

TABLE TOPICS MASTER: Asking Effective Questions

Asking questions is a critical life skill.

The ability to ask questions keeps relationships alive, interactions flowing smoothly, and essentially makes life much more interesting for everyone involved!

This is your chance to practice asking effective questions!

The Key Elements of Being Table Topics Master:

- Ask your question **and then** call someone up from the audience.

(Be sure to pause for a second or two - this gives *everybody* in the audience a chance to sweat a bit and get their brains ticking over, thinking 'what would I say?' just in case it's *them* who gets called up!)
- If you're going to talk about your question before you ask it, try to keep the preamble short: aim for 10-15 seconds at most.
- Have a different question to ask for each person who you intend to call up. Have a theme, if possible.

How To Prepare as Table Topics Master:

- Identify anyone who DOESN'T already have a speaking role in the meeting and be sure to prioritise them when asking questions.

(The running edict of Toastmasters is to give everyone a chance to speak at every meeting.)
- Have your questions and "targets" picked out in advance: this keeps everything flowing smoothly.
- Over-prepare: Have a few extra questions just in case your Table Topics session needs to fill extra time in the meeting. Always better to hold a few questions up your sleeve, rather than be a few questions short.

How to Perform as Table Topics Master:

- Before you begin your session, quickly explain the premise of Table Topics and the value of impromptu speaking, to the audience.
- If there are guests, visitors, or members who have not participated in Table Topics before, and ask these people if they would mind being called upon for a question during the session.
- Again, be sure to *ask your question* first, **and then** *call out your target*.
- Call up a few more experienced speakers first, before calling upon inexperienced speakers, in order to give others a live example to model from.

[Advanced] Taking Table Topics Even Further:

- When you call your target up from the audience, lead the applause until they reach the stage.
- Once on the stage, be sure to shake their hand. (As they exit the stage and you re-enter, shake their hand again and thank them for volunteering.)
- Try to transition from their answer into your next question, by commenting on what they've said or relating it to your own experience.

(Flawless segues between speakers is what turns an average speaking engagement into a masterful one.)

- Try to tailor the difficulty of your questions to your targets' speaking level!

Obviously some questions will be more easily answered than others. Play around with the questions you ask, including familiarity of topic and difficulty in answering.

(Give experienced speakers a challenge, while throwing new members or visitors lay-up questions to give them a chance to speak without stressing too much.)