

Toastmasters Speech Competent Communicator (CC) 1: The Ice Breaker

In the Ice Breaker speech you should focus on:

1. Introducing yourself to your club.

This topic should be easier for you to speak about, you know yourself and your stories. The ice breaker speech topic is about you. Stories and events about your life, your job, your hobbies, your personal interests, your family, or any combination of these. The idea is that everyone in the audience learns a little about who you are, you become a distinct, living, breathing human being to them, rather than just a new face.

2. Face your fears of speaking in front of a group of new people.

Even for those who have spoken before, it can be nervewracking when speaking in front of a new group. You will find your Toastmaster audience is always supportive and understanding, remembering this can help. If you get up, say something, and sit down, **you have succeeded** in this project. We are here to help.

3. Set a starting point from which to grow.

We each grow at our own pace. The first speech sets the starting point for us ... Shows us where our strengths and weaknesses lie, enables us to “benchmark” ourselves and enables us to see and feel the changes we make as we grow as speakers. Some cc1's have years of presentations behind them while others have no public speaking experience, and feel terrified at the thought. It doesn't matter where you are as you begin, the club is here to support you and help you develop as a speaker. Your main goal is to improve from this starting point. Your CC1 helps you, and your club members, assess your current strengths and areas of improvement to enable specific recommendations to help you improve.

Download the [The “Ice Breaker”](#), the pdf of your first speech. Read the objectives and start your Toastmasters journey. There is a variety of information in the pdf. At the end of the document are the guidelines for the evaluator. What they will be looking for.

A few ideas which may help:

• **Perfection not required**

The club does not expect you to be perfect. We are excited that you are taking the plunge. Enjoy the wonderful journey that helps us all become better speakers and leaders. We learn through doing, observing and *especially* through helping others grow.

• **Ask for Help**

Ask anyone in the club for help with whom you feel comfortable. We do not know how much help you need, until you ask. Please don't feel you are imposing by asking for help, we love to help, as it allows us to grow and improve our communication skills. Speak to the VPE (education) or VPM (membership), ask for a mentor, or approach someone whose speaking style you admire. Our members love being asked to help, it makes them feel important and that they have something to offer. Maybe they can share what they spoke about for their Icebreaker, or they can help you select a topic. We have all done an Ice Breaker, and have an idea how you are feeling. It also helps embed our learnings from our own speeches by helping others.

- **Notes**

For your first speech, if you need notes, use them, if not, don't. Cue cards, with key words are often most effective. Writing out your whole speech, word for word may add to your nervousness, if you lose your place (finding it again can be flustering). The first speech is about you (a topic you are intimately familiar with), so try use key words to remind you of what you want to share with your club.

- **Slow Down and project your voice (speak up)**

Two common things people do when nervous is speed up their speaking and/or mumble, or whisper. Try make a conscious effort to speak up, slow down your speaking, and breathe.

- **Practice Helps**

You don't need to have your speech memorised, but practicing it a few times out loud can help reduce nervousness on the day.

- **Timing**

Time your practice of your speech, and remember that it takes longer to deliver your speech to an audience as an audience reacts, laughs and responds. If your practice at a level speed takes about 5 minutes you will probably take 6 minutes to deliver it with an audience. It seems like a long time initially, but 4-6 minutes is actually very short when you are speaking (you'll see what I mean when you realise how much you can say about a topic). We often have far too much to say when given an opportunity to speak. Aim for somewhere around 5 minutes. Chose a few stories that let people know who you are, and have fun.

- **Don't apologise**

Initially, when we make a mistake, as speakers we feel a tremendous urge to apologise (e.g. for losing our place, um's, etc.). Most of the time the audience doesn't notice the little mistakes, until you draw attention to them by apologising. Be kind to yourself, and try to ignore the small mistakes too.

- **Topic Ideas:**

Your broad topic is yourself, your interests and your life and there are numerous angles you can take to share these thoughts. Two simple ideas to organise your speech are:

Chronological: A series of chronological moments in your life can be the easiest to write and deliver. Tell a few stories about your childhood, schooling, work and aspirations (yesterday, today and tomorrow **or** What got me to this point).

Themed: Select a common theme that runs through your life, and share a few stories linked to this theme. It might be a philosophy (seize the day), recurring concept (success, food, etc) or related to your work (Marketing, teaching, etc.). My icebreaker was "What's in a name", but then my name is Richard Riche.

Most of all have fun, you have 10 speeches to develop your competency in speaking. Don't try get it all right in the first speech. Give yourself permission to make mistakes, take a few risks and breathe. We are here, as you club, to support you and enjoy your journey with you.