

Triumphant Table Topics - Richard's tips and suggestions

Your response should be a mini-speech with an opening, a body, summary, and conclusion.

The Opening: Open with a question or statement (related to the topic) - *then pause* ... To engage the audience (also gives time to think about the topic more)

The Body: Tell a story, the more personal the better. Strive to Persuade, Inspire, and Entertain. Ensure the story makes your point (related to your question/statement)

Summarise: Summarise the main point/s you have made

The Ending: End with a question or statement that makes the point you want the audience to take home with them.

Most important: Have fun ... Go bigger than you normally would :D Speak to the green light.

Hint: It can help to call on someone larger than life, with a wild imagination for the first topic. People then get the idea that anything goes in this session!

Speaker tips:

1. When you first hear the topic **smile** and look at the audience. This will help you feel good and *look* confident.
2. Decide if you **strongly like it or strongly hate it**. Then go in that direction. Your emotion will fuel your thoughts. Don't sit on the fence - watching someone sit on a fence is boring, however watching them jump in and wrestle the bull - that is entertaining.
3. One approach is to state, "**There are three things that come to mind** about this topic". Even if you cannot think of three things when you start. As you speak search for three key ideas. It helps give your talk structure. If you run out of time to list all three, announce that you will explain more another time.
4. Try the **pro/con** method. State the pros, then state the cons. Clearly state your position – pro or con, don't fence sit.
5. When your mind goes blank and you don't know what to say next - **smile**, look at the audience and pause (rather than looking at your feet, or the ceiling and saying ... um). The one or few second pause is powerful and it gives you time to plan your next words.
6. **Repeat the topic, or your last point** in a profound way. You can even repeat it more than once, allowing you time to collect your thoughts until your mouth engages again.
7. **Look for a lesson** you can find in this word/idea. Relate this word to a book you read, a TV show, a movie, the daily news, a community project, your work or your hobby.
8. **Bring your family into the topic**. It helps make it more personal. Makes it easier for the audience to relate to us. When you talk about family be sure to use their names - it creates a stronger emotional picture for the audience.
9. Use the topic to **link to your main message**. Politicians do this all the time. If you ask them about corruption in their campaign they talk about why you should vote for them and all the great things they did for the community.
10. **Build in humour early**. When the audience laughs with you, they relax and so do you. Aughter gives you a shot of confidence.

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Topic ideas (or create your own): Time 1-2 minutes - speak to the green light

Promote a weird organisation: When people become aware that you are a Toastmaster, you will get asked to speak more often. Please demonstrate your skill by giving us a fund raising request for the Needy Nudist Network; People against animals; The flat earth society; The abolition of holidays coalition; I hate Mondays support group; Mopers anonymous; Victims of success (Branson/Gates)

Colour me Fabulous! Give a colour - Day-Glo orange, pea green, flamingo pink, Saratoga beach at midnight, chartreuse, racing car green, etc) Then ask: Why do you plan to paint your house this colour? Explain why all your clothes this summer will be in this colour? Tell a person in the audience why he/she should buy a car in this colour? Why this be your new corporate colour?

Dear Abby: Each person gets a "Dear Abby" question and have them give their advice. Made up or real ones clipped from an advice column.

Pass the question: Everybody thinks of *one* question. The first person asks a question, the next person answers it, and then asks a question of the next person, etc until the last person asks their question to the person who started.

Perpetual Story: One person starts a story. The second speaker has to continue the story and so on, until all the speakers are done. One or two lines at a time. Offer and acceptance (blocking kills story). The Table Topics Master may need to act as a prompt and intervene when needed. The idea is to try to pick up where the previous speaker left off, rather than speaking on a new topic. An on-going story where everybody chips in a bit and takes the story forward. Use body language and vocal variety to amp up story.

30 Seconds: Describe the word without using it.

Star struck: Have each speaker discuss a time (real or imagined, but preferably real) when they saw or met a celebrity.

Time Guide: If you had the opportunity to go back in time and talk to your younger self at any age, what age, what advice would you give yourself, and why?

Faking it: Pretend you are in radically different career. What is your day like? Your new career is Haitian Voodoo witch doctor/ Camel herder/Drug mule/Garbologist/ Bomb tech/ Autocue roller/ Cereal box author/ Ring tone recorder/ Glass blower / chicken sexer / Cartoon colourist /etc. .

What do you think? Some people say a little white lie is sometimes okay.

If you could travel back in time to meet anyone in history, -whom would you most want to meet and why?

If you could be any age again for one week, what age and why?

What national attraction or tourist site should every South African see at least once?

Scent game. Hand out small plastic containers with cotton wool soaked in a scent - Dettol, perfume, etc. and asked the speaker what memories the scent evoked.

Fortune cookies. Have each speaker pick from a bowl full of Chinese fortune cookies and have them read their fortune and interpret it to mean to them. Note: Make sure everyone gets a cookie whether they speak or not.

Defend why you live in: Have the speaker discuss a weird place to live and defend the place as a nice place to live, such as:

-Next to a nuclear power plant.

-In a swamp.

-Bottom of the Ocean.

-Top of the Table Mountain.