



# Meeting Sergeant-at-Arms

## The Short and Simple Way to be an Effective Sergeant-at-Arms

Read this summary if you do not want to read the whole of this document

1. Arrive **early** to meet and talk to the guests.
2. Collect the evaluation slips from the audience to give to speakers. Collect, count the votes and hand the result to the president
3. Introduce the guests to the members and talk about the toastmaster experience

This role is not just about standing up to speak in the guest slot. It is about making the guests feel welcome and answering their questions. Ensure the guests understand that they have to introduce themselves to the club. This role is formative to the experience of guests so is very very important to get right.

Congratulations on choosing to be sergeant-at-arms for the meeting; it's an excellent role and of vital importance to the club.

It is also a much misunderstood role so outlined here is what is expected from members who opt to do it.



# The Sergeant-At-Arms in Detail

## The Mechanics of the Role

- Arrive early. It is **NECESSARY** for the sergeant-at-arms to arrive before members start to assemble and guests arrive. It is not good to arrive as the meeting is starting – doing that means you will have only done half the role.
- Assist in with setting the room up for the meeting
- Meet and greet guests.
- Collect voting slips when called for by the toastmaster. Count votes and hand results to the president
- Collect evaluation slips from the audience and hand to the speaker.
- Introduce the guests to the rest of the club; talk about toastmasters and current club entry policy. The membership VP or President will be able to tell you what the current policy is.

## Good Practice

The reason why it is necessary for the sergeant at arms to arrive early is because it is the role that acts as co-pilot (like Timekeeper to the Toastmaster ) to the Membership VP by sharing the load of talking to the guests.

Guests are the next generation of toastmasters. Everyone arrives at a club as a guest and the first person they meet is often the sergeant at arms. If that person is not there or does not talk to them, then first impressions take over – they will not think the club either well run or a friendly place. It will be as if you turned up to a party and the host is not there to let you in; you will think “why have I bothered”. It is exceptionally rude.

You may ask for help when collecting the voting and evaluation slips if there are a lot of people at the meeting

We expect people to turn up at least twice as a guest and recommend they come back again just to make sure. This is a cooling off period that allows people to reflect if the club is really what they want to do. We do not allow people to join directly after their first meeting.

We also suggest that they go and look at other clubs to get a comparison. Please remind them that they can visit other Toastmaster clubs in London - there are over 40 of these (around 8 in the City of London vicinity) and a list can be found on the Toastmaster International site and on the London Speaker website ([www.thelondonspeaker.com](http://www.thelondonspeaker.com)).

It is also important to let guests know that we expect them to introduce themselves. Be aware that the guest slot is timed. It is 5 minutes minimum for **Green**, 6 minutes for **Amber** and 7 minutes for **Red**. This is your responsibility so be aware of the timekeeper when the **Amber** point is reached as this is halfway through as you risk being belled off if you overrun.



Although it is good to share your experience and what toastmasters is, think of doing that as a table topic so only 2 to 3 minutes. We encourage the sergeant-at-arms not to clap each guest but to move onto the next speaker as the individual clapping can add about 2 to 3 minutes onto the guest section which snowballs down through the meeting. Big clap and thanks at the end is all that is needed.

If there are not too many of them you have a bit of fun by asking them a question (sort of mini-table topics) as well as asking them their names.

Remember many people will be scared even just to stand up and speak their names to people. It will be the first time they have ever spoken to an audience; it makes a difference to be sensitive and encouraging.

## The Benefit to You

There are three main benefits to you personally:

As important as it is to collect forms in the meeting, that is just process. The gain lies with being able to **practice hospitality** and the soft skills that lie with making people feel welcome and comfortable. The value of this in terms of communication cannot be truly calculated. This is not something that is addressed in the toastmaster material but is important in life.

This feeds into the second benefit of **practicing active listening**. [Active listening](#) is thought to form half of interpersonal communication (the others being speaking, reading and writing). By paying attention to what people say, by asking people why they have come, by showing interest in their lives you learn the core skill of communication – to hear what people are *really saying*.

The third benefit of sergeant-at-arms is that it is the closest role in the club for **practicing selling**. It allows you to sell the club and toastmaster experience to the guests. That allows you to help build that initial relationship the guest will have with the club and with you personally.

Further details on the role are in the manuals and on [toastmasterclub.org](http://toastmasterclub.org). The role in the meeting agenda is also a hyperlink that will take you through to a description.

**Thank you once again for choosing to be sergeant-at-arms**