



*Extreme Toastmasters #595201
District 30, Chicago*

How to Win a Speech Contest (Even if You Lose)

By Club President, Jason Peck

You might be thinking, "Is this an April Fool's joke, in January?" Nope. It is absolutely possible to win a speech contest even if you lose, because it depends on your definition of winning. Now, I know I run the risk of coming over a bit like a bad motivational speaker, but hear me out ...

In March 2008, I had the privilege of winning the International Speech Contest (club level) back in London. It was fantastic and exhilarating to win. I was, as they say, over the moon. But the point is, I'd won before I even set foot on the speaking platform.

Now you might be wondering if I cheated or bribed the judges. No, of course not, silly. And in case you didn't know, the judges are anonymous (theoretically). What I was able to do was achieve something that I hadn't done for a while at that point: I won on a personal level!

Originally I wasn't sure if I wanted to enter the contest at all. I had a lot on my plate already, having been a "Mystery Speaker" twice in the week prior to competing, using two different speeches, and being mentally focused on a larger project that I was planning later that year. Eventually, I folded. As 2001 World Champion of Public Speaking Darren La Croix is famous for saying, it's all about "stage time, stage time, stage time." More time speaking in front of an audience is always a

good thing. Woody Allen once said, "80% of success is showing up." So my first personal win was ... I showed up!

I chose a speech topic that I'd originally done for my number 5 speech in the Competent Communicator manual. The only thing that remained from that version of the speech was the core idea and one quote. I trashed everything else. So, by tackling that subject again and improving upon the original, I grew as a speaker and chalked up my second win!

I was able to make it count toward the Advanced Storytelling Manual; my then-club's President evaluated the speech for me, allowing me to move closer toward my Advanced Communicator Bronze. Therefore I got my third win!

And then I went on to actually come first place in the International Speech Contest (club level) which was, obviously, my fourth and final win. But what if I hadn't won?

Stack the odds in your favor: Can your contest speech count toward a module in a speaking manual? Can it count toward your Competent Leader goal? Will it help you tackle a subject you've been thinking about or improve upon an old speech? How you view your situation makes you a real winner. ★