

HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE EVALUATOR

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FEEDBACK AND ADVICE

It is important to understand the difference between providing feedback and offering advice. Feedback is information, while advice is an opinion. Most Toastmasters evaluations are based primarily on feedback. The evaluator gives the speaker information about what he observed. This helps the speaker to learn how she is being perceived.

To further illustrate the difference between advice and feedback, each piece of advice has been paired with a piece of feedback. Notice the subtle differences between the two.

ADVICE	FEEDBACK
Don't be so scared.	I noticed that you were shaking.
You need to stand up straight.	I observed that your upper body was tilted forward.
You have to speak up.	I had trouble hearing you.
You need to improve your eye contact.	I saw that you were averting your eyes from the audience.
You didn't move enough.	I noticed that you gestured with your hands when you spoke.

UNDERSTANDING OBJECTIVES

Prepare to evaluate a member's speech by understanding both the project competencies and the member's personal goals for the presentation.

EVALUATION TOOLS

Review the project assignment and evaluation criteria that corresponds to the speaker's project. These tools will help you identify and focus on the project competencies so you can provide an accurate evaluation.



PERSONAL GOALS

Check with the speaker about her personal objectives for the project, which may be in addition to the parameters of the evaluation criteria. Learning the speaker's goals in advance improves the quality of your evaluation.

PROVIDE APPROPRIATE FEEDBACK

Provide feedback based on what you know about the speaker's public speaking ability and level of confidence. If the member is new to public speaking, focus more on what he is doing well. Boost a new speaker's confidence first, then note a few skills he needs to develop.

Give an advanced speaker more feedback on ways to enhance her communication and leadership skills while still including positive remarks.

STAYING POSITIVE

When giving feedback, present your observations in a positive manner.

POSITIVE FEEDBACK



Studies show positive feedback leads to increased confidence and a greater likelihood of achieving goals. During a Toastmasters evaluation, bring attention to areas of the speech you thought were done well. Reinforce the speaker's effective behaviors.

Seek a balance that favors positive remarks over negative. If you are struggling to identify positive remarks, look to the areas the speaker indicated as her personal goals. For example, if she wanted to improve eye contact and did a good job, lead with a positive comment about successfully meeting that goal.

CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

Constructive criticism is the practice of pointing out areas that require improvement in a respectful way. Use the evaluation criteria for the member's chosen project to form the basis for your evaluation. Focus your attention on aspects of the presentation specified in the evaluation criteria.



WHEN YOU ARE EVALUATING

During the speech, take notes when necessary, but be careful not to put all of your focus on note-taking. Give the speaker the respect and attention you would want to receive.

Start your evaluation by stating the observed behaviors in an honest, respectful way. Concentrate on the action, not the person. Use “I” messages when you give your feedback. “I” messages keep the focus on behaviors, not the person. “You were inspiring,” is about the person. “I observed how passionately and energetically you inspired the audience with your personal story,” is about the behavior.

AFTER THE MEETING

After the meeting, ask the speaker if he needs clarification or explanation on anything you said.

You may give advice if you are comfortable doing so. Your advice will vary depending on many factors, including whether you’ve completed the project you’re evaluating. If that’s the case, you can relate your personal experience of how you completed the project.

ONE-ON-ONE EVALUATION

If you have the opportunity to provide a one-on-one evaluation, deliver it in-person as soon as possible, while it is still clear in both of your minds.

Begin a personal evaluation by asking the speaker how she felt about the presentation. This gives her a chance to reflect on her performance before you give your feedback. It also tempers how you respond.

PERCEPTIONS

If your perception was significantly different from the speaker’s (either good or bad), you may have to gently ask her to consider the possibility that her perception might be biased in some way.

FEEDBACK

Limit constructive criticism to two or three points. Keep the focus narrow in order to provide the member with small, attainable goals. Too much information adds stress and may dissuade the speaker from trying again.



For the following questions, select the best answer for each question.

1. Begin private evaluations by asking the speaker how he _____.

- ☐ could have improved his performance
- ☐ was able to read the audience
- ☐ felt about the presentation
- ☐ did compared to other speakers that day

2. When giving feedback, use _____ to keep the focus on the issues.

- ☐ vocal variety
- ☐ "I" messages
- ☐ body language
- ☐ advice

3. Start your evaluation by stating _____ in an honest, respectful way.

- ☐ the biggest mistakes
- ☐ your expertise in this area
- ☐ the observed behaviors
- ☐ a better approach to the material

Answers: 1. felt about the presentation; 2. "I" messages; 3. the observed behaviors