

Camera/Video Evaluation • Next Level Toastmasters

Delivering an effective contest speech on video or via videoconference (e.g., Zoom) has become increasingly important in Toastmasters. Many conferences, where speech contests take place, are now presented in an online or hybrid format using videoconferencing platforms, such as Zoom. The Regional Quarterfinals are now judged exclusively in video format. The 2022 finals of the World Championship of Public Speaking (WCPS) suggested that competing via videoconference may be an advantage, as a disproportionate number of semifinal contestants (compared to the larger number of those competing live at the convention venue at which the WCPS was held) advanced to the finals, and a contestant competing remotely placed second.

Next-Level Toastmasters has developed the following evaluation that particularly scrutinizes aspects of competing to a camera, as well as being videorecorded. This evaluation is expected to evolve as members learn more about what factors make for winning virtual delivery.

Note to evaluators: To avoid repetition from one evaluator to the next, Camera/Video Evaluator should avoid evaluating aspects of speech/delivery that do not differ from live speeches; for example, voice, grammar, and aspects of body language that don't specifically relate to being on camera.

Criterion	Evaluator Notes
<p>Background Whether virtual* or real, background should not distract from the speaker.</p>	
<p>Hand Gestures + Body Language Hand gestures and body language should fully appear on camera. Face and head are consistently in frame. Because contestants typically compete in a standing position, speaker should stand unless speech content dictates different position(s). Avoid evaluating body language that is no different than it would be if speech were presented live.</p>	
<p>Avoidance of Technical Flaws While some technical glitches are unanticipated and unavoidable, speaker should ensure volume and clarity of audio (not muffled, no feedback, static, echo, no sound-peaking, etc.), avoid background noise, and avoid freezing or other loss of network connection.</p>	
<p>Video-Specific Embellishments Effective use of elements that would be difficult to integrate into a live speech, such as music, closeups that show facial expressions, and small props that couldn't be seen in a live speech.</p>	

*Toastmasters International recommends that contestants do not use virtual backgrounds for online contests. If a contestant chooses to use a virtual background, the background is considered to be a prop.

<p>Interaction with Camera Speaker's position in relation to the camera should fit the purpose and tone of the speech. In interacting with camera, speaker should appear to be talking directly to audience (akin to eye contact). Camera should appear to be directly in speaker's sightline. Any deviation from appearing to look directly into the camera should be purposeful. Ideally, lighting should be optimized so speaker does not appear in shadow or with glare on his/her glasses. Speaker should neither look like he/she she is reading notes nor actually use notes in a contest speech. Speech delivery may include use of camera-interaction tactics that create the illusion speaker is in same room with audience.</p>	
<p>Pauses Pauses should be of an appropriate length for an unseen audience; e.g., a pause for laughter in an online speech will seem unnaturally long.</p>	

References: The following are helpful for both Next Level Toastmasters evaluators and club members interested in competing in speech contests.

- **Online Speech Contest Tips from Aaron Beverly 2019 WCPS winner:**
<https://www.toastmasters.org/magazine/magazine-issues/2020/apr/online-speech-contest-tips>
- **Video Part 2 of above:** <https://youtu.be/5gos6QWVBjE>
- **Toastmasters Video-Recording Guidelines:**
https://toastmasterscdn.azureedge.net/medias/files/department-documents/speech-contests-documents/video-recording-guidelines_online-contests.pdf
- **Toastmasters Online Speech Contest Best Practices:**
<https://toastmasterscdn.azureedge.net/medias/files/department-documents/speech-contests-documents/479-online-speech-contest-best-practices.pdf>
- **What Do I Do with My Hands?:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=53HTS-gxD9w>
- **7 hand gestures that will immediately increase the value of what you say:**
<https://rosemaryravin.com/hand-gestures-video-conference-zoom/>
- **5 Tips For Delivering Great Zoom Presentations:**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XyRjKCT_wrk
- **Examples of WCPS speeches that embody excellent examples of virtual contest speeches based on above criteria:**
 - **Alexandre Mette, 2nd-place winner 2022:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFqt9d7XRIA>
(note background, hand gestures, eye contact, position relative to camera, video-specific embellishments [handing audience a piece of no-bake cake])
 - **Mike Carr, 1st-place winner 2020:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TA7awoBxBxc&t=465s>
(Note background, use of camera as a prop, position(s) relative to camera, hand gestures, use of props):

