

ORGANISING SUCCESSFUL OPEN-HOUSE MEETINGS

PURPOSE OF AN OPEN-HOUSE MEETING

An Open-House Meeting is a fun and celebratory club meeting, to talk more about Toastmasters to members of the public and show them Toastmasters in action. Its organisation fulfils several core purposes:

- ▶ **Raising the club's profile** within its immediate vicinity and community.
- ▶ **Attracting** a large number of guests to the club, the more the merrier!
- ▶ **Encouraging guests** to take an active part in an energetic meeting.
- ▶ **Inspiring guests to join** the club and become members of Toastmasters.
- ▶ **Amplifying the recognition** of achievements and participation by everyone present.
- ▶ **Raising the profile** of Toastmasters in the United Kingdom.

A successful Open-House meeting will require some amount of prior preparation, which is covered in this document. A big measure of success of an Open-House is to have an audience that's highly engaged with the meeting itself so that it sees the benefits of Toastmasters first-hand.

An Open-House meeting can last anywhere between 1h and 2h but **must include** the following segments:

- ▶ **Testimonials about Toastmasters**, these can be done as part of the prepared speeches.
- ▶ **Interactive speech evaluations** involving the whole audience. These are complementary to evaluator delivered evaluations.
- ▶ **'Card game' Table Topics session.**
- ▶ **Strong meeting close** to inspire and persuade the guests to start their Toastmasters journey. Never end on Club Business.

District 91 will support Face-2-face Open-House meetings by sending a box containing all the materials needed to run a top-quality meeting as well as marketing and promotional flyers. Additionally, up to £75 for PR & Advertising. Finally, marketing templates will be provided.

MEETING PLANNING

Logistics

"Amateurs talk about tactics, but professional study logistics" as the saying says. The first step in organising an amazing Open-House meeting is to arrange the basic logistics of the meeting. Exact arrangements will vary somewhat between community and corporate clubs but this step is essential for all clubs. **Organising an Open-House meeting can be done either by the club's committee or an "ad-hoc" organising team.**

It is essential to engage and inspire the whole club in this endeavour. If each club member brought one guest with them, usual meeting attendance would be doubled and with two guests per member trebled!

Key things to plan for are:

- ▶ **Meeting date and time** – This step should be done at least four weeks beforehand and ideally six or seven. The meeting can either be an additional meeting or take place in-lieu of a normal club meeting.
- ▶ **Meeting length** – Meeting length can be anywhere between 1h and 2h but don't forget to plan extra time for networking and post-meeting debrief and questions. As a rule of thumb add at least 15mins either side of the meeting itself for this.
- ▶ **Securing a venue** – This requirement only applies if the Open-House meeting will be held in a venue that's different from the usual one. If an alternative venue is needed, find one that will seat around 50 people, offer provision for using audio-visual equipment and be of the highest possible standards of neatness and cleanliness.
- ▶ **Ordering Your Open-House Box** – Please order you open house box four to six weeks before you plan to hold your events. The Club Growth Director carries a limited stock of Open -House sales promotion items and leaflets to help your evening run smoothly. Occasionally some items need to be shipped from Toastmasters HQ in the United States and is can several week for the items to arrive.
- ▶ **Catering and refreshments** – This is optional but recommended if possible. Budget conservatively and remember that not providing enough drinks or nibbles can tarnish a positive first impression.
- ▶ **Registration** – Ask people to (if possible) register their attendance either beforehand using an online form or at the meeting itself for a face-2-face meeting. Ask for their email address and a mobile number. Explain that you are interested in their feedback & thoughts and would like to ensure they receive an invitation to the following meeting as well.

Marketing

It is an imperative to market an Open-House meeting as much as possible. Reach out as far and wide as feasible.

Templates for posters and flyers can be ordered or obtained from www.toastmasters.org or the D91 website at <https://d91.toastmasters.org.uk/members/resources/club-growth/open-house/> You also have to the possibility of designing your own fliers or posters as well. Just remember to adhere to the Toastmasters brand guidelines.

All marketing should be “you” focused and heavily emphasise the benefits that a new member will gain by joining Toastmasters. Using second person “you” is also far more direct and catchier.

COMMUNITY CLUBS

- ▶ **Use the club's website or create one** – An invitation to attend the meeting should be prominently displayed on the main page of the website and provide basic details. **If your club doesn't have a website, the meeting is a perfect occasion to launch one!**
- ▶ **Create a promotional video** – This is very powerful and worth the effort. Length wise a couple of minutes are enough. Make it as professional as possible and include basic details about the meeting.

- ▶ **Use Meetup.com** – Create a special event, promote it heavily within the network and make sure as many members and guest sign-up to attend it. The more attendees there are, the higher the event’s ranking will be!
- ▶ **Eventbrite event** – Useful to track attendance and can be linked to or from a website and turned into a Facebook event to reach out to a wider audience.
- ▶ **Social media** – Use and abuse them! Facebook and Twitter are the best platforms. Note that it is possible to schedule posts on Facebook over a period of weeks to promote an event or page.
Ask attendees to invite their Facebook friends and contacts to the event!
- ▶ **Invite local media** – Contact local media as early as you can and invite a journalist to the meeting.
- ▶ **Invite your local MP and Councillors** – While there’s no guarantee that they will be able to attend. **Local politicians have lots of contacts** and may spread the word via their own channels.
- ▶ **Use community noticeboards** – They are the perfect places to put a promotional poster in. Noticeboards are typically present all over the place from churches, to supermarkets, to post offices and pubs.
- ▶ **Using existing clubs and networks** – These can be local gyms, choirs, religious groups and any other group that you can think of.
- ▶ **Promote your meeting on the D91 Calendar** – <https://d91toastmasters.org.uk/members/news/calendar/> . This will help you gain extra support if you need it from other Toastmasters in D91
- ▶ **Leafletting** – Nothing prevents you from putting leaflets in letterboxes in a neighbourhood or leaving them in shops and cafés. However, this method is very labour intensive.

CORPORATE CLUBS

- ▶ **Avoid using “club”** – Do **NOT** describe Toastmasters as a club but rather as “skills development platform” or a “leadership development programme”. **Match your language to the one used internally by your/the company** and emphasise the professional and corporate benefits Toastmasters would bring to your/the company.
- ▶ **Invite executives and senior management** – Provide them with an opportunity to speak for a few minutes at the beginning of meeting (they may have other commitments shortly afterwards).
- ▶ **Use internal publication and newsletters** – This may require permissions but is a good way of reaching out to a large number of people quickly.
- ▶ **Reach out to HR** – Ensuring buy-in from Human Resources or Training departments is a good way to build up momentum for the club and its benefits.
- ▶ **Reach out to apprentices and graduates** – This may not be relevant to your organisation but if specific training schemes exists, use them to emphasise the benefits of learning public speaking skills early-on in one’s career.
- ▶ **Use internal networks** – Women networks, ethnic minority networks, and LBGTI networks may exist in your company.
- ▶ **Use posters and hand out flyers** – The more the merrier if possible.

It is worth remembering that marketing an Open-House meeting should be **complementary to ongoing and already existing Marketing and Public Relations efforts** of the club. However, an Open-House meeting does provide a strong opportunity to restart these from a new base if needed.

Meeting Agenda & Roles

The Open-House meeting will be very similar to a normal club meeting. However, some roles will be done a little differently and the agenda will be planned with the objective of giving guests opportunities to actively take part in the meeting.

The Table Topics session must be after prepared speeches and evaluations have been held. This is in order to achieve increasing levels of audience interaction and to ease guests in taking part in the Table Topics session.

- ▶ **President's Introduction** – The President need to start the meeting on a high note and to briefly explain the history of Toastmasters and emphasize how the Toastmasters educational programme helps everyone to improve their public speaking skills.
- ▶ **Toastmaster of the meeting** – An experienced Toastmaster should facilitate the meeting to keep it as smooth as possible.
- ▶ **Harkmaster** – Replaces or run alongside the grammarian role. This role is far more interactive and involves someone asking questions to the audience on what happened during the meeting. For example, who said what in a speech/evaluation, any interesting factoids etc. The Harkmaster rewards correct answers by giving a sweet or chocolate.
- ▶ **Speakers** – Ideally two speakers should speak during the meeting, **one of which should speak about how Toastmasters has benefited them.** Aim to have a mixture of levels, so the first speaker can be a relatively new member of the club, while the second speaker maybe close to complete their Competent Communicator manual or Pathways Level 2 or is already an advanced speaker.
- ▶ **Evaluator** – Seek out the club's best evaluators for the task. Each evaluation which be divided into a standard evaluation of up to 3mins and an interactive evaluation of anything from 3mins to 7mins facilitated by the evaluators.
- ▶ **Table Topics Master** – The Table Topics session will follow very specific rules (see below) and an experienced Toastmaster should conduct it.
- ▶ **Sergeant at Arms (multiple)** – Anyone can help here but ensure that all of them are appropriately brief beforehand.
- ▶ **Reserve Functionary** – Must be able to set-in and do any of the above roles at short notice if needed.

All the other meeting roles such as General Evaluator and Table Topics Evaluator can be included if time permits. Leaving up to 25mins for the Table Topics section is recommended, Table Topics Evaluations could consequently be spread between one Evaluator covering even speakers and the other odd speakers.

It isn't recommended to have more than 3 prepared speeches during an Open-House meeting. **Remember that this meeting objective is to get the guests to speak!**

DURING THE MEETING

Sergeants at Arms

A team of Sergeant at Arms should set-up the room at least 20 mins before the meeting is due to start and pay particular attention to the following aspects:

- ▶ Meeting room signs and direction signs if needed.
- ▶ Introductory leaflets on each chair if available.
- ▶ Agendas on each chair.
- ▶ Joining instructions and forms on each chair.
- ▶ Club banner displayed and visible.

Someone should stand at the door to greet guests as they arrive to the meeting and take their names and details on the cards provided.

GUEST INFORMATION Please write in capital letters	
Name _____	 HELLO! My Name Is _____ _____ _____
Email _____	
Phone Number _____	
How did you find out about us? _____ _____	
(Please turn over)	

The cards are designed to be teared off in the dotted fold line. Guests can keep the name badge as bookmark after the meeting and should fill in both sides of the guest information card.

I'm Interested in Toastmasters because _____ _____	Top tips for Public Speaking
Would you like to hear from a club leader to learn more about Toastmasters? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	1. Know your material.
Would you like to be added to our newsletter? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	2. Practice, Practice, Practice!
(Please detach and return to a club officer)	3. Realise that people want you to succeed.
	4. Don't apologise
	5. Concentrate on the message
	For more information visit www.toastmasters.org
	(Please keep this portion)

As the guests come into the meeting ask all of them to fill in the card below:

	
Name:	
Please write something about yourself that is very interesting, adventurous, unique or that you are proud of:	

Collect all cards before the meeting starts, these will be used later in the Table Topics session.

Interactive Evaluation

Its purpose of interactive evaluations is too “prime” the audience to the concept of evaluating speeches and to make them feel that they too can evaluate a speech. The interactivity enables the audience to get more involved in the meeting, ahead of the Table Topics session. Before the speeches, the Toastmaster of the meeting will very briefly introduce the concept of evaluating speeches and ask the audience to listen.

Each speech evaluator will begin by doing a standard speech evaluation. **Once it is complete the evaluator will facilitate an interactive evaluation of the speech. The evaluator should put forward suggestions for commendations and recommendations from the audience to the speaker.** The evaluator should emphasise the value of what audience members felt, saw or heard that they liked or which could have been done differently. If you are **chairing this section of the meeting don't hesitate to coax and prompt the audience by asking leading questions** such as “This speech had a 3 parts structure, why was it so effective?” or “What did you notice about the speaker’s movements on stage?” or even “What did you enjoy the most about this speech?”.

Table Topics Session

This is where the card that each guest filled in earlier comes into play. **Introduce the table topics session as a game that everyone in the room will be playing** and briefly explain the concept of table topics and impromptu speaking.

Table Topics shouldn't last more than 1min 30 secs and ideally even be timed to be just 1 min long. This is in order to have as many guests as possible taking part in the session.

The Table Topics Master should then pull out a card at random and read it out loud to everyone present. Once the card is read you should pause for a moment to let the audience guess who it might be. Afterwards, call out the person that wrote the card by their name and invite them to the stage.

This approach is guaranteed to **drive up audience participation** and **avoids having unfamiliar participants speaking on a topic they know nothing about**. After all we all know how to speak about ourselves and this method harnesses this to maximum effect. It is also quite likely that participants may have told this story before to friends and acquaintances, making them even more familiar about the material and confident to talk about it to an audience.

Run as many Table Topics as time allows, ideally a dozen or even twenty if time permits so that as many people as possible get a chance to take part and speak. This “card game” can be run alongside classical table topics questions as well, if so **make the questions as easy as possible to answer**, or use a technique such as the “bag of tricks” where someone has to talk about an object they’ve pulled out of a bag.

Meeting Close

When closing the Open-House meeting bear the following points in mind:

- ▶ **Ask the guests for feedback** – Ask each guest to say their name and to describe the meeting in just one word. “Please tell us your name and what you felt about the meeting in one word”.
- ▶ **Thanks and reward all guests for coming and taking part** – Give the ‘First Timer’ ribbon to all guests that did their first Table Topics. You can additionally give a ‘Welcome to Toastmasters’ ribbon to all the guests’ presents.
- ▶ **There is more to Toastmasters than just public speaking** – Briefly highlight leadership opportunities and that Toastmastering a meeting is a big deal as it involves leading a 10+ person’s team.
- ▶ **The next meeting is taking place on ...** – This is crucial to invite guests present to take part in regular club meeting and activities.
- ▶ **Take plenty of photographs** – This is for post-meeting follow-up and updates on the club’s website and social media channels.
- ▶ **What’s in it for you** – Have a powerful persuader closing the meeting and invite the guests to begin their Toastmasters journey.

POST-MEETING

Follow-up

Contact all attendees to the demo meeting the day after the meeting, thank them for attending and remind them to the procedure to follow if they wish to become member. Additionally, highlight the date and location of the first club meeting and that speaking opportunities will be available.

Thank all guests who filled-in membership forms and tell them that you would love to process their membership so that they can present their Ice Breaker or be assigned a meeting role.

Should guests not join before the next meeting, send them an invitation a few days before the next meeting. If they don’t join at the next meeting, send them an invitation for the next meeting. Follow-up until they either join or ask you to stop sending them meeting invitations.

Next Steps & Mentoring

Process the membership applications and register the new members on Club Central ASAP. If possible, provide new member packs to the new members with guidance on meeting roles etc. so that they're off to the best start. At the same time, assign mentors to all the new members

Serious consideration should be given to run an orientation meeting. This is a more informal meeting where you talk about:

- ▶ The general Toastmaster processes
- ▶ How to use the manuals
- ▶ Leadership roles, both Competent Leadership and Club Leadership roles.
- ▶ Allow the new members to ask plenty of questions.

TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED WITH MARKETING YOUR OPEN-HOUSE

- ▶ **Videos** Example of a promo/invite video - [Worthing Speakers Open House 2020 - YouTube](#)
- ▶ **Templates** - [Digital Templates - Toastmasters UK South - District 91 Members](#) [d91toastmasters.org.uk/digital-templates](#) A great resource for running a social media campaign in the run up to your event. Try a mixture of organic posts and paid posts - Try Organic posts first
- ▶ **Invites** - [Special Event Flyer](#) - A wide range of save the date and invite templates to invite to your member or your guest list to your Open House
- ▶ **Free Money** - Up to £75.00 available from the District towards marketing that can be claimed back up to 30 days after your event. Simply email diane@d91toastmasters.org.uk with the date of your planned event so that funds can be pre-approved
- ▶ **District Calendar** - Add your event to the District Calendar by sending us a calendar invite - d91district91@gmail.com - and include the registration link. This helps the event be visible to internal audiences
- ▶ **Flyers** - [Toastmasters International -Resource Library](#) - Need some more ideas on flyers to help advertise your meeting
- ▶ **Presentation Template for the Day** - [Toastmasters International -Open House Powerpoint Template](#) - A great way to help you structure your event.
- ▶ **D91 Open House Resource page** - [Open House - Toastmasters UK South - District 91 Members \(d91toastmasters.org.uk\)](#)- Additional content you might find useful
- ▶ **Claim Advertising & PR Costs** - Don't forget to claim up to £75.00 to cover advertising expenses. [How to claim expenses for Open Houses](#)
- ▶ In conversation with Amy Jones and Cristelle Delaporte - 20 minute discussion on their experiences <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0vMH1e50C4>
- ▶ Latest [Special Event Flier](#)

TOPS TIPS FROM THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE

It's always invaluable to hear what others have experienced when they have run an Open House

Here are a few top tips.

- ▶ This is not only about PR - the success of the event is a team effort. However, you should begin marketing your event as soon as a date has been agreed!
- ▶ Think about what Pathways projects people getting involved with it could use - examples but not limited to - 'Building a Social Media Presence' 'Manage Projects Successfully' 'Manage Online Meetings' 'Question and Answer Session - Log in to BASECAMP and take a look at the detail of the projects to see what you can do that can be applied
- ▶ **Plan, plan, plan** - The whole thing needs planning - the project owner doesn't have to be a committee member
- ▶ **Get everyone involved** - If the whole club gets involved, everyone benefits
- ▶ **Think 'Guest to Member Experience'** - ensure membership forms are to hand and the event has a robust follow up process. Not everyone will sign up the same day - and that's ok
- ▶ **Ensure guests have a chance to speak**, but not be pressured into doing so - this could be a warm up at the beginning, an invitation to say why they attended (guest introductions) or break out into smaller groups in zoom rooms hosted by members
- ▶ **Headline Speakers** - Having a headline speaker may well create a buzz to increase attendance in general
- ▶ **Use the Simplified Agenda** - The agenda is just as important for guest experience and engagement as solid event marketing
- ▶ **Different Skill Levels** - Ensure the agenda has people starting out in their Toastmasters journey - remember 'new members attract new members' - guests should not feel intimidated
- ▶ **Evaluator(s)** - be positive
- ▶ **All roles matter** - All functional roles matter - Timer, Toastmaster, Zoom Master
- ▶ **Include a short educational on Toastmasters** - see powerpoint template. This could be the bigger picture, it could simply be explaining our education system and how it can help people with their own personal development

DON'T FORGET TO FOLLOW UP!

SAMPLE AGENDA

Meeting Timing	Running Timing	Role & Event	Presenter	Green	Amber	Red
	00:15	Meet and greet				
		Meeting Starts				
	00:03	Welcome by Toastmaster of the Meeting		02:00	02:30	03:00
	00:06	ZoomMaster of the Meeting How to use Zoom – for online Open House Meetings		02:00	02:30	03:00
	00:10	Toastmaster of the Meeting Overview of agenda		02:00	03:00	04:00
	00:11	Timekeeper Describes Role				01:00
	00:13	TM explains the prepared speaking element and introduces the speaker				02:00
	00:20	Speech: [ADD TITLE]		05:00	06:00	07:00
	00:21	TM to thank the speaker and announce next speaker				01:00
	00:28	Speech: [ADD TITLE]		05:00	06:00	07:00
	00:29	TM to thank the speaker and hand over to evaluator				01:00
	00:32	Evaluation of Speaker 1		02:00	02:30	03:00
	00:33	TM to thank the evaluator and hand over to next evaluator for the group feedback session				01:00
	00:39	Interactive Evaluation of Speaker 2		04:00	05:00	06:00
	00:40	Timekeeper Reports on times of speeches and evaluations				01:00
	00:41	TM to thank everyone and hand over to TTM				01:00
	00:43	Table Topic Master		01:00	01:30	02:00
	00:58	15 Table Topic Speakers		00:30	00:45	01:00
	00:59	TM to thank all and hand over for TT timing				01:00
	01:01	Timekeeper Reports on times of Table Topics				02:00
	01:02	TM thanks and hand over to TTE				01:00
	01:09	Table Topic Evaluator – General remarks		05:00	06:00	07:00
	01:10	TM hands over to Panel Lead				01:00
	01:20	Q&A Session About Toastmasters with Panel		06:00	08:00	10:00
	01:25	TM to wrap up the meeting and hand out awards / show virtual awards				05:00
	01:27	Any final questions and closing remarks		01:00	01:30	02:00
	01:30	Meeting Close				

CHECKLISTS

Corporate Clubs and Programmes

TASK	DEADLINE	DONE
LOGISTICS		
Arrange meeting date and time	T - 6 Weeks	
Secure meeting venue	T - 4 Weeks	
Order 'Demo Box' from District 91	T - 4 Weeks	
Organise catering provision	T - 2 Weeks	
MARKETING		
Invite Executive/Managing Director/Senior Managers	T - 6 Weeks	
Contact HR & Training Dept	T - 6 Weeks	
Prepare flyers and posters	T - 4 Weeks	
Contact internal networks	T - 4 Weeks	
Promote via internal newsletters & intranet	T - 3 Weeks	
Hand out flyers	T - 2 Weeks	
Send reminders and follow-ups to contacts	T - 1 Week	
Invite team members and colleagues	T - 1 Week	
ORGANISATION		
Get in touch with Area/Division/Club Growth Director	T - 6 Weeks	
Assemble organising team	T - 6 Weeks	
Secure speaker & functionaries	T - 4 Weeks	
Brief visiting Toastmasters on travel and security arrangements	T - 1 Week	
Brief and train Sergeant at Arms	T - 3/5 Days	
Final agenda ready	T - 3 Days	
Agendas printed	T - 1 Day	
Membership forms ready and printed	T - 1 Day	
Meeting supplies ready	T - 1 Day	
Room ready	T - 1 Hour	
Visiting Toastmasters start arriving	T - 30 Mins	
POST-MEETING		
Follow-up with guests	T + 1 Day	
Send thank you notes as needed	T + 1 Day	
Collate membership forms	T + 2 Days	

Community Clubs

TASK	DEADLINE	DONE
LOGISTICS		
Arrange meeting date and time	T - 6 Weeks	
Secure meeting venue	T - 4 Weeks	
Order 'Demo Box' from District 91	T - 4 Weeks	
Organise catering provision	T - 2 Weeks	
MARKETING		
Club website page created	T - 6 Weeks	
Eventbrite page created	T - 6 Weeks	
Facebook event created	T - 6 Weeks	
Invite local politicians to meeting	T - 6 Weeks	
Identify local websites and community publications	T - 5 Weeks	
Create promotional video	T - 4 Weeks	
Meetup.com updated	T - 4 Weeks	
Contact local media	T - 4 Weeks	
Contact local organisations & clubs	T - 3 Weeks	
Begin to publicise on local websites and noticeboards	T - 3 Weeks	
Design and order marketing materials	T - 2 Weeks	
Invite members of neighbouring clubs to attend	T - 2 Weeks	
Send reminders and follow-ups to contacts	T - 1 Week	
ORGANISATION		
Get in touch with Area/Division/Club Growth Director	T - 6 Weeks	
Assemble organising team	T - 6 Weeks	
Secure speaker & functionaries	T - 4 Weeks	
Brief and train Sergeant at Arms	T - 3/5 Days	
Final agenda ready	T - 3 Days	
Agendas printed	T - 1 Day	
Membership forms ready and printed	T - 1 Day	
Cards ready	T - 1 Day	
Room ready	T - 1 Hour	
Visiting Toastmasters start arriving	T - 30 Mins	
POST-MEETING		
Follow-up with guests	T + 1 Day	
Send thank you notes as needed	T + 1 Day	
Collate membership forms	T + 2 Days	

USEFUL RESOURCES

Toastmasters Magazine, July 2017, '[Stir Up Excitement with an Open House or Demo Meeting](#)'