

Toastmasters Tips on Holiday Toasts

How to raise a glass with class

When you deliver your holiday toast, what words will you say? What pithy wisdom, humorous thoughts or warm expressions will you share with family and friends?

Like fine wine itself, a toast is an opportunity to savor. Over the next few weeks, countless people will stand up and say a few words at holiday meals, office parties and various New Year's festivities. "Delivering a toast is a classic form of public speaking," says Gary Schmidt, president of Toastmasters International. "It's an easy way to connect with an audience." In that spirit, Toastmasters offers these tips on the art of toasting:

- Be Brief. Keep your comments short and they'll have a greater impact.
Talk for more than a couple of minutes and the guests will grow antsy.
- Be Bold. Step up and act confident. Speak loudly and clearly.
- Be Prepared. Know what you want to say ahead of time. Your words might inspire reflection or provide some much-needed laughter, so make the most of the moment -- don't wing it.
- Be Fresh. Your drink shouldn't be stale and neither should your words.
Cliches and platitudes mean little to listeners; be original and speak from the heart.
- Be You. Don't try to be hilarious if that's not who you are. Skip the serious message if it doesn't feel right. Just be yourself.

New Year's events are particularly ripe for a toast. Some celebrate family and friends, others talk about goodwill for the world. One suggestion is to touch on obstacles you've overcome in the past year. Then mention a few goals for 2010. End your remarks on a hopeful note.

Articles about toasting are available at www.toastmasters.org.

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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