well-fed audience. Often a 10- to 15-minute speech is best, especially if other entertainment or activity is to follow on the program. (Because of time constraints found in most Toastmasters club meetings, this project requires an eight-to 10-minute speech.) Also, keep the talk somewhat light and positive. Even if the

occasion or message is serious, you should enliven the talk with stories, anecdotes, and humor. Your listeners want liveliness and variety to help hold their interest and ward off drowsiness.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

For this project, prepare, rehearse and deliver an eight- to 10-minute after-dinner speech, using the entertainment skills you have developed in the preceding projects in this manual. Include humor, drama or a combination of both, making sure they are relevant to the theme of your speech. You may simulate a particular audience and occasion if you wish, but be sure to notify the Toastmaster of the meeting in advance.

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **SPEAKING AFTER DINNER**

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: The speaker is to prepare an after-dinner speech of eight to 10 minutes. The speaker should entertain the audience by weaving jokes and/or dramatic or humorous stories around a recognizable theme. The overall effect should be lighthearted and relaxed. In addition to your verbal evaluation, please write answers to the questions below.

▶ What indicated to you that the audience was entertained?

▶ How effectively did the speaker capture the audience's attention and hold it?

▶ What was the theme of the talk? How easy was it for you to follow?

▶ How effectively did the speaker deliver the jokes, stories and/or anecdotes? Did they fit the talk's theme?

▶ What is your overall impression of the speaker's approach to entertaining the audience?

THE PAUSE

The pause is one of the most valuable tools in telling jokes, stories, and anecdotes. It's generally used in two ways – to generate anticipation in your audience for what is coming, and to allow the audience to reflect on a point just made. Longer pauses should be used if the thought expressed is difficult or unfamiliar, or when the speaker is trying to impress a point upon the audience. A longer pause also shows uncertainty. In emotional scenes, a long pause indicates the speaker's inability to continue, or it gives the speaker time to regain composure. Whenever you use a pause, it should be packed with meaning and its length should vary as the material demands.

By pausing, you create tension in the audience. The pause also signals your audience that you are about to say something important.

When telling a joke or story, pause just before you deliver the punch line. By pausing, you create tension in the audience. The pause also signals your audience that you are about to say something important. Also pause at the end of the joke or story to give the audience the opportunity to absorb the punch line, see the humor and respond. Sometimes speakers are so nervous that they immediately rush into their speech after telling a joke or story. Even if listeners found the story amusing they had no time to laugh without interrupting the speaker. When you finish, stop and wait for a response.

WHEN NO ONE LAUGHS

No joke, anecdote, or story is guaranteed to succeed. Some do fail. Sometimes the speaker stumbles in the delivery or selects a story that is inappropriate for the audience. Or the audience is tired and inattentive. Or the sound system fails at a critical point, ruining the story's tension. Perhaps someone in the audience blurts out the punch line to a joke.

Every speaker has experienced an ineffective or unsuccessful delivery. But the good speakers are those who recover quickly and smoothly. Fortunately, this is easy to do. After you have delivered the punch line and paused, scan your audience. If faces remain deadpan – you don't see a smile or chuckle from anyone – your joke or humorous story or anecdote wasn't. Resume your presentation as though nothing happened. Pretend the story was supposed to be serious. Most likely your audience accepted it as serious and won't notice.

PROJECT COMPLETION RECORD **THE ENTERTAINING SPEAKER**

PROJECT	SPEECH TITLE	DATE	VICE PRESIDENT EDUCATION'S INITIALS
1. The Entertaining Speech			
2. Resources for Entertainment			
3. Make Them Laugh			
4. A Dramatic Talk			
5. Speaking After Dinner			

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.