When we now have "online" Toastmasters meetings, we always like to challenge ourselves in developing new skills and improving how we communicate. We hold a virtual (online) club meeting each month to allow us to develop these skills. Whether you participate in virtual meetings every day, or this is your first time, you are very welcome to join a Toastmasters club on this journey.

What do you need for an online Toastmasters Meeting?

- A (good) internet connection
- A computer with a proper webcam 💻, if you have a speaking role or
- A phone 📱 if you are attending as a "guest", but preferably, a computer
- A headset or earphones with a microphone
- The Zoom app (free): **ttps://zoom.us/**

Online Meeting Rules

To help Toastmasters Keep Productive and Professional Follow These Seven Simple Etiquette Rules and Tips:

- Join the Meeting 10 Minutes before the start to get set
- When Logging in, please set your name and Role/Guest
- Please turn on your camera
- Mute your microphone when you're not talking
- Please turn off your phone
- Please pin the timer's video (3 Dots Top Down Menu above Video)
- If want to participate in the Table Topics, please sign in on a common chat

What to expect in Toastmasters virtual meetings

You can expect a warm welcome and a supportive learning environment. Our virtual meetings operate in much the same way as "regular" Toastmasters club meetings, but the added dimension of online attendance means we've been able to welcome attendees from Europe. In addition to developing skills in virtual meetings, it means that our members also benefit from being able to interact with people across multiple countries, time zones and cultures.

How this document can help you

This document is designed to help you get the most out of attending one of Toastmasters virtual meetings. It assumes that you're already familiar with Toastmasters club meetings and roles such as Toastmaster, Speaker, Grammarian and Evaluator. The tips listed below provide advice on how to adapt those skills to the online environment, and at the end you'll find advice about how to use the online meeting software effectively.

General tips for virtual meetings (all roles)

- Practice using the camera on your computer, phone or laptop. You can do this at any time prior to the meeting
- Familiarize yourself with the meeting software and its features
- Plan your lighting so that your face is well lit. Avoid sitting with your back to a window or other source of light and be aware that some overhead lighting can also make it difficult to see you clearly
- Position yourself so that your upper body is visible, not just your face. This will allow you to be more expressive when speaking
- If you are using a phone or tablet, ensure that it is placed on a stable surface
- Ideally, position the camera so that it is at eye level when you are looking forward. This makes for better "eye

contact" with the audience
- When speaking, make "eye contact" by looking directly at the camera lens. This can feel uncomfortable at first and takes practice, but it makes a significant difference to the effectiveness of your online communication
- If you wear glasses, be aware of reflections and glare that may be distracting. You may be able to eliminate this by adjusting your seating position, the angle of the camera, the angle of your glasses or making the source or light more diffuse
- Join the meeting early so that you can make sure that your video and audio are working properly
- Remember to use the "mute" feature when you are not speaking to eliminate background sounds
- Applaud enthusiastically for each meeting participant. Even if you are on mute, this demonstrates your appreciation and encouragement
- Use Speaker View (sometimes Gallery View) / Slide View on ZOOM

Speaker (including Table Topics)

Before the meeting
- For a prepared speech make contact with your assigned evaluator to ensure that they understand your objectives and that they have a copy of the evaluation form. You can access all of the Pathways evaluation resources on base camp. https://toastmasters.csod.com
- Let the Toastmaster of the meeting know if you are planning to share your screen, for example to show a slide presentation

On arrival at the meeting
- Join the meeting early so that you can make sure that your video and audio are working properly. This also allows you to network with other club members and answer any last-minute questions from your evaluator
- When your assigned evaluator joins the meeting, use the "chat" feature of the meeting software to send them a private message with your email address. That will make it easier for them to send you their written evaluation after the meeting

During the meeting
- When it is your turn to speak, turn off the "mute" feature so that people can hear you
- Switch the "gallery view" so that you can see the audience
- Be aware that large gestures such as opening your arms wide will not fit on the screen, and that quick gestures may appear blurred to the audience. You can try practicing clearly defined and intentional movement
- On camera, your face will be more visible than in a large room. Use this as an opportunity to use facial expressions to convey meaning, ideas and emotions
- Remember to check for signals from the timekeeper as your speech progresses

After the meeting
- Make contact with your Evaluator to thank them for their feedback and ensure that they are able to return their written evaluation to you
- If you have completed a Pathways level or have qualified for an award under the traditional education programme, contact the club's VP Education for more information

Evaluator

Before the meeting
- Make contact with your assigned speaker to ensure that you understand their speech project and objectives. Check that you have a copy of the evaluation form. You can access all of the Pathways evaluation resources on base camp. https://toastmasters.csod.com

On arrival at the meeting
- Join the meeting early so that you can network with other club members and greet your assigned speaker
- When your assigned speaker joins the meeting, use the "chat" feature of the meeting software to send them a private message with your email address. That will make it easier for you both to follow-up after the meeting

During the meeting
- For speech evaluations, make notes using the evaluation form as the speech progresses
- For Table Topics evaluation, make notes so that you can provide feedback to each speaker
- Use the "gallery view" to see the reaction of the audience

- When giving your verbal evaluation, remember to include feedback on the effectiveness of the speech in the context of a virtual (online) meeting

After the meeting
- Type up your notes as soon as possible using the evaluation form and send them to the speaker
- Reflect on how your observations of the speech and the meeting as a whole can help you when you are speaking

Timer

Before the meeting
- Familiarize yourself with the agenda so that you know the timings for each speech and agenda item
- Find large coloured cards or brightly coloured items that you can hold up to the camera to indicate the timings. Remember that it can be difficult for speakers to see the timer, so there's no need to be subtle

On arrival at the meeting
- Join the meeting early so that you can network with other club members and test out your timing props
- Practice using the meeting software by sending a private chat message to the Toastmaster of the meeting

During the meeting
- Use a stopwatch, smartphone or other timing device to keep track of the times
- At the appropriate times, send a one-word private "chat" message to the speaker to indicate the timing. For example, type "green" at the minimum expected time and "red" at the maximum expected time
- Remember to hold up your timing prop so that it is clearly visible to the camera

Table Topics Master

Before the meeting
- Plan Topics that are fun and engaging, and will work well in the context of a virtual meeting
- For extra challenge, think of ways in which other impromptu speaking formats could be incorporated. For example, debates, interviews, talking about a prop or press conferences

On arrival at the meeting
- Join the meeting early so that you can network with other club members
- Identify the people that you plan to ask to participate in Table Topics. Try to pick people that do not have significant speaking roles in the meeting

During the meeting
- Present your theme and invite the participants to respond to your Topics

General Evaluator

Before the meeting
- Review the meeting agenda so that you are familiar with the planned meeting agenda and roles
- Familiarize yourself with these tips and other materials on how to participate effectively in virtual meetings

On arrival at the meeting
- Join the meeting early so that you can network with other club members and ensure that assigned evaluators are present

During the meeting
- Make notes on the effectiveness of the meeting and each participant's preparation, delivery and performance of duties
- Deliver your evaluation at the end of the meeting, including tips on how future meetings could be improved
- Ensure that meeting guests and first timers have had an opportunity to introduce themselves and provide feedback

Grammarian or Ah-Counter

Before the meeting
- Review the meeting agenda so that you are familiar with the planned meeting agenda and roles
- As grammarian, prepare the "word of the day" and either print it or write it in large letters

On arrival at the meeting
- Join the meeting early so that you can network with other club members

During the meeting
- As grammarian, present your "word of the day" by holding up your sign to the camera and by typing it into online "chat"
- Make notes on each participant's use of grammar and fluency of speech, and deliver your evaluation when called upon to do so

Toastmaster

Before the meeting
- Ensure that all meeting roles are filled and that the meeting agenda is accurate
- Familarize yourself with these tips and how to use the meeting software effectively
- If you wish, propose a theme for the meeting

On arrival at the meeting
- Join the meeting early so that you can network with other club members and ensure that all meeting attendees are present
- As each person joins the meeting, check that their audio and video are working correctly
- Copy the link to the easySpeak agenda and paste it into the meeting "chat". To do this, go to the easySpeak meeting screen, click the "agenda" button in the top-right and then copy the web address/URL
- Check if any speakers plan to share their screens/present. If so, check that they are familiar with how to do so
- If possible, appoint a meeting "host" to help people with any technical difficulties during the meeting

During the meeting
- At the start of the meeting, walk the attendees through the key features of the meeting software. This should include the use of mute, switching between gallery and speaker view and how to pin a specific speaker's video
- If any of the speakers will be using screen sharing, demonstrate how this will be used and explain how to use "split screen" mode
- Introduce the meeting "host", if available
- Introduce guests and anyone that is attending a Cornerstone online meeting for the first time
- As you introduce each meeting participant, check that their video is working and that their audio is not muted.

Using the Zoom meeting software

All club meetings should use the Zoom online meeting software. This allows us to have participants from around the world, works well on computers, smartphones and tablets and allows features such as screen sharing.

You will be sent an email with a unique link that will allow you to join the meetings. When you click the link, you will be asked to download and install the software if you do not already have it. You can also choose to download the software from here: https://zoom.us/download

The same link can be sent to all members to allow them to access each meeting.

Testing Zoom

Once Zoom is installed on your computer, smartphone or tablet, you can use it immediately. This will allow you to practice using the software before the club meeting.

To join a test meeting at any time, go here: https://zoom.us/test
This will allow you to check that your video and audio is working correctly.
Further help is available here: https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us

In the meeting

Once you have joined the meeting, you should be able to see and hear the other meeting participants. If you have any difficulty, try adjusting the settings: ⚙ Settings

Video layouts – active speaker or gallery view
There are two useful video layouts: active speaker or gallery view. In active speaker view:
- You will see a large video of the person that is currently speaking
- You can switch to gallery view by clicking the "gallery view" option (top-right on a PC)

In gallery view:
- You will see smaller videos of everyone in the meeting. Dependent on the size of your screen, you may also see scroll bars that allow you to see more participants
- Click on the three dot at the top-right of any of the participants to see further options. This includes the "pin video" option. This will make them the "active speaker" for you, irrespective of who is actually speaking. The same menu also allows you to send a private chat message
- You can switch to speaker view by clicking on the "speaker view" option (top-right on a PC)

Sending chat messages
Click the "Chat" option to open the chat window. You can choose to send the message to "Everyone", or to a specific person

Side-by-side mode when viewing a shared screen
If someone is sharing their screen (e.g., a presentation), you can enable side-by-side view to allow you to view both the presentation and the speaker. To do this, choose "side-by-side mode" from the "view options" menu

Once you are in side-by-side mode, you can use the vertical bar to the left or right in order to change the size of each section.

Tips and Tricks

Note for the Timer:
You can change your Virtual background to either Green, Yellow or Red)

How to set your virtual background in Zoom https://support.zoom.us/…/arti…/210707503-Virtual-Background

Try to have 1 Host – and 3 Co-Hosts for the Online Meetings (in case of technical difficulties)

Extra Notes

Each online club has its own strategies. In my online clubs, we (all officers and members) are constantly watching for new people popping in. We immediately welcome them in the chat, and when an opportunity permits (such as in between speakers) the Toastmaster or whoever has the floor welcomes them. Also, if they come in early, before the meeting, we ask them to introduce themselves. And then at the end, we invite them to give their comments.