

Ten Types of Table Topics

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INTRODUCTION

This Seminar presents ten types of Table Topics. All of them are different to the standard question and answer routine on items such as current affairs. Instead, each is intended as a theme that can be built into a complete topics session.

The use of variety in table topics programs is the key to ensuring Club meetings begin in a sparkling fashion. Table topics need to be stimulating, interesting, provocative, pleasurable and different.

The two key points a Topic Master should aim to achieve are realism and variety. The Topic Master should seek realistically for topics that will bring out the best thinking and speaking by the members. He or she should also seek out fresh approaches and new ideas that will make the table topics session exciting and challenging.

Wherever possible the table topics session should have an overall theme, a cohesive objective or a uniformity of style. This will make the session an entity in which members can readily perceive their own possible participation. This then leads to better performance.

Here are 10 such types of table topics sessions. Some alternative ways of presentation are also given.

1. FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS

Objective - To give instructions

a. Drawing objects. Place a card on the lectern with a simple picture or word on it. The speaker has to describe the object, without using gestures or naming it, for everyone to draw on a piece of paper. At the end, members show what they have drawn or printed.

b. Identifying descriptions. Place a picture from a magazine on the lectern. The speaker must describe it without saying what it is. Everyone writes their guess on a piece of paper.

2. READING ALOUD

Objective - To practice reading on request, e.g. when acting as Secretary.

Speakers to be asked to read in an impromptu manner. The session can use instructional material, poems, etc.

3. LETS IMAGINE - FAMOUS PEOPLE

Objective - To use imagination

Speakers to be asked to imagine they are famous people in the past coming back to life. They are to comment on life as they find it. (There are many variations possible to the Let's Imagine theme, such as speakers to be given "inventions" and asked to sell them to prospective buyers. See also five themes in Table Topics pamphlet 1315).

4. USING IMAGINATION WITH SIMPLE OBJECTS

Objective - To use imagination

Speakers to be given a simple object and asked to describe how many uses they can imagine for it, e.g. a piece of string, paper-clip, set of keys, etc.

5. TELEPHONE TOPICS

Objective - To practise using a telephone
Use a telephone handset or mobile phone.

- a. Speakers to be asked to carry on a conversation with an imaginary person to explain a situation, sell a product, etc.
- b. Using two telephones, conversations can be arranged between two speakers.

6. "MAN-IN-THE-STREET" INTERVIEWS

Objective - Practise use of microphone

- a. Use a portable cassette recorder to conduct "man in the street" interviews. The interviews can be played back after the meeting.
- b. Alternatively, conduct interviews as members arrive at the meeting and play them back during topic session.

7. CEREMONIAL OCCASIONS

Objective - Making formal speeches

Use pairs of speakers for events, e.g. One speaker presents a gift and then a second responds or one says goodbye to a member moving interstate who then responds.

8. MIMING TOPICS

Objective - To encourage use of gestures

Use pairs of speakers. One speaker is asked to pretend he has lost his voice. He is given a piece of paper with a note asking him to convey a message or to find some information from the 2nd speaker.

9. IMPROVISATION SKITS

Objective - Acting a part

Use pairs of speakers. One speaker plays the role of a particular person. The second speaker has another role and is given a piece of paper defining the task that he has. The audience and first speaker do not know the task. e.g. First speaker is Editor of a local paper. The second speaker must persuade him to publish an article about Toastmasters.

10. TV TALK-SHOW INTERVIEWS

Objective - To practise interviewing

Use pairs of speakers sitting in chairs at front of the room. One speaker is the Host of a TV show. The other speaker is introduced in a role and has to be interviewed. The session is best when all interviews have a common theme, e.g. Use Guinness Book of Records and introduce each "guest" as the holder of a particular world record.

FURTHER IDEAS

See "Think Fast", the TI Table Topics handbook (Code 1315) and the Table Topics section of "Patterns in Programming" (Code 1314) for many other different ideas for presenting Table Topics. In Toastmasters, ingenuity in developing new Table Topics ideas is encouraged.