

Effective Evaluation

At every Toastmasters meeting, a significant part of the meeting time is allocated to the evaluation team. The evaluation team consists of a General Evaluator, one or more Speech Evaluators, Grammarian/Ah Counter (this function is performed by the Wordmaster), and Timekeeper.

Evaluation has several objectives, including:

- ♦ To give the speaker your honest reaction in a constructive manner.
- ♦ To teach the evaluator to listen, clearly, precisely and attentively.
- ♦ To give the evaluator an opportunity to practice delivering an oral evaluation.

When you are the evaluator...

Before the meeting

- ♦ Read the speech project in the manual. Become familiar with the objectives & goals.
- ♦ Read the evaluation guide for the project. This helps you listen and watch for specific areas of emphasis.
- ♦ Talk to the speaker before the meeting to get an understanding of the speaker's goals and any specific areas for which the speaker wants feedback.

During the speech

- ♦ Listen to the speech. What strikes you? These can be either great things or not so great things. Look for things that are missing. Especially consider the project's goals.
- ♦ Write useful comments in the speaker's manual for future reference. Use your notes when you give your oral evaluation.

Your evaluation

- ♦ When called on by the toastmaster, give the project title (e.g., Speech 2: "Speak with Sincerity" from the Communication & Leadership Manual) and state the project's objectives.
- ♦ Be positive. Tell the speaker what you thought went well, what you enjoyed. Say "I liked the example you used to support your first point. I identify with the cat in that story." or "You really nailed your closing. After your speech, I was motivated to act immediately on your suggestion to write to my senator." Always conclude on a positive comment.
- ♦ Be specific. Rather than saying "You had distracting hand gestures" say "When you pounded on the lectern, it distracted me from the point you were trying to make."
- ♦ Be constructive. Rather than saying "Your voice is monotone" say "Your voice has good volume. I would like to see more variety in pacing and pitch to emphasize the different points of view you presented."
- ♦ Be personal. Use "I" statements and "You" statements. Avoid "we", "the audience," and "they say." Speak directly to the speaker. Smile.

Effective evaluations are an irreplaceable part of the Toastmasters educational mission. The speaker, the evaluator, and your fellow Toastmasters all benefit from effective evaluations.

Adapted from *Effective Speech Evaluation: Tips and Techniques for Giving Helpful Evaluations* (Toastmasters International, 1996) by Molly Donaldson. Revised by Prokopis Christou.