TABLE TOPICS

Impromptu Speaking Contest Guide | Oman Gavel Championship of Public Speaking 2027

What is Table Topics?

Table Topics is the art of speaking with little or no preparation. A Gavelier receives an unfamiliar question or topic and delivers a short, meaningful response. The challenge is to think on the spot, communicate a clear message and connect with the audience.

How the contest works

- All contestants receive the same general topic, selected by the Contest Chair.
- Contestants do not know the topic in advance. Except for the first speaker, contestants wait outside under the supervision of the Sergeant at Arms until called.
- Each contestant responds individually, without advance preparation or access to devices for an unfair advantage.
- The response should address the given topic directly and reach a clear opinion or conclusion.

A simple way to organise your response

1. Open: Begin with a clear position, interesting thought or short personal connection.
2. Develop: Explain your main point with a reason, example or brief story.
3. Conclude: End with a memorable sentence that connects back to the topic.

The PREP technique

Point → Reason → Example → Point. State your view, explain why, support it with an example and reinforce your message. This is a useful practice framework—not a mandatory contest format.

What makes a strong response?

- Relevance: answer the actual question rather than a memorised speech.
- Clarity: develop one central message with a logical beginning, middle and end.
- Connection: use natural eye contact, vocal variety and purposeful gestures.
- Authenticity: share a thoughtful opinion or relatable experience in your own voice.

CONTEST ESSENTIALS

Rules, judging and practical preparation tips

Speaking time and signals

Signal	Time	Meaning
Green	1:00	Minimum qualifying time reached
Yellow	1:30	Begin moving toward your conclusion
Red	2:00	Conclude promptly

Timing rule: A speech shorter than 1:00 or longer than 2:30 is disqualified. Under the 2026–2027 Toastmasters rules, the overtime disqualification threshold is reached at 2:31 (whole seconds).

How are Table Topics responses judged?

The official Toastmasters Table Topics judging guide considers Content (55%), Delivery (30%) and Language (15%). Judges look for an organised, relevant response, effective voice and body language, and clear, appropriate word choice.

Five preparation tips for Gaveliers

- Practise speaking for 60–120 seconds on a different everyday question each day.
- Take a brief moment to think; choose one idea rather than several unrelated points.
- Use a short story or real-life example to make your message memorable.
- Speak at a natural pace; pause instead of filling silence with repeated “um” or “ah.”
- Finish with a clear closing line, and practise using timing signals.

Try these practice topics

“What is one lesson you learned outside the classroom?” • “Is courage more important than confidence?” • “What small action can make a big difference?”

Remember

There is no single perfect answer. A strong Table Topics speaker thinks clearly, responds sincerely and makes the audience care about the message.

Official Toastmasters references

2026–2027 Speech Contest Rulebook (Table Topics Contest Rules and Timing); Table Topics Contest Judge’s Guide and Ballot (Item 1180); Toastmasters “Table Topics Speaker” and “Improve Your Impromptu Speaking.”
This independent OGCPS preparation guide is not an official Toastmasters International publication. OGCPS-specific instructions issued by the Organising Committee should also be followed.