

StenoMasters: A New Online Speaking Club for Stenographers Everywhere

For those tackling a fear of public speaking, StenoMasters may be right for them.

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[/EINPresswire.com/](https://EINPresswire.com/) -- For many

people, the number one fear – even

ahead of death – is public speaking. Fortunately, there is now an online club where stenographers everywhere can practice their public speaking. StenoMasters was chartered in August 2021 as part of Toastmasters International, an organization that has been in existence for almost a century. Toastmasters has around 16,000 clubs in over 145 countries on six continents, with over 300,000 members. Everyone can benefit from the support Toastmasters offers – lawyers, judges, doctors, laypeople, and of course, stenographers.

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Lin Riffle, RDR, CRR, CRC



StenoMasters official logo.

StenoMasters has grown rapidly to over 20 members from

12 states, and even has one member from Australia. The club provides a welcoming environment for stenographic court reporters, captioners, and students, as well as anyone connected to the field, to work on developing their public speaking skills. StenoMasters president and charter member Joshua Edwards, a CART captioning agency owner in New York City, said, “I am overjoyed that StenoMasters has taken off. Our goal is to keep growing our presence and membership to the point that state court reporting associations will begin chartering their own chapters.”

All Toastmasters meetings worldwide consists of three sections: prepared speeches, evaluations, and Table Topics. Meetings are run entirely by members who sign up for various roles in advance. The roles are the Toastmaster who serves as the MC for the evening; a Table Topics Master who comes up with a set of questions for impromptu responses; a timer who times every person who speaks by displaying green, yellow, and red signs to indicate to the person speaking how much time they have left; an ah counter who counts everyone’s distracting filler words like “um,” “like,” and “you know” so that they can work on eliminating them; prepared speakers who write, rehearse, and deliver a speech, usually 5-7 minutes; and evaluators who

evaluate the prepared speakers for 2-3 minutes. Each role provides club members a chance to practice a leadership role while sticking to specific parameters.

Taking on different roles is like working out a different muscle set in the gym. At one meeting a member may practice evaluating someone else, and at the next meeting they may be give a prepared speech or take one of the helper roles. StenoMasters member Lin Riffle, RDR, CRR, CRC, and a Realtime Systems Administrator in Ohio, expressed her views on her favorite role to take during a meeting:



Joshua Edwards, RDR, CRR, CRC

"My favorite role at a StenoMasters meeting is the Table Topics Master. It gives me the opportunity to choose an interesting subject matter and come up with questions that will prompt members to share their view and experiences. It is always fun and a great learning exercise to hear different perspectives."

One of the joys of attending a Toastmasters meeting is hearing people's responses to Table Topics as well as the prepared speeches. Each meeting is a grab bag of topics. During Table Topics, attendees respond on the spot to impromptu questions, or "table topics," by sharing a story for 1-2 minutes. This is great practice for learning to think on the spot and come up with a personal story or anecdote, and to incorporate humor or share an important lesson. StenoMasters member Yvette Heinze, RPR, CSR, Official Court Reporter for the District of Montana, Great Falls Division, said:

"When I first joined, I thought Table Topics would be the easy part of the meeting, and it is when you have a story or example to give, and it's a topic that's comfortable to talk about. However, at one meeting, we posed questions to each other that an attorney or non-steno person may ask about stenography. Even though we all love steno and know it's the gold standard, it was challenging to think of an appropriate response without preparation. The best part is that it does not matter if you mess up or have no words. The group is very supportive, and I've enjoyed getting to know my fellow Toastmasters."

Prepared speeches, on the other hand, are written, edited, and practiced, well in advance of the meeting date. Members are welcome to speak on any topic they wish, whether it's related to the fields of court reporting and captioning or not. Since our club was formed, we've heard dozens

of fascinating speeches. StenoMasters member Nancy Silberger, Senior Court Reporter at Kings County Supreme Court, said:

"My main reason for joining Toastmasters was to get over my fear of public speaking. If memory serves me right, I gave the first speech at our inaugural meeting and I chose a topic that was very personal. It was very well received and gave me a lot of confidence. While I still have a fear of public speaking, it has lessened significantly thanks to Toastmasters!!"

Toastmasters is also a fantastic networking platform. Often, when you mention Toastmasters to a stranger you just met, they will perk up and say they're a member or they know someone who is. Over the years there probably have been many court reporters and captioners who were members of local Toastmasters clubs. One of these is Kate Roundy, an Arizona Freelance Certified Court Reporter, who is a member of a local Toastmasters club in her area. She said, "I cannot say enough about how Toastmasters helped me gain the skills to effectively speak to an audience and even address our legislature regarding court reporting issues. I went from real-live chicken to a confident, effective public speaker."

Finally, being a member of Toastmasters offers ample leadership development opportunities. Each club has several officers who oversee the operations, such as the President, Secretary, Treasurer, Vice President Membership, Vice President Education, and Vice President Public Relations. Chris DeGrazio, a freelance court reporter in Florida and the VP Public Relations for StenoMasters, had this to say about serving as a club officer: "Being VP Public Relations of StenoMasters is an honor that I value wholeheartedly. Evolving, challenging myself, and witnessing myself slowly improve is a reward of StenoMasters that I never imagined being able to experience."

StenoMasters meets on Zoom biweekly on Monday nights at 8:30 p.m. EDT. Guests are welcome to attend and watch for free. Everyone is invited – court reporting students, working court reporters and captioners, instructors, vendors, and friends and family. For more information [visit stenomasters.com](http://www.stenomasters.com), join our [Facebook Group](#), or email info@stenomasters.com.

Joshua Edwards, RDR, CRR, CRC

StenoMasters

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