



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

Humorous Contest – Awakening the Laughter In Your Audience

Angela L. Miller, CC
Kentucky Farm Bureau Club 1035
2015 Winner Club Humorous Contest
and Area 61 Runner-Up

Hello and welcome to the Awake the Laughter in your Audience training presentation. My name is Angela L. Miller and I'm a training consultant at Kentucky Farm Bureau. I'm also the club treasurer for our TM club 1035. I joined Toastmasters in 2014. In 2015, I won our club humorous speech contest and was the runner-up for Area 61. When the call went out for presenters, there was a long list of talented winners who were contacted. When none of them could make it, I got the gig.

Thank you for coming out to attend this interactive training session. Yes, this is an interactive training presentation. What that means for you is that you get the opportunity to learn something from everyone around you. That also means that everyone around you wants to learn something from you too! We all learn more and get more out of it when we work together. So I'm going to need your participation to help make this training a success.




WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

- Agenda
 - Benefits of humor
 - Ways to incorporate humor
 - Adapting others' material
 - Delivery and timing
 - Rules for using humor
 - Humorous speech contests

Let's take a look at what I hope we will accomplish during our session today.

First we're going to talk about what humor is and the benefits it can bring to your speech. Then we'll discuss some specific techniques that can help you incorporate humor into your next presentation. We'll also discuss adapting other's work and how delivery and timing impact how your humorous speech will be received by the audience. We'll also discuss the six rules of humor, as provided by fellow District 11 Toastmaster Graham Honaker in a recent edition of the Toastmaster magazine. Finally, we'll talk about the upcoming humorous speech contests and how you can use what you've learned to have us all falling out of our seats with laughter the next time you speak.

Let's get started.

WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

¹ humor

noun | hu·mor | \ˈhyū-mər, ˈyū-əl

Simple Definition of HUMOR

Popularity: Top 40% of words

- : a funny or amusing quality
- : jokes, funny stories, etc., of a particular kind
- : the ability to be funny or to be amused by things that are funny

Source: Merriam-Webster's Learner's Dictionary

In a shout out to our grammarian, our word of the training session is humor. Let's take a look at how Merriam-Webster simply defines it.

As you can see, humor is all about being funny and amusing. It includes jokes and funny stories. And it includes both the ability to be funny and the ability to find things funny.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

- Benefits of using humor



Humor is a powerful tool that you can use in your speeches. Use it well, and you can reap many benefits. Let's talk about these for a few minutes.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

- Benefits of using humor
 - **Adds interest and excitement**



First up, we have adds interest and excitement. As a speaker, you want the audience to pay attention to what you have to say. When you use humor and amuse your audience, they are more likely to stay tuned to what you have to say.

Anyone know the length of the average adult attention span? (Play the high low game until someone guesses correctly.) According to research, the average attention span for adults has dropped from 12 minutes a decade ago to 5 minutes. Sadly, the average goldfish has a longer attention span. That's why it's important to use humor to "hook" your audience.

When you add interest in your presentation, the attention span increases because the audience wants to hear what you have to say.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

- Benefits of using humor
 - Adds interest and excitement
 - **Builds goodwill with audience**



Next, humor can help you build goodwill with your audience. Imagine, you're giving a presentation in front of a large audience full of unfamiliar faces. You don't know the audience and the audience is unfamiliar with you. There's a bit of tension in the air, created by your nervousness and the audience's skepticism. How do you break the tension? Humor. If you can get the audience laughing early, they are more likely to buy-in to your presentation and connect with you as the speaker.

Did you notice how I did that in the beginning? I started off by providing you with a little detail about myself and letting you know my expectation for your involvement in this training session. I got you chuckling early and hopefully built some goodwill with you that will help keep your attention throughout this training session. Let's face it, is much easier for you be comfortable and relaxed when you have a smile on your face.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

- Benefits of using humor
 - Adds interest and excitement
 - Builds goodwill with audience
 - **Emphasizes or illustrates key points**



Next, humor can be used to emphasize or illustrate a key point in your speech. Use it to help you make your point. Here's a quick example:

Sherlock Holmes recently passed away. He died and went to heaven. St. Peter met him at the pearly gates with a challenge. After hearing about how Sherlock's deductive reasoning skills solved many cases, St. Peter threw down a challenge – locate Adam and Eve from amongst all the souls in heaven. Sherlock accepts the challenge and the pair stroll along the golden streets of heaven, interacting with all the inhabitants. After a while, Sherlock points out a pair and correctly identifies Adam and Eve. Amazed, St. Peter asks how Sherlock was able to guess correctly. Sherlock says, "It was no guess. These were the only two without belly buttons!" Sometimes, the answers to questions we're trying to answer are right there, staring us in the face.

It's an easy formula. Tell your funny joke or story, deliver the punch line, pause, and state your point.

This technique is tried and true. How many times have you heard "and the moral of the story" after a funny joke or story?



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

- Benefits of using humor
 - Adds interest and excitement
 - Builds goodwill with audience
 - Emphasizes or illustrates key points
 - **Helps to convey a sensitive point**



Can humor help to convey sensitive points? Absolutely! <Patch Adams>



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

- **Benefits of using humor**

- Adds interest and excitement
- Builds goodwill with audience
- Emphasizes or illustrates key points
- Helps to convey a sensitive point
- **Helps you deal with the unexpected**



And finally, humor helps you as the speaker deal with the unexpected. Let's say you're in the running for the best actress at the Academy Awards. You're nervously waiting to find out who won. When your name is called, you make your way to the stage to give your acceptance speech, only to trip on the train of your gown and you make your way up the steps.

This happened to Louisville's own Jennifer Lawrence during her acceptance speech for the Academy Award for Best Actress in 2013. Once she got to the stage, the first words out of her mouth were "Thank you. You guys are just standing up 'cause you feel bad that I fell and that's really embarrassing, but thank you." She made light of the embarrassment, which helped her to connect with the audience and deliver her acceptance speech.

When you're a speaker, things go wrong all the time. You trip and drop your note cards, which fall into an unorganized trail around you. Prepared technology fails. Life happens. But when you can acknowledge it in a humorous way, you connect with your audience and they will listen to what you have to say.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

- Ways to incorporate humor: jokes and stories



Now that we've covered the benefits of incorporating humor into your next speech, let's talk about the ways you can add it, through jokes and stories.

Jokes are often abbreviated versions of a story with a punch line. Some jokes consist of just a punch line and are called one-liners. Stories are longer, but still include a punch line. The benefit of telling a story is that you can layer on multiple punch lines, each one garnering more laughter than the next, but still making an important point. If you plan to compete in your club's humorous speech contest, a funny story is a must, as you can't simply get on stage and tell jokes. You're in a speech contest, not a joke contest. Connect your funny stories with a succinct opening, body, and close.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

- Ways to incorporate humor: jokes and stories
 - **Exaggeration**



Let's talk about a few ways that you can incorporate jokes and stories into your humorous speech. First up is exaggeration. We all know what exaggeration is, and we've likely heard exaggerations in our daily lives. For example, your toddler may exaggerate a 30 minute car ride into an epic 3 hour drive. It's an effective way to make something seem much bigger than it really is.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

- Ways to incorporate humor: jokes and stories
 - Exaggeration
 - **Understatement**



Next up is understatement. This happens when you expect something really big and get something rather small. This example came straight from the Make Them Laugh project guide in the Entertaining Speaker manual, and it's a totally relatable example. The father, upon seeing his smashed car, asks the son who had borrowed it whether anything unusual happened while he was out driving. In this case, unusual is an understatement!



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

- Ways to incorporate humor: jokes and stories
 - Exaggeration
 - Understatement
 - **Twisted definition**



Here's another good one, the twisted definition. It's when you take a definition and twist it around into something that everyone can relate to. Here's another example from the project book: A consultant is someone who is called in at the last minute to share the blame.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

- Ways to incorporate humor: jokes and stories
 - Exaggeration
 - Understatement
 - Twisted definition
 - **Pun**



Puns are another great way to incorporate humor, as they are simply a play on words. Here's an example. Did you hear about the guy whose whole left side was cut off? He's all right now!

I often find great puns like this on laffy taffy.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

- Ways to incorporate humor: jokes and stories

- Exaggeration
- Understatement
- Twisted definition
- Pun
- **Parody**



Moving on, let's talk about parody. I'm sure you've watched Saturday Night Live before. The show is all about parody. The most famous skits are the ones where they take something that really happened and add their own humorous spin. With the current election cycle and recent debates, they famously made fun of those running for president by staging their own version of the debate. And they've been doing it for years...like since the dawn of time, which, by the way, is no exaggeration, pun intended!



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

- Ways to incorporate humor: jokes and stories
 - Exaggeration
 - Understatement
 - Twisted definition
 - Pun
 - Parody
 - **Misunderstandings**



Okay, let's talk about misunderstandings. Misunderstandings can be funny. Here's an example. A little boy in the Cummings family was very upset. At each meal, his father led the prayer and asked God to forgive them for their shortcomings. For years, the boy felt he must have done something really wrong for his father to pray that way.

As you can see, all of these are effective techniques to use when incorporating humor into your speech.

<<Set Up Break-Out Activity>>

Now, I know I've got a great group of fellow toastmasters that have listened and made note of this presentation. You all are prepared for anything...including a little impromptu table topics! It's your turn! Here's how it's going to work. I'm going to divide the room into two groups and assign half of these techniques to your group. In your group, talk with your fellow toastmasters and see who can come up with the best example for each of the techniques. I'll give you 10 minutes to work in your groups. When the time's up, I'll ask for volunteers from each group to give us the best example of each technique. I'm looking for quick wit here, so keep your example short and sweet...but funny!

Group 1, you'll take the first three: exaggeration, understatement, and twisted definition. Group 2, you'll take the last three: pun, parody, and misunderstandings

What questions do you have? Let's get started.

<<Debrief activity>> Great work everyone! Wasn't this a great opportunity to practice and hear some great material? Thanks to all the volunteers who came up with fantastic examples of each technique.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

- Adapting another's material



Now, let's move forward and talk for a moment about source material.

Often, life itself presents many situations that you can use in your humorous speech. When it doesn't, or you're looking for something specific, you may need to adapt another's material. Think about it this way. Your favorite late night comedians don't write all of their best jokes. They have a team of writers behind them. You and I are probably not so lucky. So when you find something that amuses you, make note of it. Keep a file. That way when you need to pull something out, you'll be ahead of the game with source material already at your fingertips.




WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

- Adapting another's material
 - **Theme:** Overarching point of story
 - **Peg:** Context in which theme is presented




When you uncover a gem, one of the first things you'll want to do is separate the theme from the peg. The theme is the overarching point the story makes, and every story has one. On the other hand, the peg is the context in which the story is presented. While the theme is static, the peg can be manipulated to match the story you want to tell. The Make Them Laugh project provides a great illustration of this. The theme of the story may be gambling, while the peg may be your spouse playing roulette or you losing you're a million dollars in the stock market.

Separating your story into the theme and peg will help you immensely when you're adding humor to make a specific point or for a specific audience.

WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

- Adapting another's material
 - Theme and peg
 - **Embellishment**



Once you've separated them out, you can add a little embellishment. Embellishment is adding details to make your story more appealing. For example, if I took the gambling scenario from the last example and added embellishment, my funny story might go something like this.

My last boyfriend didn't like to gamble. We went to a Catholic picnic and he played craps. I'm quite uncoordinated, so when he had me throw the dice, I nailed him in the eye with my elbow and threw them into an adjacent table. The guy at that table got a snake eyes. My last boyfriend got a black eye.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

- Adapting another's material
 - Theme and peg
 - Embellishment
 - **Put yourself in the story**



There's something else I did in that story that I recommend. I put myself in the story. Yes, your audience wants to hear about your life experiences, your stories. So even if you embellish the story, put yourself in it.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

- Delivery and timing



Let's recap what we've talked about so far. We've talked about what humor is and why you should use it, how it will benefit your speech. We've talked about ways to incorporate jokes and stories into your speech with exaggeration, understatements, puns, parodies, twisted definitions, and misunderstandings. We've even talked about adapting someone else's material. This is what I like to refer to as the ground work. You know, the work that you do building your speech.

Now, it's time to see what jokes fly and which ones fall flat. To do that, you've got to practice your delivery and timing. Sometimes, you just need to hear it out loud to determine whether or not your material works. And that old adage that practice makes perfect...it's true! You want to eliminate the awkwardness, remove references to notes, and say your speech confidently. And the only way you can do that is to practice, practice, practice. Here are some tips to help you with delivery and timing in your humorous speech.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

- Delivery and timing
 - A. Speak slowly and clearly enough so the audience can understand you.
 - B. Tell the joke from memory – don't read it.
 - C. Use body language to act out the story.
 - D. Make sure the jokes are relevant to your speech purpose.
 - E. Make fun of yourself. Listeners like speakers who don't take themselves too seriously.
 - F. Don't laugh at your own story.
 - G. Be confident.

Let's take a look at this list. Most of these are things you would do for any speech, regardless of the topic. But there are a few that specific to humorous speeches. Let's look at a three of them, D, E, and F.

Ask the audience

D - Why should you make sure the jokes are relevant to your speech purpose? (Allow ample time for response.)

E - Why should you make fun of yourself...besides the obvious reason listed right beside it on the slide? (Allow ample time for response.)

F - Why should you avoid laughing at your own story? (Allow ample time for response.)



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

- **Six Rules of Humor**
Graham Honaker, ACS,
CL – District 11, Free
Speakers Toastmaster
Club of Indianapolis, IN

HOW TO



Six Rules of Humor

Tips for winning the Humorous Speech Contest.

BY GRAHAM HONAKER, ACS, CL

I have been fortunate to win the District Humorous Speech Contest twice. The District 11, winning Toastmaster and Toastmasteress have been and along the way I've learned some important lessons about making audiences laugh. The important lessons I've learned are:

1. Find Humor in Everything Life

If I have to be honest, I have found it difficult to come up with a humorous speech topic. Some of the best speeches are inspired by life's everyday occurrences. In 2013, my wife and I were with our young children in Europe in a very busy hotel. The morning after we checked out, I was told we were the only couple to check out that morning. I was told that about once every day and things that are funny to me are funny to others.

2. Know Your Audience

In my 2014 speech, I compared the delivery of my first child to a Toastmaster meeting. This would have made little sense to my audience outside of Toastmasters,

but the humorous competition (taking this long to make a joke with so much content) landed perfectly with my audience. Please your audience – it's particularly important when trying to land a punchline.

3. It's a Toastmaster Speech

Remember the Toastmaster's speech? The Toastmaster's speech is a big laugh at the end, so that audience can laugh at the Toastmaster and not at the Toastmaster. This approach forces your audience to laugh and watching them as they laugh. I like to see the audience's reaction and to tell them my own story.

2015 HONORARY LEADER AND MASTER

I think you've all got the gist of how this works and have a good foundation for a humorous speech! But I'd like to take this up a notch and talk about an article I read in Toastmaster magazine about this time last year. Actually, it was from the June 2015 edition and it contained a really wonderful article from someone who has won the Humorous Speech Contest at the district level for our very own district 11 not once, but twice. In his article, Graham Honaker shares six rules of humor. Here they are:



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

- Six Rules of Humor – Graham Honaker, ACS, CL
 1. Find humor in everyday life
 2. Know your audience
 3. It's a humorous speech contest: be funny!
 4. Use props
 5. Don't step on your laughter
 6. Consult with others

First, Graham recommends finding humor in the world around you. Try to find humor in the situations you face at work, at home, with your hobbies, and so on.

Next, Graham discusses the importance of knowing your audience. He talks about how he compared the birth of his child to a Toastmasters meeting. If the audience was made up of folks that weren't Toastmasters, they'd be left out of the joke. That's why it's crucial to know your audience.

For rule number three, Graham reminds us that the object of the contest is to deliver a funny speech. It should be funny throughout, not just a big build up to a joke at the end. Graham likes to start off with a joke to get the audience warmed up and increase his energy as a speaker. And if you've been paying attention to this presentation, you learned why it's important to "hook" your audience from the beginning...right??!!


Graham's next rule is to use props. When you select the right prop, it can really enhance your speech and provide a memorable visual for your audience.

For rule five, Graham advises that you don't step on your laughter. This is where timing and pacing really come into play. You want to tell the joke in such a way that the audience gets the punch line. Give the audience a moment to "get" the joke before you proceed. Practicing your speech to perfect your pace and timing are key to executing this rule.

Finally, Graham suggests that you consult with others. Run through the speech with your

mentor, and other trusted club members. Something that you may think is hilarious might be insulting to another. Often, hearing your words out loud can help you determine if you're getting your message across. If you have something funny but are afraid it may cross the line into offensive territory, run through it with others. Also, Graham suggests using self deprecating humor, as you're only poking fun at yourself.

Graham also discusses the rewards of being an effective humorous speaker in this article. You can find the article on the Toastmaster International Website.

WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

- Humorous Contest Dates
 - Club Contests: Now – August
 - Area Contests: September
 - Division Contests: October
 - District 11 Contest: Fall Conference
- Toastmasters District 11 website has details:
<http://toastmastersd11.org/calendar.html>
- The *Speech Contest Rulebook* for the 2016 -2017 Toastmaster Year is available on the Toastmasters International website: http://www.toastmasters.org/en/Shop/club-officers/Contest-Supplies/Speech%20Contest%20Rulebook_1171.aspx

<<Insert Dates for Club Contest, Area Contest, Division Contest, and District Contest>>

Now that you've attended this training, are you ready to show off your skills at your club contest? Sure you are! I know you can do it!

Here are the dates you need to keep in mind.

The Toastmasters District 11 website has all the specific dates for your area and division contests.

Because we're talking about contests, I must point out in my official contest voice disclaimer voice that all rules regarding Toastmaster speech contests can be found on the Toastmaster International website.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE



Finally, I'd like to say thank you for the opportunity to speak to this group. It's been an absolute pleasure to speak with you today! Thank you.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

- **Presentation Resources**

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- Images courtesy of bing.com