



# TECHMASTERS - TWIN CITIES

## Weekly Role Guide

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### Guide Overview

This is an in-depth review of each of the weekly roles at TechMasters. This is designed to be used as a starting point for discussions between mentors and mentees in how to perform each role. These are the 'standard' definitions for each role and it is suggested that new members develop a reasonable mastery of the 'normal' way to do each role before getting really creative and making up new rules, which you are always free to do.

### The Weekly Roles

Here are the 13 weekly meeting roles + the floating 'Hot Seat' role. The roles are shown in the order they normally occur in a meeting...

1. Invocation/Time (IT)
2. Toastmaster (TM)
3. Court Jester (CJ)
4. Grammarian (GR)
5. One Minute Toastmaster (1M)
6. Table Topics Master (TT)
7. Speaker (S) (up to 3 per meeting)
8. General Evaluator (GE)
9. Evaluators (E) (one per speaker, up to 3 per meeting)
10. Hot Seat (HS) – floating role

### Invocation/Timer (IT)

The IT role has several facets...

1. **Opening/closing quote**/invocation/exhortation/meditation. A positive or thought-provoking quote to start and end the meeting. Note the opening quote is very early in the meeting – you are called upon by the President right after the pledge. The ending quote is just before the President closes the meeting.
2. **Timing of the various roles.** Keep track of:
  - a. meeting start time
  - b. length of business meeting
  - c. length of individual table topic responses (more on this below)
  - d. length of the break
  - e. length of prepared speeches (more below)
  - f. length of evaluations
  - g. meeting end time



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3. **Timer's report.** In the 'reports' part of the meeting, the General Evaluator will call upon you for the timers report. If we're doing OK on time, you can quickly buzz through all the times you've recorded to that point.
  - a. If we're running late, you can shorten your report to include the TT response times, the speech times and the evaluation times.
  - b. If we're really, really late (which doesn't happen too often), you can further shorten your report by reporting just the shortest and longest TT response, the speech times and the eval times. This would be the absolute minimum timers report.
4. **Working the timing lights** and/or the timing cards. Part of being timer is to give some feedback to the speakers throughout the meeting to help them stay within their allotted times. We have a green/yellow/red system where:
  - a. green = 'reached minimum time'
  - b. yellow = 'running out of time'
  - c. red = 'reached maximum time'

**For TABLE TOPICS RESPONSES:** (1 min – 1.5 min total)

  - d. green = 1 minute
  - e. yellow = 1 min, 15 sec
  - f. red = 1 min 30 sec
5. For **PREPARED SPEECHES**, you should ask each speaker how long they expect to go (note – you can ask before the meeting or at the break). All the CC manual speeches are 5-7 minutes. Some of the advanced speeches will be longer (i.e. 8-10, etc). For a normal 5-7 minute speech:
  - a. green = 5 minutes
  - b. yellow = 6 minutes
  - c. red = 7 minutes
6. For **EVALUATORS:** ( 2 - 3 min total)
  - a. green = 2 minutes
  - b. yellow = 2 min 30 sec
  - c. red = 3 minutes

Note – depending on the Toastmaster of the day, you may be called upon early in the meeting to 'explain your role'. If you are called, you can explain your role is to keep the meeting on schedule and give the time ranges for table topic responses and evaluators. You can quickly explain the meaning of the green/yellow/red lights/cards and that people should strive to talk until they get the 'green' and they should think about wrapping up when they get 'yellow' and wind up quickly when they get 'red'. We'll talk more about why this is a 'sometimes' thing when we get to reviewing the Toastmaster role, but it is best to be prepared, just in case.

The most important thing about the timer role is to **be ready** when the President calls on you for the opening/closing quotes. That isn't a good time to wait for your phone to 'power up' to get the quote.

**The thing to watch out for** when timing is that you can get so wrapped up in the speech or the response that you forget to start or stop the timer. This has happened to me and many other folks over the years. Oops. If it



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happens, don't sweat it, just try to get the best time you can for the person you missed and do a short mea culpa in the report – i.e. 'I'm sorry, but your speech was so fascinating I forgot to stop the timer'.

We have a stopwatch at the club (in the podium) or you can use your own watch or phone as you like.

### Toastmaster (TM)

The key things as TM are...

1. Smile, be upbeat and full of energy. This is most important. If you're up there having fun it flavors the entire meeting and life is good.
2. Keep the meeting moving along and on time.
3. Introduce and call on the role participants in order – CJ, 1M, TT, speakers, GE
4. Reach out to the folks with major roles (TT, Speakers, GE) to get material for an introduction (or just make something up if they don't respond ☹)
5. Remind the TT master to start with the people with no roles, then move to people with minor roles. We will be skipping folks with major roles as well as speakers for TT in the interest of time. (this is new – normally we skip just the speakers)
6. Call for a 5 Minute break. We want to start the break at 8:10 and get going again by 8:15
7. At the break, call up the speakers, evaluators and the GE. The GE should assign the speaking order and pair up the speakers and evaluators. You need to get the titles of the speeches and the estimated time.
8. Introduce each speaker in turn, then call up the GE
9. After the GE finishes, you can award the Spark Plug (person who brought the most energy to the meeting) and the Fuzzy Mouse (best non-technical explanation of a technical topic). The Fuzzy Mouse is optional. Don't give out awards if they haven't been earned.
10. If there is time, you can give a brief assessment of the meeting after you hand out the awards. You can call out anything you thought was especially good or something that really needs improvement. Since we're on the new time schedule tomorrow, that would be a good thing to discuss if the GE didn't cover it.
11. Turn the meeting back to the president

If everyone shows up, things go pretty smoothly. The scramble is when we're short on people and you need to get roles filled on the spot in the morning. Usually, you ask for volunteers then you can start asking specific people to 'volunteer' if you still have roles open.

The key thing to remember is that when you are TM, it is *your* meeting, so you can truly do it your way.



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Before the meeting...

Send out an email to people with a role. Here's a sample:

Subject: TM roles this week

Importance: High

Greetings, fellow Techmasters!

You are getting this email because YOU have a role on Tuesday...

IT ? open

TM Paul

CJ Brette

GR El Haddi

1M Naz

TT ? open

SP Mike Emo

SP ? open

SP ? open

GE Loras

E Alex

E Jaim

E ? open

HS Vince

As you can see, we have several open roles this week. I put out an email to members without roles so see if people want to pick up one of the open roles. The two critical open roles are TT and one of the SP slots.

Thought on open speaking slots: we suddenly have quite a few new members, so it is always appropriate to do a 'how to' or a nuts-and-bolts type of speech, i.e. 'How to give an evaluation' or 'How to answer table topics without drowning in ahs and ums'

**Jaim/Alex** – if you would like to pick up one of these larger roles instead of doing eval, please let me know.

**Vince** – will you be able to pick up SP or TT this week?

**Mike/Loras** – please provide a short intro (or I can just make something up. ☺)

**Brette/El Haddie/Naz** – you have 'early roles' – please make every effort to be at TM by 7.40 as the business meeting is also shortened and we get into our meeting faster than we used to.



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Reminder: we are on our 'shortened' schedule so...

**TT should finish by 8.05.** The means START with the people with no role, then move to people with smaller roles. Skipping people with larger & major roles will ensure everyone has a chance to speak. Also, please do NOT surprise our guests with TT questions – we don't want to make guests uncomfortable and being asked to speak in front of a room of strangers is about as uncomfortable as it gets.

Also, we have FOUR new members from last week (Sam, Troy, Hans and Nick J). I don't know if they will be picking up roles this week, but please have a few extra questions.

**Speakers** – please keep within the 5 – 7 minute time slot

As we're already short several people, please try to attend on Tues. If you are unable to attend, please let me know ASAP and also reach out to the other members to find someone to fill your role.

### Court Jester (CJ)

Court Jester is one of the easiest roles. The idea is to deliver a short, funny joke, story, anecdote, etc. to start the meeting with a little levity. The CJ is called early in the meeting, just after the Toastmaster takes control of the meeting. When you are CJ, be sure to be on time.

Guidelines:

1. **Keep it clean.** We are all adults, so a little edgy is ok, but steer clear of any topics that are off-color or really racy. If you wouldn't tell the joke to your mother, it probably isn't appropriate.
2. **Keep it short.** We don't have a specific time limit for the CJ, but if your joke takes more than 3 minutes it is too long. Keep it short & sweet and get to the punch line.
3. **Don't step on the punch line.** A short pause just before the punch line sets up a little anticipation and often generates more laughs.



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### Grammarian (GR)

This is one of the 'early' roles - the Toastmaster will call on you shortly after he/she takes over the meeting from the president. There are several aspects to the grammarian role...

1. Introduce the **Word of the Day**. The Word of the Day helps the club build our vocabulary. You can pick any word you like, but remember, you need to use it in Table Topics, too, so don't go too crazy. ☺ When introducing the Word of the Day, you go to the front of the room and write the word on the whiteboard, along with the part of speech and the definition. Then you use the word in a sentence to demonstrate correct pronunciation and usage.
2. **Ah/Um counter**. When people use crutch words like 'ah' and 'um' during Table Topics, you **RING THE BELL** each time you hear one of these words and keep a tally by person of ah/um usage for your report later in the meeting. This is often something people struggle with - i.e. they want to be 'nice' and ringing the bell isn't thought of as 'nice'. Nothing is further from the truth! Ringing the bell is an act of love and a gift! By ringing the bell, you help members attune their ear to their crutch words, which is the only way to learn how to stop using them.
  - a. Note - you do NOT ring the bell during the prepared speeches unless the speaker asks you to. (Ask the speaker if they want to be 'dinged' at the break or before the meeting starts). You do count the ahs/ums, but ringing the bell can be very distracting for prepared speeches, so we normally just keep the tally.
  - b. Note - lately, we've been also counting other crutch words, like 'you know', 'and so', etc. If you can count those too, that is great. For your first time out, focus on counting the ahs/ums and get as many of the other crutch words as you can.
3. **Word of the day usage**. Note 'word of the day' usage throughout the meeting. If, during table topics, the speaker didn't use the word of the day, give them a series of fast 'dings' on the bell when they are done to remind them they need to use the word of the day.
4. Look for **Word Pictures**. The other major thing you do as grammarian is to look for Word Pictures and to award the Word Picture of the Day award in the reports and awards section of the meeting. A 'Word Picture' is using language to create a vivid image. Typically, word pictures use the words 'like' or 'as' to help create the image. For example...

'Like a shrill banshee's scream shattering the inky pre-dawn blackness, I was jolted awake by my alarm clock.'

vs

"My alarm clock rang"
5. **Report/Award**. At the end of the meeting, the General Evaluator will call on you to give your report, where you quickly run down the list of people who spoke and their ah/um/crutchword count. You can comment on the word of the day usage (i.e. the club did a good job and used the word or they didn't). After your report, walk to the front of the room and pick up the **PENCIL, which is the Word Picture of the Day** award and give that to the person who had the best word picture or vivid language usage that day.



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### One-Minute Toastmaster (1M)

The 1M is our education segment. In this role, you deliver a short tip to help everyone improve their communication skills (speaking, listening, etc) or otherwise to become better TechMasters.

Your material can be positive in nature, i.e. 'what to do', or negative in nature, i.e. 'watch out for this'. If you use negative material, direct any negatives on you and not on any member.

This role is targeted for 1 minute, so *short* is the operative word here.

Great sources for inspiration in the 1M role...

1. The Toastmaster magazine. Every issue has something that can be crafted into a 1M segment.
2. Something you learned from another member – i.e. a good technique or something you found to be an 'ah ha' moment for you.
3. Great examples of good (or bad) communication from your daily work or home life.
4. A tip from a book or article that you found very helpful.
5. Something you struggled to learn and your trick for finally 'getting it'. Chances are another member may be wrestling with a similar issue and your personal insight could be the key that unlocks the puzzle for them.

The 1M role is an early role. You are called after the Grammarian and before Table Topics.

If possible, sit near the front so you can get up and face the room. If you are in the back of the room and cannot make it to the front quickly, you can address the room from wherever you are sitting. (but stand up for your segment).

### Table Topics (TT)

Table Topics Master is one of the most interesting roles and one that requires preparation in advance of the meeting. Your role is to lead the impromptu speaking part of the meeting by asking members open-ended questions. An open-ended question is one that does not get a one-word answer. Examples:

**'What is your favorite color?'** is a closed-ended question because it can be answered with a single word.

**'What is your favorite color *and why*?'** is open-ended because the member has to explain why.

**'Red is often called a power color. How do you react when seeing a red sign?'** is even more open-ended and a deeper question.

Remind members of their response time target, which is 1 – 1.5 minutes, and that they should use the Word of the Day in their response. Remind the Grammarian to ding for ahs and ums.

Remind members that there are three ways to answer a table topics question:





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1. You can answer the question directly
2. You can answer someone else's question
3. You can change the subject and talk about anything else you'd like

You can build your questions around a single theme (i.e. favorite summer activities) or you can be somewhat random. In the best case, you will have looked at the schedule and come up with questions for specific members based on your knowledge of that member. (this is a more advanced way of doing TT and not something you should worry about in the beginning)

**Never, ever call on guests** for table topics unless you have cleared that with the guest **before** the meeting. Calling on guests makes them very uncomfortable and this is not something we ever want to do to our guests.

**Table Topics should end by 8:05AM.** To make sure that everyone has an opportunity to speak at the meeting, call on people in the following order:

1. People with no role that week
2. People with a minor role (CJ, IT, GR)
3. People with larger roles (1M, E)

Generally, you will run out of time before you run out of people to call on. **It is most important to call on the members with no role so they have an opportunity to speak.** If we have only 2 speakers scheduled (and they are doing normal 5-7 minutes speeches), you can go a *little bit* longer to get in a few more questions, but coordinate this with the Toastmaster of the day. In any event, finish up by 8:10am.

In the report section, the GE will call on you to award the Wise Old Owl for the member who you felt gave the best table topics answer. 'Best' is totally subjective and completely up to you.

## Speaker (SP)

The Speaker role is where you deliver a prepared speech, generally 5-7 minutes in length. It is highly recommended to do your first 10 speeches from the Toastmaster Competent Communicator (CC) manual, aka 'manual speeches'. The CC manual covers the structural elements of a good speech, i.e. organization, body language, etc. While you are free to do the CC speeches in any order, the speeches are arranged in a logical progression, building your speaking skills and confidence as you move through the program.

Note – you are always in charge of your content. The manual speeches cover *how* to craft and deliver an effective speech. *What* you talk about is entirely up to you. Generally, the best topics for speeches are things you are passionate about.

## The Ice Breaker – your first speech to the club

Notes on icebreakers, which apply to just about everyone when they start at Techmasters...

1. While a 5-7 minute speech about yourself sounds like a lot of time, it really isn't. Invariably, people end up with WAY more material than will fit in a 5-7 minute speech, so focus and editing are the operative



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words here. Think about a short intro (30 sec – 1 minute), a 4 or 5 minute body (max) and a short conclusion (30 seconds). Also, a spoken speech tends to take longer to deliver than you think it will, so aim for a 5 minute speech to allow yourself some wiggle room. It isn't an issue if you go *a little bit over*, but learning to speak in your targeted timeframe is one of the most important things we learn at TM.

2. An icebreaker can be thought of as introducing yourself to the group. i.e. suppose you went to a class reunion and someone said, 'hey, what have you been up to these last 10 years?' You can talk about personal or professional areas of your life, i.e. family, hobbies, work, technology, etc. Many people touch on the most important things (i.e. go broad without going too deep into any one area).
3. You can use visuals if you want to – we've seen people show pictures of their spouse, kids, pets, hobbies, etc. We've also seen great icebreakers without visuals, so this is totally your call based on what you want to talk about. If you use visuals, try to limit yourself to just a few slides (i.e. 1-3). Trying to cover a large number of slides in 5-7 minutes is really hard in an icebreaker. (Covering that many slides in 5-7 minutes is hard anytime, actually). Remember – you are the star of the presentation, telling your story your way. The slides are there to play a supporting role.
4. When you go to deliver, relax. This can be easier said than done, but know that you are truly among friends and nobody expects you to be perfect. Remember – we are all here to learn how to be better communicators – and we learn by doing.

### General Evaluator (GE)

The GE role covers a few things...

1. At the break (or before the meeting) get the speech titles, **assign** the speaking order and pair up the evaluators with the speakers. You do not ask for 'who wants to be evaluated by...' – you just assign (no wishy washyness). You can ask the speakers if they need A/V and decide if the people who need A/V should go 1<sup>st</sup> (if they are all ready) or last (if they are having issues).
2. When you're called up after the speeches, call for voting on best speech right away. (Remember, you get a vote, too)
3. Call on the evaluators in the order of the speakers. Remind them of their timing (2 – 3 minutes)
4. Call for voting on the best evaluator.
5. Call on timer and grammarian for their reports. The grammarian also needs to give out the word picture award (the big pencil).
6. Call on table topics master to give out wise old owl award
7. you give out the best evaluator and then the best speaker award.
8. If someone does an exceptional visual presentation, you can give out the Visual Impact award. This is only given out for a truly excellent and exceptional visual presentation.
9. Give a brief evaluation of the Toastmaster of the day.
10. Give a brief evaluation of the overall meeting. Try to point out something you really liked or something that went very well (i.e. visitors taking a table topic or a particularly great table topics session) and something that needs improvement (i.e. timing of the meeting, speakers left the podium 'naked' by not waiting for TM, etc)
11. Turn meeting back to TM to award the Spark Plug and Fuzzy Mouse awards.



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Key points –

- make sure cover all the voting and the awards
- be observant during the meeting so you can call out something really good and something that needs improvement
- Be brief to give the TM and the president a little time after you are done, but try to have enough time to do an evaluation of the overall meeting. This gets chopped because we run late, but it is actually an important thing to do if you have time.
- Don't give out the Visual Impact award if it wasn't earned or appropriate. It is optional.
- Remember the break is short – be ready to assign speaking order and evaluators so the evals and the speakers have a couple of minutes to connect before the speeches.

### Evaluator (E)

Being an evaluator is an exercise in listening and observation and then giving feedback to the speaker.

You get paired with a speaker at the break. The speaker/evaluator pairing is assigned by the General evaluator. The speaker is supposed to tell you what they want you to focus on (and if they don't tell you, be sure to ask). If they are doing a 'manual speech' from one of the TM speech manuals, your job is a lot easier since you have specific criteria to measure the speaker against. If it isn't a manual speech, then let the speaker guide you as to what they want you to focus on.

When watching/listening to the speech, try to 'listen' with all your senses, attention and emotion. You want to pick up what the speaker is 'putting out there', which isn't always verbal. For example...

- does the speaker favor one side of the room?
- do they have a nervous habit, such as noticeably shifting back & forth?
- are they relaxed or do they have a death-grip on the podium?
- are they smiling?
- how is their energy level? Are they projecting to the back of the room?
- Can you feel their passion for the subject?
- Are they talking to their slides (i.e. turning and 'reading' the slides)?
- Are they using a lot of 'ah/um' words or other verbal crutches ('ya know', 'and so', etc)?
- Are they in command of the room? (aka do they have a strong 'presence' or are they wishy-washy)
- did they use the word of the day?
- did they have strong word pictures or other examples of excellent word usage?
- Are they using hand or body gestures to emphasize specific points in the speech? Are they appropriate? Too much? Not enough?

In addition to the speaker's delivery, you also need to look at the structure of the speech...

- Is there an opening/body/conclusion?
- How are the transitions between sections? (i.e. smooth and natural or abrupt)



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- If this is a manual speech, how did the speaker do against the objectives of the speech? (and if not a manual speech, how did the speaker do against their stated goal)

We don't really critique content per se – that is always up to the speaker, but you can make some observations here, too.

- Did the speaker use visual aids (aka slides or other props)?
  - Where they appropriate?
  - Where they clear?
  - Where they interesting (keeping in mind the intended audience). I.e. if the speaker was talking to a group of grandmothers about photo-sharing, you would expect the content to be quite simplified vs. the same talk for a room full of developers.
- Did the title relate to the content?
  - if the speaker asks for specific feedback on content (i.e. someone is preparing a talk for code camp and you are comfortable commenting on the content, you can offer feedback on the content)

A lot of this sounds 'negative', but it isn't. Also look for strengths. We are always looking to reinforce a speaker's strengths and to point out some areas for improvement.

When you deliver the actual evaluation, you have about 3 minutes. Structure your evaluation as an 'evaluation sandwich'...

- point out what the speaker did well
- review some points for improvement
- finish with something you really liked about the speech

The goal is NOT to beat up the speaker. The goal is to point out areas for improvement in a positive way and, if you can, offer some advice on improving. i.e. if you see someone bouncing all over the place, some good advice would be to calm down and try to not be so animated.

Note that sometimes experienced speakers will ask for a more stringent evaluation, in which case it is appropriate to skip some of the 'good points' to focus more on the areas for improvement. If the speaker wants you to do this, they will ask you when you meet at the break.

If you have a lot of notes, you won't be able to cover all of the above in 3 minutes. If that is the case, cover the highlights when you do your evaluation and then give the speaker more detail either in written form at the meeting or send them an email.

Doing evaluations is very much a learned skill. Take your time and try to go for your full 3 minutes – and remember to project your voice and look at the person you are evaluating (aka 'ignore the rest of the room'). Remember that an evaluation is itself a mini-speech. The 3 parts of the sandwich make for a natural open/body/close.



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Finally, keep in mind that you are giving a gift to the speaker. You are 100% focused on helping them be a better speaker. When you keep that in mind, it is a lot easier to focus on the speaker and give them the feedback they need to hear from you.

### Hot Seat (HS)

The Hot Seat role is the most challenging role in the club. As Hot Seat, you can be called to fill *any role* that is vacant for the day. If multiple roles are vacant, normally, the Toastmaster will call for volunteers and you get the role that isn't filled. I.e. everyone else gets first choice.

The best and only way to really be prepared for the Hot Seat role is to have material prepared for every role all the time. This way you can respond immediately to any situation. If you are called, for example, to be the CJ that morning, deliver your joke and then replenish your 'stock' after the meeting with another joke so you're always one step ahead.

In addition to being good preparation for the Hot Seat role, this is a good way to have material ready to go for any role. If you are scheduled for a role and you don't have time to prepare, it is nice to know you have a fall-back position.

Finally, every member is encouraged to consider themselves an alternate 'Hot Seat' every week. Because of the very fluid nature of our membership and the fact the IT problems 'just happen' on a regular basis, there is a very good chance that on any given week there will be an opportunity to pick up an extra role. This is a great way to make rapid progress on your CC and CL goals and the fastest way to improve your skills. There is no substitute for 'doing' and being prepared allows you to 'do' a lot more often.