

District 91

Notes for Contestant Briefing: Online Contest Edition

Version 1.00, August 2020

Conducted by: Contest Chair

When: The Contestant Briefing may be held the day before, a few days before the contest, or even directly before the contest.

Where: the same platform as the contest (e.g. Zoom)

Attendees: Contestants, Chief Judge, Timekeeper(s), backup Chief Judge.

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Before the Contestant Briefings

1. Contest Chair Aims To Obtain Digitally Signed Electronic Copies Of The Following From The Contestants
 - Speaker's Eligibility & Originality
 - Speaker Profile (no signature required)
2. Contest Chair asks the Contestants if they have any disability or sensory impairment that needs to be taken into account, e.g. blindness, colour blindness.
3. Contest Chair appeals to Contestants to use for the Briefing the same device and surroundings they wish to use in the contest.
4. Contest Chair asks all Briefing Participants to practise changing their name according to the list of prefixes before, or as the first action during, the Briefing (Speakers should be prefixed by an "S.").
5. Contest Chair shares the Briefing agenda before the Briefing. The order of agenda items may depend on functionary availability.
6. For International and Humorous Speech contests, the Contest Chair must ensure that the Speakers have sent their speech titles before the Briefing.
7. Prior to the Briefing, Contestants should set up and try out positioning themselves in their desired video frame which is their "stage area", e.g. in a triangle of 2m deep and 3m wide in front of the camera. They should also check their lighting, audio quality and physical/virtual background area. Contestants must be aware that they are responsible for their delivery on camera and well-functioning equipment and connection. Any failure of audio/video or loss of network connection may make the Speaker ineligible to compete and thus effectively disqualified.

Sample Briefing Agenda

See table of contents for this document.

Zoom Name Prefixes for Speakers and Functionaries

The Prefixes are followed by Firstname and Lastname of the individual unless otherwise stated.

Zoom Master	ZM 1 -
Zoom Master backup	ZM 2 -
Contestants	S[speaking order number] -
Contest Chair	CC -
Chief Judge	CJ -
Sergeant at Arms	no SAA for the International and Humorous Speech contests. For Eval, TT: SAA -
Ballot Counter	B -
Timekeeper	Timer
Timekeeper (backup)	Timer (backup)
Judges	J - [code name]

Contestant Briefing

Introductions and Zoom Display Names

A very quick “round the room” where everyone says their name and role. Contest Chair calls out the call participants in the following order and points out their display name prefixes.

- Contest Chair
- Speakers – Contest Chair confirms pronunciation
- Timekeeper
- Timekeeper (backup)
- Chief Judge
- Zoom Master 1
- Zoom Master 2*
- Contest Chair Backup*
- Chief Judge Backup*

(*) present at Briefing if possible

Judges are not present for obvious reasons. During the contest, the Judges will be anonymised and keep their video off at all times.

Contest Zoom Rooms on Contest Day

1. Contestants and all organisers/functionaries access the 'Contest' Zoom video call via a Waiting Room.
2. The one or two Zoom Masters on the 'Contest' call will move all participants into the appropriate breakout rooms. They will move the Contestants as required. Contestants should not have to 'leave' a breakout room (but should be prepared to do so if required).
3. Contestant Rooms
 - a. A breakout room where the Contestants can perform final audio/video checks, with the Contest Chair present.
 - b. For the Evaluation contest, the Contestants will be taken to a room where they can make their notes for five minutes and where they will remain until the Zoom Master moves them one by one to the main contest room as their turn arrives. Once all notes are made, Contestants must put their notes on paper/device behind them out of reach and then remain visible on camera, including their hands, keeping their microphones on during the entire time in that breakout room. The Sergeant at Arms stays in the room until the last Contestant leaves.
 - c. For the Table Topics contest, there will be a breakout room for the Contestants (except for Contestant number one). The Contestants stay in this room until the Zoom Master moves them one by one to the main contest room as their turn arrives. The SAA stays in the room until the last Contestant leaves.
 - i. **How can contest organisers prevent a Contestant from hearing the Table Topics question or any other Contestants' speech?**
 1. all Contestants to keep their microphones on (so that the question cannot be transmitted to them verbally),
 2. Contestants must remain visible on camera at all times with agreement on a means of preventing them from seeing the contest question should someone write it up for them.
 - d. We assume that no contest organiser would ever need to go over the top with anti-cheating measures because it is to be hoped that Toastmasters will approach contests with integrity.

There will be further rooms for functionaries but Contestants do not need to be concerned about that.

Zoom Technical Set-up & Audience

1. Contest Chair should ask whether any Speaker has any disability or sensory impairment that needs to be taken into account, e.g. blindness, colour blindness.
2. **Speaker experience overview.** More detail will be shared later in the Briefing.
 - a. The Speakers will be speaking to the camera.
 - b. The Timekeeper provides visual signals. Audio Timekeeper signalling can also be provided. More detail on that below.
 - c. It is highly recommended to only have two to three cameras switched on at any point in time to preserve internet bandwidth:
 - i. the camera of the person speaking and the Timekeeper's camera.
 - ii. If requested, the Contest Chair's camera can also be switched on during speeches, if the Contestant would like to see the Contest Chair as their audience.
 - d. The Zoom Master will keep everyone on mute and their video off when they are not speaking and will switch the Contestant's microphone on (and prompt them to do that themselves if they have muted themselves) and also prompt the Speaker to switch their video on.
 - i. Each Speaker is responsible for switching on their video (and mic, if required) when prompted to do so.
 - ii. The Contest Chair will check that the Contestant can be seen and heard before they start their speech. It is recommended to have a brief scripted interaction

between Contest Chair and Speaker when “the Speaker steps onto the stage“, and after the Speech. This ensures that the interactions are uniform across Contestants, which prevents judge bias.

- e. The Speaker keeps looking at the camera for a few seconds after they have clearly indicated that they have finished their speech (e.g. by saying Contest Chair). This allows the audience an opportunity to react. The Zoom Master could switch on everyone’s microphones straight after the speech so that all audience members can share their appreciation through audible clapping.

Agreed Stage Area & Contestant Set-up

1. Stage Area

- a. Each Contestant will move within a certain space in front of the camera, which means they will be framed in a certain way on the video call (closely cropped if they are close to the camera or at a wider angle if they are further away). All Contestants need to agree on the maximum physical ‘stage’ space in front of the camera to be used. This needs to be discussed and agreed between the Contestants well before the contest. Consider using a triangle 2m deep x 3m wide at the far end in front of the camera, for instance.
- b. Tip for Contestants: mark the agreed speaking area (e.g. tape/post-its on the floor)
- c. Contestants may choose to speak seated rather than standing. Body language is more easily included when standing but sound quality can be an issue due to the greater distance from the device.

2. Audio/Video checks

- a. Ideally, the Contestant should attend the Briefing with the “Contest camera/audio/environment set-up”.
- b. In the Briefing, Contest Chair and Zoom Master can (if they wish to do so) support the Contestants by feeding back to each:
 - i. Can the Speaker be seen and heard?
 - ii. Is the camera at eye level?
 - iii. Are body positioning, light, sound quality, and physical background in line with the agreed stage area and the TMI video recording rules?
 - iv. Do gestures stay within the frame?

3. Stable Contestant Technology Set-up

The advice for Contestants (and all other contest contributors) is to aim to make their technology set-up as stable as possible. Some of the measures to be taken may be:

- o Connect with the Contest Zoom room with one device only.
- o Use the Zoom application and latest version. Install the Zoom application if required and test using it. Avoid using the WebClient (the one that uses a web browser).
- o Use cabled connection over Wi-Fi if possible.
- o Don't update software at the last minute.
- o Switch off automatic restarts for Operating System updates.
- o Ensure that all the devices used (e.g. laptop, wireless headset, backup device) are fully charged and keep sufficient battery charge as required for the duration of preparation on the day and the contest.
- o Have a backup device ready but not connected to Zoom during the contest. Have the Zoom link to the contest quickly accessible on that device. If your main device fails you can then switch over to your backup.

Dealing with Technical Issues

- a) Technical issues may occur before or during the speech.
- b) If a major issue happens, such as severe or prolonged loss of video or audio quality or connection or device failure, it is possible that you may not notice this yourself.
- c) If you stay connected during the technical issues, the Chief Judge will tell you if they feel that the issues are sufficiently severe that you need to interrupt your speech and try to fix the issue.
- d) If you lose connection or a device fails, take all necessary steps to reconnect as quickly as possible.
- e) If your speech gets interrupted due to a technical issue -
 - The Chief Judge will ask the Timekeeper to stop the clock.
 - You must do your best to come back on as quickly as you can.
 - When you come back online the Chief Judge will check with you if your mic and camera are working and if you have pinned the Timer. You confirm that everything is working again.
 - The Chief Judge then lets you know what they last heard and saw and prompts you to continue with your speech. You continue your speech from where you dropped off.
 - At your first definite verbal or nonverbal communication the Timekeeper's clock starts again and the colours are shown as per the contest speech timing schedule.
 - Additional time allowance:
 - In an International Speech, Humorous Speech or Evaluation contest there will be an additional allowance of 30 seconds to your permitted time, i.e. disqualification would occur if an International/Humorous speech was more than eight (8) minutes. Disqualification would occur if an Evaluation was more than four (4) minutes.
 - There is no additional time allowance for a Table Topics speech.
- f) If a technical issue occurs before the speech has started affecting the Speaker's ability to start, the same process applies. There will be no change to the speaking order due to technical issues.
- g) If the entire contest goes down, please stay on stand-by to continue straight away when it recommences. There will be communication in this event.
- h) You can use the above-mentioned WhatsApp group or send messages to / call a number you will be given on contest day if you need immediate assistance.
- i) Chief Judge and Zoom Masters have documented key rules. They will aim to be present at the Contestant Briefing and give a quick overview and can be approached for questions.

Protests

Contestants can raise protests based on Originality or Eligibility or for referencing another competitor's speech. **New 2020/21 rule:** "Contestants must not reference another Contestant, or a speech presented by another Contestant, from the platform at the same contest in which they are competing".

Should you wish to lodge a protest you should contact the Chief Judge in a private WhatsApp message (ensure that it has been seen) or by calling the Chief Judge **after** the speeches have **concluded** and before announcement of the results.

Speaking Order

- a) Contest Chair and Contestants draw the speaking order at the Briefing.
- b) One option is to use an online tool, such as <https://www.random.org/lists/>
- c) The Contest Chair prepares an alphabetically sorted list of the Contestant names to copy and paste into the online tool.
- d) During the Briefing the Contest Chair accesses the randomiser website and shares their screen, copies & pastes the alphabetically sorted list of the Contestant names into the online tool, presses “randomise” and reads out the list to the Contestants while they can also see it. The Contest Chair makes a copy of the list.
- e) The Contest Chair shares this list with the Chief Judge soon after the Briefing. The Chief Judge shares the order with the Judges.
- f) Prepare a “low-tech backup”, e.g. prepare a list of letters and numbers thus: A-5, B-2, C-1, D-4, E-3. Share this list with an official such as a ballot counter or the Chief Judge prior to the Briefing. Ask the Contestants to pick a letter, look the letter up and tell them the order position they have selected.

Timings and Timing Signals

Duration of Speeches and Time Signalling

This information has been taken from the Speech contest rulebook 2020-21. Always check the latest contest rulebook as the information in this document may become out of date.

International and Humorous Speeches

1. International and Humorous Speeches shall be from five (5) to seven (7) minutes.
2. A Contestant will be disqualified if the speech is less than four (4) minutes 30 seconds or more than seven (7) minutes 30 seconds.
3. Time Signalling
 - a. A white virtual background is shown until the Timer switches to the coloured virtual background
 - b. A green signal will be displayed at five (5) minutes and remain displayed for one minute.
 - c. A yellow signal will be displayed at six (6) minutes and remain displayed for one minute.
 - d. A red signal will be displayed at seven (7) minutes and will remain on until the conclusion of the speech.
 - e. There will be no indication to the Contestant that they have gone over time, i.e. banging a gavel, waving cards, etc.

Table Topics Speeches

1. Table Topics Speeches shall be from one (1) to two (2) minutes.
2. A Contestant will be disqualified if the speech is less than one (1) minute or more than two (2) minutes 30 seconds.
3. There will be no indication to the Contestant that they have gone over time, i.e. banging a gavel, waving cards, etc.
4. Time Signalling
 - a. A white virtual background is shown until the Timer switches to the coloured virtual background
 - b. A green signal will be displayed at one (1) minute and remain displayed for 30 seconds.
 - c. A yellow signal will be displayed at one (1) minute 30 seconds and remain displayed for 30 seconds.
 - d. A red signal will be displayed at two (2) minutes and will remain on until the conclusion of the speech.

5. There will be no indication to the Contestant that they have gone over time, i.e. banging a gavel, waving cards, etc.

Evaluation Speeches

1. Table Topics Evaluation Speeches shall be from two (2) to three (3) minutes.
2. A Contestant will be disqualified if the speech is less than two (2) minutes or more than three (3) minutes 30 seconds.
3. There will be no indication to the Contestant that they have gone over time, i.e. banging a gavel, waving cards, etc.
4. Time Signalling
 - a. A white virtual background is shown until the Timer switches to the coloured virtual background
 - b. A green signal will be displayed at two (2) minutes and remain displayed for 30 seconds.
 - c. A yellow signal will be displayed at two (2) minutes 30 seconds and remain displayed for 30 seconds.
 - d. A red signal will be displayed at (3) minutes and will remain on until the conclusion of the speech.
5. There will be no indication to the Contestant that they have gone over time, i.e. banging a gavel, waving cards, etc.

Timekeeper Signalling Details

Online Visual Signalling

1. The Timekeeper will display the timing cards as a virtual background. The Timekeeper will cover their camera so that they only show the virtual background but are not seen as a person. (it may be beneficial to have a set of physical timing cards as a backup)
2. In the Briefing all Contestants should check that they can identify and see the Timer.
3. The Timekeeper demonstrates the timing signalling (images and, if requested, audio), in line with the indication of times above.
4. The backup Timer performs the same quick demonstration of the timing cards.
5. The Speaker must have the Timekeeper on their screen during their speech. The Contestants may practice pinning the Timer / excluding non-video participants in gallery view.
 - a. Either by pinning the Timekeeper just before starting to speak.
 - i. Pinning is done on a laptop by hovering over the video, clicking the ... icon and selecting 'Pin..'. The same icon is used to un-pin.
 - ii. On a phone, scroll to the left, that will show multiple videos. When you find the 'Timer' double tap on the image. To un-pin double tap again.
 - b. Or by switching to gallery view after they have been moved to the room in which the contest takes place and choosing to hide non-video participants (as only very few people will have their video on). This makes other participants who have their video off invisible.
6. Note: the backup Timekeeper should be ready to provide signalling at any point in time, in case the Timekeeper experiences technical difficulties. Therefore, they need to keep time for all speeches in order to be ready to be called upon. If the Timekeeper cannot display time accurately during the speech due to a technical issue at the Timekeeper's end, the backup Timekeeper's camera will be switched on by the Zoom Master. The Zoom Master will spotlight the backup Timer for a brief moment when they switch the colour.

Audible signalling

1. In addition to the coloured visual signals, audible signals can be provided.
2. Speakers should advise the Chief Judge and Timer in the Briefing whether they wish to get an additional audio signal from the Timekeeper, e.g. the spoken words "Green, Green".
3. If one Speaker requests an audible signal on top of the visual signal then it should be discussed if all Speakers would like to have an audible signal.

NOTE: The Contestant IS NOT PERMITTED to use an additional timing device but must only use signals from the Timer, as per usual contest rules.

Arrival on the Day

Contest Chairs, *please adapt the details for your contest.*

1. Contest Chair reiterates the exact time, date of contest and advises everyone when they need to be there.
2. Contest Chair advises that the Zoom link will be sent out before the contest, e.g. in a calendar invitation and on the WhatsApp group.
3. Contestants will arrive on the day via a Zoom Waiting room and the Zoom Master will let them in and take them through to the Contestant Breakout Room.

Suggested Contest Chair-Speaker Interaction Before Each Speech

Contest Chairs, *please finalise your personal script for the interaction with the Contestants as shown below. Feel free to use this one. Share this script with the Contestants well before the contest so that they know what they can expect.*

1. Before each contest speech, the Contest Chair ensures that the Contestant can be seen and heard. It is recommended that Contest Chair and all Contestants agree on a brief fixed script in order to have a uniform interaction prior to the contest speeches across all Contestants (and, thereby, avoid 'Judge's bias'). This can be practised during the Briefing.
2. Audio/video script and introduction - Example script (feel free to use it):
 - a. Contest Chair: "Contestant number [number in running order]. [Firstname of Contestant], do you have the Timer pinned and are you ready?"
 - b. Contestant: "I am ready"
 - c. Contest Chair: "I can see and hear you"
 - d. Contest Chair:
 - i. International/Humorous Speech contest: "Our next Speaker is [Firstname Lastname] - [speech title] - [speech title] - [Firstname Lastname!]"
 - ii. Table Topics Speech contest: "[Firstname Lastname] - [topic] - [topic] - [Firstname Lastname!]"
 - iii. Evaluation Contest: "[Firstname Lastname] - [Firstname Lastname!]"
 - e. Contestants are encouraged to pause before they speak without giving any signs of communication, without unduly delaying the contest, of course (i.e. pause just as they would on a real stage) but this is up to the Contestant.
 - f. The Contestant begins the speech.
 - g. The timing begins with the Contestant's first definite verbal or nonverbal communication after their name has been said for the second time.
 - h. After each Speaker the Contest Chair says: "One minute's silence please". The minute silence starts *after* these words have been spoken. The Timekeeper signals with a red light when the one minute is over.
 - i. Once the minute silence is over the Zoom Master switches on video and microphone for the Contestant/prompts the Contestant to do so.

After the Final Speaker

1. The Contest Chair says “Silence please”. Then stops speaking until advised by the Zoom Master that the functionaries have gone.
2. The Zoom Master takes the Chief Judge, Judges, Ballot Counters and Timers into a breakout room and announces when this is complete.
3. The Contest Chair explains that functionaries were taken off to a quiet place where Judges will complete the judging and functionaries will be counting the votes.
4. All Contestants are prompted to switch their cameras on and all do so. The audience (except for the Judges) may also switch on their cameras. The Contest Chair invites the audience to applaud all Contestants.
5. Contest Chair “hands out” Contestant certificates (which are only displayed to the audience) in speaking order. More applause for the individual Contestants.
6. Contest Chair performs Contestant interviews for about 2 minutes per Contestant.
7. After the Contestant interviews, there may be other audience entertainment until the ballots are counted.
8. Announcement of the Winners:
 - a. Prior to announcing the contest results, the Chief Judge will announce if any time disqualifications occurred, but not name the Contestant(s) involved.
 - b. The Chief Judge will announce the results
 - c. The Zoom Master will switch on Contestants', Contest Chair's/Chief Judge's cameras and spotlights winner for 3rd, 2nd and 1st place to show the reaction
9. The Contest Chair asks the 1st place winner a few brief questions to capture the moment.

Recording of Contest Speeches

Any Contestant may ask the Zoom Master (via the Contest Chair) to record their contest speech.

Recommendations:

- Contest speeches should not be recorded without express permission from the Contestant (ideally, digitally signed).
- If the club wishes to record the contest then they should obtain digitally signed consent from all Contestants, functionaries and audience members.

Online Speech Contest Statement for Area, Division, or District Contests

Contest Chair at those contest levels - always check the Toastmasters International website for the latest version.

Because our contest is being held on an online platform, the online speech contest statement will be read at the start of your contest or included in writing in a location that will be visible to all attendees and participants:

By attending this remote Area, Division, or District speech contest you agree to the privacy policy of Toastmasters International as well as the unassociated remote hosting service. Some of your personal information, such as name, image, and any shared messages may be shared with other meeting participants and will be recorded by Toastmasters International who may use the recording in the future as it sees fit. Your remote attendance hereby discharges Toastmasters International from all claims, demands, rights, promises, damages and liabilities arising out of or in connection with the use or distribution of said video recordings, including but not limited to any claims for invasion of privacy, appropriation of likeness or defamation.

This will be shown as a video or will be read out by the Contest Chair.

This may not apply here but should there be some sort of statement to say that there will be recordings.

Source documents and further reading

1. Contest [Rulebook](#)
2. [Online Contest Exception](#)
3. [Online Contest Best Practices](#)
4. [Best Practices for Online Contests - Contestant Guide District 20 District Contests](#)
5. Zoom Masters: for any Zoom Master questions contact District 91 Zoom Masters via the dedicated WhatsApp group ([joining link here](#))
6. Contest Agenda Slide