



THE ROLE OF MENTOR

As an experienced Toastmaster, you have been selected to serve as mentor for a new member of your club. What is a mentor?

According to the dictionary, a mentor is a wise, loyal advisor. As a mentor, you have the opportunity to share your wisdom, knowledge, and experience with a new Toastmaster who wants to learn, grow, and achieve.

Most new members join Toastmasters because they have problems and/or needs that relate to public speaking. Research has shown that a majority of these men and women equate the self-improvement they seek from Toastmasters with career advancement or professional development. So it's vitally important to most new members that they solve their problems and meet their speaking-related needs.

Yet many new members fail if simply left to fail or succeed with no guidance other than that provided by speech evaluations. It's a mistake to assume that they can succeed without psychological or other support. They need reassurance that their goals and the effort required to attain them are worthwhile. They need practical advice from someone who thoroughly understands the Toastmasters program. In short, they need someone like you.

Clubs are urged to conduct an orientation interview for each new member. This is normally the responsibility of the vice president education (VPE), who completes a New Member Profile Sheet during the interview; on this sheet is brief biographical data, along with a summary of the new member's needs and expectations. You should be given a copy of this sheet and use it as a basis for establishing an ongoing dialogue with the new member.

Responsibilities When Mentoring a New Member

At the First Club Meeting

1. **Sit with the new member.** Explain the various parts of the meeting, such as business session, Table Topics, prepared speeches, and evaluations as they happen and answer any questions the mentee may have.
2. **Orient the new member to club customs and procedures.** If your club has special awards, events, or other procedures, explain those to the mentee. Help the mentee become comfortable and a part of the club in any way you can.
3. **Explain how to sign up.** Ask the VPE to schedule the mentee's Ice Breaker speech as soon as possible then encourage the mentee to serve on a club committee. Also advise the mentee what to do and whom to contact if he or she is scheduled to fill a meeting role but is unable to attend the meeting.
4. **Help with the Ice Breaker.** Many experienced Toastmasters still consider the first speech to be the most difficult. This is because new members are not only uncomfortable speaking before a group, but they are also speaking before relative strangers. Your assistance can help the mentee overcome any fears and start off well. Discuss speech ideas with the mentee and offer suggestions for organizing if necessary. Listen to the mentee practice the speech and offer feedback.

At the Second Meeting Within the Next Month

1. **Make the mentee aware of resources.** If your club has a library, show it to the mentee. Point out materials in the *Toastmaster* magazine. Also discuss district conferences. Explain the roles of club officers and the information they can provide.
2. **Provide positive feedback.** The first few weeks of membership are critical. Mentees must feel they are already benefiting from the Toastmasters experience. Compliment them on their progress.
3. **Explain responsibilities.** Membership requires more than just giving speeches and receiving evaluations. It also means a commitment to helping the club and its members be successful. Review "A Toastmaster's Promise" which is printed on the back of the membership application.
4. **Help with speeches and other assignments.** Continue to help your mentee prepare speeches and use evaluations to improve.

Offer your own feedback, too. Help the mentee prepare for assigned meeting roles and offer tips for fulfilling them successfully.

Eventually

1. **Tell how you've benefited.** Share your own goals and aspirations with the mentee and how you have benefited from the program. You are proof that they can achieve their own goals.
2. **Invite the mentee to other events.** Toastmasters' speech contests, conferences, and other clubs' meetings all offer mentees the opportunity to extend their learning and participation.
3. **Acknowledge progress.** Ask for time during a club meeting to mention your mentee's progress in the program. Such recognition shows that the club cares about the mentee's progress and motivates the mentee to continue.
4. **Explain officers' duties.** Describe how the mentee can develop leadership skills by serving as a club officer. Help the mentee select a club office in which to serve and discuss when the mentee would serve. Be sure these goals are reasonable.
5. **Explain speech contests.** Discuss the purpose of speech contests, the types of contests conducted by the club, and how some contests progress to area, division, district, and sometimes international levels. Help mentees assess their readiness to participate in contests.
6. **Describe the organization.** Acquaint the mentee with Toastmasters International's structure, including the area, division, district, and international levels, and the purpose of each. Help the mentee understand how the organization works, the mentee's role in the organization, and the leadership opportunities available beyond the club.

Responsibilities When Mentoring Experienced Members

If you are mentoring a more experienced member, your responsibilities will differ depending on what your mentee wants to learn – for example, your mentee may want to develop certain leadership skills or learn how to use humor in speaking. Whatever skill the mentee wants to learn, you can help by...

- ▶ Providing your own insights on, and experiences with, the subject;
- ▶ Observing, listening, and providing feedback on the mentee's efforts;
- ▶ Referring the mentee to books, tapes, or other materials on the subject which you have found helpful; and/or
- ▶ Introducing the mentee to other people who may be able to help, too.

More Mentoring Tips

When working with your mentee, remember that your function is to help the mentee learn to think and act successfully and independently. Don't tell the mentee what to do or do the mentee's work yourself. Simply guide and offer feedback.

Keep in mind, too, that for the mentor/mentee relationship to be successful, you must be...

- ▶ Available. You must have time to spend with a member – at least 15 minutes or more each week to help with speeches and answer questions. New members may require additional time.
- ▶ Patient. People learn at varying speeds, and some need more guidance than others.
- ▶ Sensitive. Tact and diplomacy are vital. Be careful to say and do things that will motivate and encourage the mentee. Be loyal and take care not to betray the mentee's confidences.
- ▶ Respectful. Everyone is different. Respect the differences between yourself, the mentee, and others.
- ▶ Flexible. You must adapt and adjust to various situations and accept that the mentee may make decisions with which you may not agree.
- ▶ Supportive of the club. You must be proud of your club and what it has done, and can do for members.
- ▶ Knowledgeable. Before you can help someone else, you must be familiar with the club, its operations, the educational program and even the Toastmasters International organization itself. You should have completed at least several speeches in the *Competent Communication* manual, have served in most meeting roles, and have enough speaking skills yourself to be of help to your mentee.
- ▶ Confident. You should be self-assured and friendly.
- ▶ A good listener. Often simply listening, without taking on the other person's problem, can be of great help to the mentee. Just by listening you can enable the protégé to articulate the problem and sort things out.
- ▶ Concerned about others. You must care about your mentee and truly want to help.

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