

## **TOPICS – GUIDELINES**

### **Purpose**

- (1) To give members an opportunity to practice speaking “off the cuff”
- (2) To enable all members not filling roles on the night to have a chance to speak.

### **Rules of Engagement**

- (3) Named members will be given a topic.
- (4) The Topics session is not a debate. Once you have spoken you may not come back in on that topic – there is no right of reply.
- (5) If you wish to come in on a topic after the first speaker, raise your hand. However preference will be given to those who have not yet had a chance to speak.
- (6) You are asked to speak for between one and two minutes. At two minutes a warning bell will ring, asking you to conclude. Remember: you are under no compulsion to speak for a full two minutes. If you feel you have made your point at any time before that, don't be afraid to stop.
- (7) Visitors (except for visiting Toastmasters) will not be given a topic, but if they would like to speak on one may signal the Topicsmaster by raising a hand.

### **Notes for Topicsmaster**

- At the start of the Topics session you accept the gavel from the Toastmaster and are now in charge of the meeting.
- As you are in the chair, you sit at the top table during the Topics session. However, it is good practice to stand while giving out the topic. This helps people to hear you more easily, and follows on naturally as you stand to lead the applause and thank the speaker for their contribution.
- Begin by stating (for the benefit of new members and guests) the purpose of Topics and specifying the Rules of Engagement.
- It is entirely up to you who and how many (if any) speakers are let in on a topic after the named speaker has finished. You aim to keep the session moving and varied.
- Do not allow the same person to keep coming in again and again: and do not give a topic to someone who already has a role on the night until all others have had a chance to speak.

- Remember: as many people as possible should contribute to the evening. Also: people coming in as third or fourth speakers have had plenty of time to think about it and are not really speaking "off the cuff".
- Don't waste time with lengthy introductions to each topic explaining why you think it is particularly relevant or interesting.
- Don't make the topic so long that by the time you get to the end the listener is confused as to just what it is you are asking. One sentence is plenty and there is no reason why a topic cannot be expressed in just one word.
- Nobody should have to ask you to repeat the topic. If they do you are either being too long winded or are not speaking clearly.
- Finally: Politics, sex, and religion are by convention "off limits" in a Topics session. As a matter of courtesy, whatever is selected as a topic should not be embarrassing or offensive to the speaker or to the audience.
- At the conclusion of the session thank the audience for their participation and hand the gavel back to the Toastmaster; signalling that he or she now has control of the meeting again.

WRM

ETM - 28 June 2010