Toastmasters Tips for Accepting an Academy Award®

Don't let a bad speech leave you up in the air

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You've won the Oscar®! It's your time to grab the golden statue and express how you feel. Unfortunately, you won't have an avatar to deliver the speech for you. So don't let the pressure of the moment blindside you; saying the wrong thing could send you to the hurt locker.

Whether it's the Oscar, a company plaque or a community-service citation, your acceptance speech requires some thought and preparation. Toastmasters International, which over the past 85 years has taught millions of men and women public speaking and leadership skills, can help. Toastmasters International President Gary Schmidt says, "The best kind of awards-acceptance speech is short and sincere. The audience wants to share in your success. A heartfelt, humble and brief statement will exceed that expectation."

You need good content and good delivery. Toastmasters offers the following tips:

-- Write your speech as a script - and memorize it. For actors, that should be easy.

-- Pause, smile and count to three before saying anything. "One one-thousand, two one-thousand, three one-thousand... pause... begin."

-- Be gracious. Acknowledge the good work done by your competitors and thank the organization that selected you for this award.

-- Keep names to a minimum and get them right! No one wants to hear the winner reeling off an endless list of people to thank. Memorize the names of a few, or prepare a card to read from.

-- Be modest, not self-congratulatory. But not too modest. Saying, "I really don't deserve this" sends the wrong message. -- Don't apologize for anything: The audience won't notice and is rooting for you.

-- Mainly, your acceptance speech should represent you - as a professional and as a person.

-- Make your last line expendable, in case you are cut off.

-- Practice, practice, practice! Rehearse with a timer and allow time for the unexpected.

If you're lucky enough to win an Academy Award, make your speech memorable. However, even if you're not a movie star, you can still deliver a classy and thoughtful acceptance speech. Remember: You're the star of your own life story. Make the most of your moment in the spotlight.

About Toastmasters

Toastmasters International is a nonprofit educational organization that teaches public speaking and leadership skills through a worldwide network of clubs. The organization currently has 250,000 members in 12,000 clubs in 106 countries. Since its founding 85 years ago in October 1924, the organization has helped more than four million men and women give presentations with poise and confidence. For information about local Toastmasters clubs, please visit www.toastmasters.org.

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