

CREATING AND RUNNING AGORA SPEAKERS CLUBS



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FOREWORD

Welcome to the third edition of the Agora Guide - the book that explains everything about the Agora Speakers International Foundation: who we are, what we do, how you can participate in our clubs, and even how to create a new one. This book remains focused on the operational aspect of clubs. The Educational Paths themselves will be the subject of different books.

A lot has changed since the last edition, almost 3 years ago. We've learned from our experience (and from our mistakes!), and we've greatly expanded every single part of the documentation with more details, more tips, more advice while simplifying many of the requirements and procedures. Simultaneously, we've kept adding more educational activities and improving the existing ones to ensure that meetings are never boring while retaining their educational focus.

This book condenses and organizes all the wiki information ([.wiki.agoraspeakers.org](https://wiki.agoraspeakers.org)) in a single place. It is also more professionally designed and can be either downloaded as a free ebook by our members or purchased through Amazon for those that want a more professional finish. The wiki, however, will remain the most up-to-date source of all Agora information for the foreseeable future, so please refer to it for the latest news and changes.

As always, we welcome all feedback, suggestions, criticisms, ideas, and especially your stories - share with us your club anecdotes, your successes, what you've learned in Agora and how it has helped you. Maybe in the next guide, your picture will be present in one of the chapters.

Feel free to drop us a note at info@agoraspeakers.org or on any of our social network channels.

Aug 21, 2021, will mark Agora's 5th birthday. We've come a long way since the Agora dream was started in 2016 with a single humble club in Madrid. That single club was later joined by one in Gorzów Wielkopolski (Poland), then another one in Visakhapatnam (India), then Kathmandu (Nepal)... The list kept growing and growing as we kept coloring the world map in Agora's colors, each club adding their own personality and richness to the pot. In this book, we've tried to reflect that using pictures exclusively from actual, real Agora meetings - no actors, no staged shots, no photoshop. This guide represents Agora exactly the way we are in all our genuineness and diversity.

One of the main drivers of Agora's efforts and strategy has been the belief that everyone has the seeds for becoming a great leader and a force for good in the world. These seeds only need to grow in the right environment, receive the right training, establish the right relationships, and be provided with the right tools to flourish. And that's exactly where Agora comes in: a strong, healthy, tolerant, supportive, and friendly community that fosters mutual understanding, joint learning, and personal and professional growth.

For this reason, this guide marks another milestone: It will be the first time all Agora materials are available in 30 languages. From English to Korean, from Thai to Swahili, from German to Tamil, from Hindi to Portuguese, to reach out to all the corners of the world where people can benefit from what we offer.

Plenty of changes are on the horizon. We will continue expanding our educational offering and provide even more services to members while at the same time remaining true to our goal of training the leader inside each person. Join us in this exciting journey, and let's make history together.

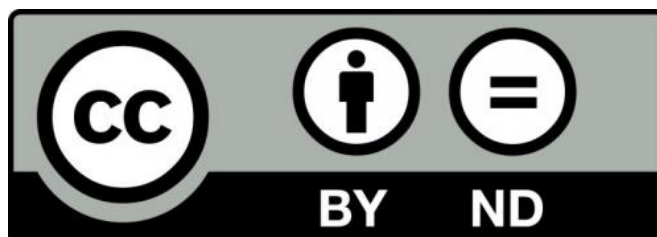
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Founder, Agora Speakers International

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CHAPTER 1 WELCOME TO AGORA SPEAKERS INTERNATIONAL

Agora Barreiro Forum in Portugal / Antonio Matias

The Agora Speakers International Foundation is a European secular educational charity that empowers people to become brilliant communicators and confident leaders who will be actively building a better world.

We provide a specialized educational program focused on developing leadership, public speaking, critical thinking, and debating skills.

Our training system does not involve teachers or classes. To learn and improve, our members use our online training materials and join one or more Agora local clubs where they meet, practice, and receive peer feedback regularly in a friendly and supportive environment. At the same time, they participate in and lead real-world projects that leave a lasting effect on their communities.

Founded in 2016, we now have an active presence in over 70 countries through over 150 clubs worldwide.

As a true charity, for clubs that are open to everyone all our activities and educational materials are totally free, with no sign-up, membership, or chartering costs of any kind, nor any kind of mandatory purchases. Starting a local club is also free.

■ Our Purpose

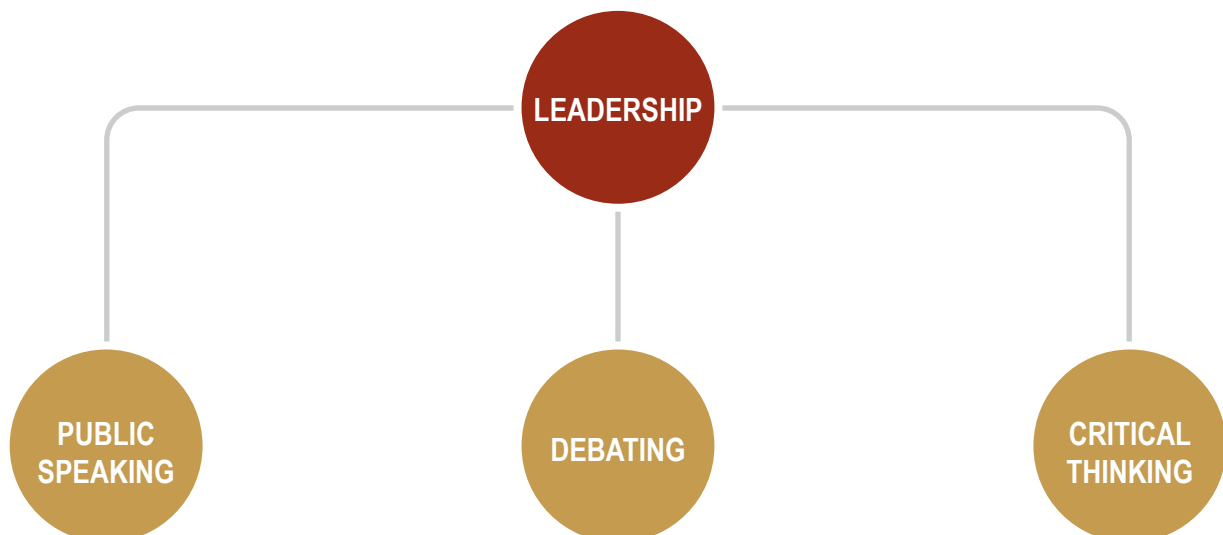
Agora Speakers International is a worldwide nonprofit association of passionate volunteers devoted to helping people develop their public speaking, communication, critical thinking, debating, and leadership skills.

Agora empowers you to become a brilliant communicator and a confident leader who will actively build a better world.

■ Soft Skills Training

We help people develop a core set of skills centered around Leadership:

Here are some of the skills that you will learn and improve in Agora:



SOFT SKILLS TRAINING

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Public Speaking	Speechwriting	Language Richness	Foreign Language	Non-verbal communication
Storytelling	PRESENTATION	STAGE PRESENCE	VISUAL COMMUNICATION	LANGUAGE VIVIDNESS

LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Constructive Feedback	Mentoring	Vision	Concentration and Focus	Persuasion
Risk-Taking	Insight	Negotiation	Motivating Others	Coaching

CRITICAL THINKING

Debating	Argumentation	Research	Intellectual Honesty	Problem Analysis
Scientific Knowledge	Curiosity	Logical Thinking	Creativity	Cognitive Flexibility

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Empathy	Listening	Social Knowledge	Sensitivity	Compassion
Relationship Management	Mediation	Relationship Building		

PERSONAL CHARACTER SKILLS

Self-Confidence	Self-Control	Tolerance	Reliability	Positivity
Perseverance	Optimism	Honesty	Punctuality	Resilience
Courage	Humility	Determination		

MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Scheduling and Planning	Delegating	Risk Assessment	Risk Management	Fund Raising
Time-management	Budget Management	Marketing	Public Relations	Goal-setting and tracking
Event Organization	Entrepreneurship	Strategic Thinking	Change Management	Recruiting

TEAMWORK AND TEAM-BUILDING

Mentoring	Teaching	Conflict Resolution	Team Coordination	Multi-cultural teams
Diversity Awareness	Networking	Intercultural Competence	Engagement	Inclusiveness

■ What's in it for me?

Joining Agora Speakers International will bring you many benefits on all levels, both in your personal and professional life.

- You will learn to communicate more effectively
- You will learn how to use all kinds of tools such as stories, anecdotes, humor, and emotion to allow your speeches to pop out and make an impact.
- You will learn to move people to action and lead small and big teams.
- You will increase your self-confidence, your assertiveness, and your ability to defend your interests.
- You will learn how to deal with failures and think on your feet, and improvise when things don't come out as expected.
- You'll become a very sharp critical thinker, and you'll be able to easily spot when someone is trying to manipulate you into a decision that is contrary to your interests.
- You will become a member of a wonderful worldwide, supportive, and very close community.
- You'll get access to an ever-growing set of services.
- You'll gain the ability to defend your viewpoints and principles
- You'll become a better and more empathic listener
- You will be able to leave a lasting positive impact on your community and the world at large.

TIP

What if I don't speak in front of an audience?

It's a common misconception that public speaking techniques and training are useful only when speaking in front of an audience. In fact, nothing can be further away from the truth. As you progress through our program, you'll see that your communication style improves even in one-to-one interactions, not only in the professional but also in the personal sphere. You'll become much better at expressing your ideas, listening to others, detecting fallacies and issues in their reasoning, reaching agreements, and in general having a much richer and more persuasive discourse.

The skills that we teach and train...

- ...empower people to pursue their professional and personal dreams.
- ...create leaders that have a real positive impact on their surroundings.
- ...create more informed citizens that cannot be easily manipulated, resulting in a stronger and healthier society.

You will notice improvements in the way you interact with people in all spheres of your life, and more importantly - you'll start getting results. What is more - those results will come rather quickly. If you invest at least enough time to attend and participate in club meetings twice a month, you'll be surprised how much you have improved in merely 3-4 months.

■ Why is this important?

The soft skills that we help you improve are critical to success in the workplace and life in general, and there's a huge number of research studies backing that claim:

- In "Hard evidence on Soft Skills", Heckman and Kautz showed that many factors of your professional life and personal are directly related to soft skills abilities. In other words, "soft skills predict success in life."
- Employers consistently list soft skills (and, in particular, communication skills) as the top desirable skills for any job candidate.
- In one particular study by Indeed.com, the top two skills sought by employers were Communication and Leadership skills.
- According to a study by the American Journal of Psychiatry, a fear of public speaking, in the form of social anxiety:
 - Reduces your probability of successfully graduating from college by 10%
 - Reduces your potential wage by 10%
 - Reduces your probability of holding a technical, professional, or managerial job by 14%.
- You're not alone - Public Speaking is the largest driver of social anxiety and social phobia, with 89.4%.

■ I'm not a leader!

You may think that you're not "born" a leader. That you don't "have what it takes". That you've always been shy and never been able to persuade anything.

Well, you'd be surprised that most leaders were, in fact, just like you.

Leaders are made, not born. And this is not only a hollow wishful thinking idea - there's a growing body of research that leadership is something that can be learned and trained.

TIP

Just because leaders are made and not born does not mean that becoming a leader is easy or straight. It takes effort, willpower, and discipline. You must be willing to invest time in yourself, persistently and relentlessly push the boundaries of your comfort zone, and not give up upon facing the first obstacle.

Leadership can also take different forms:

- You might be a leader through your **business skills**, like Jeff Bezos or Jack Ma.
- You might be a leader through your **intellectual power**, like Albert Einstein, Sam Harris, Jordan Peterson, or Neil DeGrasse Tyson.
- You might be a leader through your **work**, like Thomas A. Edison
- You might be a leader through your **charisma**, like John F.

Kennedy

- You might be a leader through your **sacrifice**, like Nelson Mandela
- You might be a leader through the firmness of your convictions and **your devotion to your principles**, such as Pope John Paul II or Mahatma Gandhi.
- You might be a leader through **compassion**, like Mother Theresa of Calcutta or Lady Diana, Princess of Wales.
- You might be a leader through **passion and conviction**, like Martin Luther King.
- You might be a leader by **making a stand for your rights**, like Rosa Parks or Greta Thunberg.
- Of course, you might be a leader through your **military genius**, like Napoleon Bonaparte, although we'd rather prefer you put those skills to the peaceful resolution of problems instead.



TIP

You don't need to have all the "leadership traits". There are many paths towards leadership.

■ **Do you want to speak like Ronald Reagan or Barack Obama? To lead like Martin Luther King?**

If so, we have both good and bad news for you. The bad news is that you can't speak like Ronald Reagan. There was only one Ronald Reagan in history, and you can't be him. Sorry. You can't be Barack Obama, either. Nor any other famous speaker or leader. And that is good because imagine how poor, monochromatic, and boring

the world would be if all the public speakers spoke like the Roman orator Marcus Tullius Cicero. Instead of Lincoln, Churchill, Reagan, Obama, Luther King, and so many others, we would have had a hundred copies of Cicero.

The good news is that you can be yourself. There has never been anyone like you in world History, and there will never be one like you again. You can develop your own public speaking and leadership style, with your own personality, with your own charisma. And that's what will make you unique.

In Agora, we place special emphasis on you finding and developing your own style rather than trying to imitate someone else. You will be studying many great people's speaking and leadership styles, picking up ideas and approaches that you like. You will be studying the core tools of rhetoric, argumentation, management, persuasion. And with all these pieces, you will build your own unique style.

■ **I can't make a difference!**

The world is in such a bad shape that you probably think that you can't really make a difference. The problems are huge and seem insurmountable. There's oppression, violence, climate change, poverty, discrimination, war. How could anyone make a difference, especially when they don't have the power, knowledge, influence, or skills?

Yet, you don't need to solve the problems of the world. You only need to solve one small problem for someone to make a difference.

STORY

The Star Thrower
(abridged and adapted from the original story by Loren Eiseley)

The beaches of Costabel are littered with the debris of life. Shells are cast up in windrows; a hermit crab, fumbling for a new home in the depths, is tossed naked ashore, where the waiting gulls cut him to pieces.

Ahead of me, a gigantic rainbow of incredible perfection had sprung shimmering into existence. Somewhere toward its foot, I discerned a human figure standing, as it seemed to me, within the rainbow, though unconscious of his position. He was gazing fixedly at something in the sand.

Eventually, he stooped and flung the object beyond the breaking surf. I labored toward him over a half-mile of uncertain footing.

By the time I reached him, the rainbow had receded ahead of us, but something of its color still ran hastily in many changing lights across his features. He was starting to kneel again.

In a pool of sand and silt, a starfish had thrust its arms up stiffly and was holding its body away from the stifling mud.

"It's still alive," I ventured.

"Yes," he said, and with a quick yet gentle movement, he picked up the star and spun it over my head and far out into the sea. It sank in a burst of spume, and the waters roared once more.



"It may live," he said, "if the offshore pull is strong enough." He spoke gently, and across his bronzed worn face, the light still came and went in subtly altering colors.

"There are not many come this far," I said, groping in a sudden embarrassment for words. "Do you collect?"

"Only like this," he said softly, gesturing amidst the wreckage of the shore. "And only for the living." He stooped again, oblivious of my curiosity, and skipped another star neatly across the water.

"The stars," he said, "throw well. One can help them."

"There are so many dying stars on the beach. What difference does saving one star make?"

"For that star, it made a whole world of difference."

I turned as I neared a bend in the coast and saw him toss another star, skimming it skillfully far out over the ravaging and tumultuous water. For a moment, in the changing light, the sower appeared magnified, as though casting larger stars upon some greater sea. He had, at any rate, the posture of a god.

(...)

On a point of land, as though projecting into a domain beyond us, I found the star thrower. In the sweet rain-swept morning, that great manyhued rainbow still lurked and wavered tentatively beyond him. Silently I sought and picked up a still-living star, whose tube feet ventured timidly among my fingers while, like a true star, it cried soundlessly for life. I saw it with an unaccustomed clarity and cast far out, spinning it far out into the waves. I spoke once briefly. "I understand," I said. "Call me another thrower." Only then I allowed myself to think. He is not alone any longer. After us, there will be others.

And sometimes, just by starting to actually act about a problem rather than merely talk about it, you'll experience something incredible. It takes courage to take the first star and throw it back into the sea under the onlookers' surprised gaze. It may seem pointless, but you not only have made a huge difference for that star - you've set an example for others. You've overcome the mental blockers telling you that "nothing that you do will matter," and you've changed the indifference into action. Once you've taken the first step, others who have seen your example will join you. They may not join immediately, especially because so many people give up so easily on anything at the first obstacle that we've learned to be cynical. But if you persist,

if you're convinced that what you're doing makes sense, others will invariably join you. The small round ball that you've been pushing will become larger and larger, gathering momentum and support until it becomes an unstoppable wave of change.

And this is not just some random feel-good motivational story. It happens all the time in real life. But you must take the first step, you must believe in what you want to do, and you must persist.

REAL-WORLD CASE

Versova Beach transformation in Mumbai
(from an [original report](#) by CNN)

"I shifted to my new apartment two years back and saw plastic on the beach – it was 5.5 feet high. A man could drown in the plastic," Shah told CNN. "I said I'm going to come on the field and do something. I have to protect my environment, and it requires ground action."

Shah, 33, began cleaning the beach in 2015 with the help of a neighbor. Over time, he was joined by more than 1,000 volunteers, including local Versova residents, slum-dwellers, politicians, Bollywood celebrities, and school children.

The volunteers have also cleaned 52 public toilets at the beach and planted 50 coconut trees. Shah says he wants to plant 5,000 coconut trees there and turn it into a "coconut lagoon like it used to be."

Over a period of 21 months, volunteers led by Afoz Shah collected a staggering 5.3 million kilograms of decomposing trash and plastic from the 2.5 kilometer stretch of beach.

Labeled the "world's largest beach clean-up project" by the United Nations, Versova's dramatic transformation from filthy to fabulous has gone viral in India, where online commentators have praised the role of local volunteers in helping in the colossal effort.



CORE PRINCIPLES

The following are the fundamental principles under which the Foundation and all Agora Speakers clubs operate.

■ Non-Discrimination



Clubs may not exclude member candidates based on race, color, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, income level, nationality, ethnicity, or mental or physical disabilities, as long as the member, through his own individual effort, is able to participate in the educational programs of the Association.

Upon request, and always on a case-by-case basis, Agora Speakers International may grant permission to create a club that does not adhere to this principle to meet local legislation or circumstances (such as a prison club, for example) protect minorities or for other reasons. This permission may be revoked at any time.

NOTE

Note that Non-Discrimination does not mean that anyone is entitled or has the right to get into any club they want. Discrimination only occurs when there's a systematic policy (explicit or de facto) that precludes certain groups of people from joining. Clubs have the freedom to reject as members - on an individual and case-by-case basis - people who they consider to be problematic or that will not contribute positively to the club.

■ Nonprofit

Club fees – including how often and how much – are up to each club.



Funds collected by the clubs - regardless of their source - can only be used for the clubs' overall operation and never as an economic benefit for any person. If a club charges fees, there are [specific rules](#) about the proper use of funds and financial transparency that the club needs to comply with.

Club fees may not be discriminatory, except as noted in the rules for club finances.

■ Tolerance



Members in a club must be supportive, respectful, and exercise tolerance with each other, even when the speaker's speech subject or opinion is one with which most people may deeply disagree.

This especially applies to leaders of the different meeting sections (Meeting Leader, Hot Questions Leader, Debate Moderator, etc.) and Club Officers.

Unless a speech goes against previously approved and explicitly indicated [Speech Content rules](#) for the club, neither section leaders nor club officers may interrupt or hinder in any way a speaker that is giving a speech with which they disagree or feel offended.

Except for speeches with highly targeted negative personal (explicitly directed at a specific member) content, there is no "right not to be offended" in Agora clubs nor the Foundation.

NOTE

We explicitly encourage everyone to speak passionately and courageously about the things they care about. We also explicitly protect criticism, humor, and satire.

Also, there's no "right to reply" in a club meeting. If you're deeply offended by someone's speech, your only recourse is to give a counter-speech following the usual club role procedures and within an educational project or role.

Finally, there's no "right to fair and equal treatment of subjects" in clubs. For example, if someone gave a 15 minutes speech on a subject because that was the project's duration and you felt offended, your counter-reply should be time-constrained to whatever the duration of your educational project is.

■ Neutrality / Non-Affiliation

Agora Clubs may not be used to promote any religious, ideological, or political agenda or worldview or to promote other associations, companies, products, or services. We do not engage in activism.

Please note that this principle applies to the Foundation as a whole

and all Agora clubs and representatives. For example, a club may not actively promote Christianity. Or Socialism. Or Women's Rights. Or Action against Climate Change.

However, it does not apply to members. An individual member, acting or speaking on their own behalf, can advocate and promote whatever things matter to them. In fact, we encourage our members to speak boldly and take a stand on relevant things that matter, regardless of which ones might be.



Also, clubs may promote Science and Technological progress, as these are objective, non-ideological in nature, and part of the Foundations bylaws.

Organization and Participation in Events

A common question connected with this principle is what kind of events clubs may organize or participate in.

NOTE

The core premise that underlies the Neutrality principle is that our Foundation wants to reach out and help people everywhere, regardless of the nature and shape of the regime where these people live in. There should not be any shred of doubt that neither Agora nor its clubs engage in activism of any kind and that they do not have any agenda (political, ideological, moral, etc.) other than the goals explicitly stated in the bylaws.

We believe it's better to reach everywhere rather than be banned due to an insistence on preaching a cause to a choir of already-convinced people.

In other words, no matter how popular a cause or idea is in a certain area (be that Human Rights, Democracy, Freedom of Speech, Climate Change, Abortion, Freedom of Religion, etc.) Agora clubs may not engage directly or indirectly in its promotion or support, as this support may cause authorities in other countries to frown upon Agora's activities in them and may cause serious, even life-threatening, problems to members in those countries.

Although it's impossible to define a set of rules that would unambiguously cover any possible situation, here are some examples of events where club participation wouldn't be allowed:

- Any event where the main organizer is a third party with a clear ideological leaning (example: religious celebrations, PACs and think-tanks, pro-life or pro-choice events, etc.).
- Any thematic event where the theme or goal of the event has a clear ideological leaning, agenda, or activism goal. For example, an event for requesting action on Climate Change, in favor of Human Rights, LGBTQ rights, etc.
- Any event where any of the listed organizers (regardless of the size of its participation) is engaging in acts contrary to the bylaws, ideals, and mission of the Agora Speakers Foundation - this includes organizations that promote discrimination, hatred, violence, pseudo-science, etc.

NOTE

Again, we must insist that these limitations refer to the club's participation as a collegiate body and the appearance of the Agora or club logo at the event. Individual members, or groups of members, are free to participate in whatever events they wish as long as they don't violate the general behavioral code.

Finally, please note that the Neutrality principle precludes neither Agora nor its clubs to offer services (either for free or at a price) to any third party, as long as it's made abundantly clear that this interaction does not imply endorsement, support, or advocacy for that third-party or their ideas.

■ Intellectual Honesty

Members of a club must be intellectually honest. As scientific researchers, they should keep an open mind to new ideas, continuously examine their viewpoints and beliefs critically, and be ready to let go of them if new compelling evidence or arguments are presented. They must not engage in manipulation or deceptive techniques to pursue their goals or argue their viewpoints. They must also acknowledge their own knowledge limitations and actively work to complete them.



Just as no discrimination doesn't mean that everyone is entitled to club membership, Intellectual honesty does not imply that every possible viewpoint on a subject is entitled to equal rights or equal time in a club. For example, Intellectual honesty requires acknowledging that there are people that believe that the Earth is Flat, but that doesn't mean that the Flat Earth "theory" gets equal standing with mainstream scientific knowledge.

HOW OUR SYSTEM WORKS

Our Educational System involves five pillars:

■ Educational Program

The Educational program consists of different activities and projects that professionals have written to help you become an effective speaker, a brilliant debater, and a confident leader. They are structured so that you start from very simple things, even if you have zero experience in these fields or are a complete introvert, and slowly but steadily lead you to more and more advanced projects. The best part is that you'll start seeing improvements almost right away.

The Educational Program has been created by accomplished and successful professionals with many decades of experience in public speaking, psychology, leadership, story writing, and many other fields.

All the materials of the Educational Program are available online, totally free, for all Agora members.

■ Local Clubs

Agora Clubs the place where all the fun takes place. They are independent entities that are affiliated with Agora and are created and run locally by volunteers. Clubs hold regular meetings every week, two weeks, or every month, either physically, online, or a mix of the two.

Clubs provide a place where Agora members meet, learn, and practice using the educational program - a safe, fun, and supportive environment where you can experiment without fear and hone your skills until you're ready to "fly out of the nest".

If there's no Agora club nearby, you can start one yourself. Anyone can start a club. The only things needed are time, energy, and at least 8 members. We provide many support and training materials specifically for club founders, so drop us a note if you're interested.

Clubs have a lot of freedom in designing their activities. You will notice that although all the clubs generally follow the same approach and guidelines of the Foundation, they have very different personalities, atmospheres, and feelings.

Do you want to get a feeling of how a club meeting looks like? Check any of the recordings on our Youtube channel.

■ Mentors

Clubs provide members with a mentorship system that will help you and guide you during your first steps in Agora.

Your mentor will help you with your first projects, help you integrate into the club's culture, get involved with all the activities, and guide you with the online systems and tools.

■ Worldwide Community

Our diverse worldwide community is an invaluable asset. By all means, engage and participate with it. Attend other clubs, ask questions, ask for advice and feedback. It's priceless to be able to meet people from so many different backgrounds and countries.

Periodically we organize regional, national, and international conventions. These are events where you can attend different learning sessions, listen to proficient speakers and even compete in our speech and leadership contests.

Additionally, clubs are all the time organizing parties, events, public speaking retreats, marathons, leadership activities, community projects, and all kinds of activities. We pride ourselves on being one big Agora family.


You can connect with our community using any of our internal systems, but also on any of our social networks:

- Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/agoraspeakers>
- Twitter - <https://twitter.com/agoraspeakers>
- Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/agoraspeakers/>
- Youtube - <https://www.youtube.com/c/AgoraSpeakers>
- LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/agora-speakers>
- Pinterest - <https://www.pinterest.com/agoraspeakers/>
- VKontakte - <https://vk.com/agoraspeakers>
- Reddit - <https://www.reddit.com/r/AgoraSpeakers/>



■ Online Systems

Apart from the Wiki, we're deploying more and more systems designed to help you with all aspects of your experience with Agora. From real-time chat systems, forums, extended courseware materials, webinars, interviews to more sophisticated systems that will help you run your club or even find networking opportunities. We have great plans for this Agora pillar, so stay tuned.

 **NOTE**

Firmly Grounded on Scientific Research.

Public speaking (and in general all soft skills training) is, unfortunately, one of those areas where self-help books have propagated many misconceptions and bogus or useless advice, copied and passed on from other books and courses.

Here's a test you can do: Pick up any public speaking program that teaches persuasion and check if they include Monroe's Motivated Sequence. They will probably do - and some will even tell you that this is "THE" organizational speech pattern that you need to use every time you need to persuade people. Well, research shows that this particular pattern doesn't have any more persuasive power than any other reasonably organized speech and that, in fact, you can mangle up or completely reverse all the sections of the Motivated Sequence, and the persuasive effect would remain the same.

Here's another test: Most public speaking courses will tell you that you should strive to have absolutely no filler words and word parasites in your speech. Well, research actually shows that if your speech is completely devoid of any filler words, you will be perceived as artificial, and your credibility will suffer.

One of our Educational Program's core features, and one that we particularly take pride in, is that it is firmly grounded on scientific research. Every advice that you will read, every activity that you will perform, every project that you will deliver is the result of analyzing the scientific literature to make sure that the advice is grounded on studies that prove that it works.

OUR LOGO AND NAME

■ Our Name

The city-state of Athens is widely regarded as the birthplace of democracy, and the Ancient Agora of Athens is considered the best example of the ancient Greek agora. In the Greek cities, those were the center of the city's artistic, political, and spiritual life. All citizens could gather there to hear their politicians and orators speak and discuss all aspects of city life. From this word comes the modern Greek *γορεύω*- to give a speech, make a declamation.



Greece is also considered the birthplace of [classical rhetoric](#) - harboring the first schools that studied it and practiced it systematically. In fact, all modern-day public speaking practice can be traced back to these original schools.

Pronunciation

Agora is pronounced with an accent on the first A. The full phonetic notation is /'a-gə-rə /.

You can hear the pronunciation for example here: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/agora>

What are we called?

Although there isn't an official term for "Agora members" other than... Agora members, many of our members like to call themselves "Agoreans". In this case, the accent would be on the "o" /a-'go-ri-ans /

■ Our Logo

The logo pays homage to this heritage and represents everything we want for this organization. Open, democratic, passionate, and purposeful.



It is made up of four elements:

- Three Greek columns both representing our connection to the birthplace of democracy, the timeless principles we defend and believe in, and the solidity and stability of our organization
- A stylized representation of a Greek amphitheater symbolizing the audience and also the fact that leaders make waves that spread to the world.
- A speaker silhouette in a calm yet firm pose, with a wide-open arm gesture, represents leadership ideals - reaching out, dialogue, serenity, and conviction.
- The flames symbolize the passion and knowledge emanating from the speaker.

INFO

Agora Speakers International was originally headquartered in Spain. Some people have remarked that the colors of Agora resemble those of the Spanish flag. In fact, this is purely a coincidence, merely because the original logo design brief specified that the colors should revolve around the concept of fire and passion.

HOW DO I LEARN AND IMPROVE

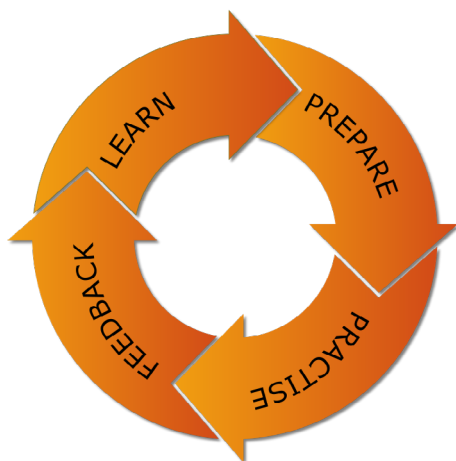
Ok, enough theory. By now, you probably have the specific question, “once I join, how exactly do I learn and improve?”

■ Continuous improvement in club meetings

Agora club meetings are not “training sessions” or “seminars”. There are no “experts” or “teachers” in an Agora Speakers club- everyone is there for their own learning process, everyone has something to learn and to improve, everyone is your peer and your equal.

The learning process happens using a very widely applied practice in the industry called “Continuous Improvement Cycle” and the “learn by doing” approach.

For each project, you will go through the following stages:



Learn

During the "Learn" phase of each project, you will:

- Study the online materials and resources for the project.
- Analyze what other accomplished speakers and leaders do.
- Ask questions and get advice from our worldwide community.
- Engage with your mentor on the specific tasks of the project.

Prepare

Now that you've learned the theory, it's time to put it into practice. Regardless of the type of project - public speaking, critical thinking, leadership, or other, you will need to do it yourself. For that, you will need to prepare by:

- Writing speeches or plan leadership tasks according to project goals.
- Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse.
- Discuss and receive guidance from your mentor.

Practice

Now it's the time to practice what you've learned by presenting your project to the club. You will be:

- Delivering prepared speeches in your local club.
- Showing the results of your leadership projects.
- Practice all sorts of scenarios such as improvisational speaking, debating a subject, or being grilled with questions on a decision you've made.
- Taking leadership positions in clubs and higher levels in the Foundation.
- Spearheading and leading real-world projects that positively impact your community and improve the lives of people around you.

Get Evaluation and Feedback

After the project is presented, you'll:

- Receive detailed evaluation from your peers at club meetings.
- Receive written feedback from other club members.
- Receive general advice from the community.
- You will write a journal where you will reflect on your path and learned lessons, and it will serve as both a history of your progress and a guide of where you need to improve.

The feedback that you receive will always be supportive and offered with the true intention to help you improve. Unlike real-world situations, no one will judge you or try to prove you wrong, or make you look bad in front of others. In fact, the supportiveness, friendliness, and warmth of our community, where we all learn and improve together, is one of the best things you'll find in Agora.

Repeat

Nobody becomes an expert on the first try, and you shouldn't expect to be able to play Chopin on your first day with a piano or score a hole-in-one on a golf course. The core to success is repeating, getting feedback, listening to others, and then moving forward. As the saying goes, "Practice makes perfect."

NOTE

It's up to you what feedback you want to incorporate and what you want to ignore. Agora's goal is to help you develop - within best practices - your own speaking and leadership style, not to copy someone else's.

Our Educational Program does not have a time limit - you can proceed at your own pace, repeat a project as many times as you wish, and only move forward when you feel you're ready. Unlike most real-life scenarios, there's absolutely no penalty in Agora to try out a leadership or speaking technique and realize that it didn't work quite well. In fact, we encourage you to do that so that you're already prepared when the moment comes in real life where you do have to get it right.

■ Does this system work? Isn't a professional course better?

Research has shown that even moderate proficiency in a skill (be that tennis, dancing, swimming, or public speaking) requires practice, usually well beyond the number of hours devoted to practice in professional courses.

Consider this: Imagine you want to learn to cook great dishes. You have several options:

- Sign up for an intensive 1 or 2-week course with a famous chef, create some dishes one time, spend a lot of money, and hopefully, after that, you're already an expert.
- Join a cooking group. Every week, you'll be reading how to create a single dish from the online materials, and you will cook that dish for all members of your group. Everyone will taste it and give you their feedback. If you're satisfied, you can move to a different dish the following week. If not, you can repeat it. Each new dish you cook will be more and more complex. You do this "loop" week after week for several months, without spending any money. Additionally, in the cooking group, you'll practice different specific cooking skills.
- Alternatively, you can simply read a lot about cooking, watch a lot of videos, and trust that when the time comes to prepare something for your guests, you'll be ready.

Which approach do you think will be best?

Agora takes the second approach - you'll have access to our educational materials, crafted by professionals with the specific goal of taking you from the very basics of public speaking, leadership, and debating to more and more advanced concepts.

But don't trust our word for it. Record yourself, join a club for some time, re-record yourself, and you'll be amazed at how much you have progressed in such a short period of time.

Of course, you'll only improve if you attend meetings regularly and take roles in them. If you only go to your Agora club once a month, or even less frequently - you're wasting your time. It would be like trying to become a piano player or a dancer by playing or dancing once a month.

■ Workshops and Conventions

Both the Foundation and the clubs constantly organize workshops and conventions at all levels (city, country, international, etc.). Apart from the regular club meetings, you'll be able to enjoy many workshops, training sessions, and seminars delivered by experts in their fields.

HOW WE ARE DIFFERENT

Training in public speaking and leadership is not new. Only the term "public speaking" is relatively modern, and it merely updates what has been known since the times of Aristotle as "Rhetoric".

The core model we use - learning by working on specific, goal-oriented, or scenario-based projects of increasing complexity and receiving feedback and evaluation on each of them - has been around for over 2,000 years, and in fact, is shared by many other public speaking organizations, workshops, seminars, and clubs.

Check out this description of what was happening in a Roman classroom more than 2,000 years ago.

Beginners worked on a graded series of introductory exercises that familiarized them with a number of techniques that would need to be combined in a complete speech (e.g., telling a story, criticizing or defending a narrative's plausibility, arguing a general thesis). ... Students would then proceed to the more advanced exercise ... in which they were given a hypothetical scenario and asked to speak on one or the other side of a judicial or deliberative dispute arising from it

Erika Bailey (2019) [A Historical View of the Pedagogy of Public Speaking](#). *Voice and Speech Review*, 13:1, 31-42, DOI: 10.1080/23268263.2018.1537218

Does this ring a bell with our prepared speeches and hot questions? Of course, we don't just use what the Romans did, just in the same way we don't use chariots anymore. We take the core concept and improve it. Here are only some of the things that make our organization and model unique and different from others:



■ Educational

- We encourage and require a lot of out-of-club work and getting involved in the leadership of real projects in the community unrelated to Agora. We want the public speakers that we train to actually go out in the wild and speak and the leaders that we train to actually have a real and positive impact on the world around them.
- For the above, clubs have a special [VP of Community Leadership](#) officer role that is focused solely on finding and leadership speaking opportunities for members.

- Most projects require a [speech analysis](#) part that focuses on analyzing good speeches from a particular viewpoint and exposes the club to many different speaking styles by doing” approach.
- We have some unique regular activities:
 - Focused on critical thinking.
 - [Debates](#) with a very special ruleset that encourage cooperation and allow a multiple-side view of problems.
 - [Language games](#) focusing on language improvement for non-native language clubs
 - [Projects](#) focusing on encouraging tolerance and peaceful coexistence
- We train in actual leadership through community projects that are implemented strictly outside of the Agora world
- We train speakers specifically in dealing with unexpected failures of all sorts and hostile audiences.
- We have thematic worldwide [contests](#) such as Best Educational Speech, Best Social Awareness Speech, or Best Storytelling.
- We have a strong social orientation, and we want to train real leaders, not future speech consultants.
- We encourage clubs to experiment and try out new ideas for educational activities, and if they work, we standardize them for all clubs.
- We develop our educational materials and rulebooks with feedback from the whole community.
- We actively search to make available our educational materials to all possible languages.
- All our educational production is free for members.

■ Organizational

- We’re free. There are no fees or purchases necessary. There are no club chartering fees, setup fees, membership fees, or sign-up fees, as long as your club is open to everyone.
- All club materials can be produced/printed locally at your most convenient provider. There’s no need to order them from a faraway location and be paying shipping costs.
- Starting a club requires only 8 members.
- A club can charter in a day with zero paperwork - just fill in an online form.
- Our organizational and contest structure matches political and administrative boundaries. So, if you win a contest, you’re the “Best Educational Speaker of Spain” (for example), and not the “Best Educational Speaker of Section 43, Chapter 93” or some random organizational structure. The former reads much better on a professional resume.
- Since members don’t pay anything, we’re not obsessed with membership growth. We don’t put pressure on clubs to be constantly recruiting (and to neglect existing members) or push members to rush through the educational program. Our growth is strongly organic, and we care for each club individually.
- We partner with existing organizations allowing them to work

with us and offer all the benefits of Agora to their members while at the same time preserving their identity.

- We allow clubs to keep all the funds they collect and use them for their own operation.
- We enforce strict rules for financial transparency at all levels to ensure that funds are properly used, and expenses are cross-audited by everyone.
- We’re legally registered as a Public Interest Foundation, the strictest form of charity within the EU. This means that we can provide much more effective formal backing for activities and club requirements.
- We don’t censor members nor prohibit them from publicly criticizing the organization.

■ Technological

- We provide a worldwide real-time chat platform for all our members that allow them to communicate without registering on third-party sites or networks.
- We provide a worldwide forum system with workgroups where we collaboratively develop - with feedback - all our rulebooks and educational materials and activities.
- Our educational materials are hosted on a Wiki to which anyone can contribute, extend, and translate.
- All our servers and infrastructure are in the European Union (in Germany, specifically), which means that your data is protected by the strictest privacy standards (The EU GDPR).
- Many more to come.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Participating in Agora is easy, and it's free!

- You can attend as a guest. Feel free to visit any public Agora Speakers club to decide if you like the system.
- You can [register as a member](#) to access all our systems, our real-time chat, discussion forums, online tools, and in general to keep up with the news around Agora development.
- You can join a club.... or you can join as many clubs as you want. See the section about "[Joining a club](#)" to learn how to find clubs in your area.
- You can start a club!. Starting a club is easy, very gratifying, and you can also become an [Ambassador](#) of Agora Speakers for your country.
- Or... you may also [help us](#) in our mission.

JOINING A CLUB

If you already know a Club you would like to join, write to the person listed as a contact point for that club or to the Vice President, Membership (VPM).

If you don't know any club, you can:

1. Check the global country page to see if there is a local group for your country.
2. Join the local group and see which clubs are available.
3. Attend one of their meetings as a guest.
4. Ask to join!

If you still can't find a club to join, feel free to email us at info@agoraspeakers.org with your city and country, and we'll try to point you to the existing ones in your area.

In Agora, you can join as many clubs as you want, as long as you're able to participate regularly in their meetings. And, best of all, you don't have to pay anything to us regardless of whether you join one or ten clubs. Of course, each club is allowed to charge an additional membership fee to offset operation costs, such as room rental, printing and photocopying costs, audio/visual equipment, etc.

Also, Agora has many different [Club Types](#) that differ in the way they function.

Club membership is subject to acceptance by the club. Even if you're a member of Agora Speakers, a club is allowed to refuse your membership for objective, nondiscriminatory reasons (such as lack of enough room space, lack of some pre-requisites such as a specific professional background, etc.).

If you feel the negative was based on discriminatory reasons (race, color, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, income level, nationality, ethnicity, or mental or physical disabilities), please drop us a note at info@agoraspeakers.org, and we will investigate further.

If there are no clubs nearby, you can always [start one!](#) We provide club founders with a lot of support, training, and worldwide recognition within our community. If you start the first club in your country, you might even apply for Agora Country Ambassador.

FIRST STEPS IN AGORA



Attie Ringo (right), Agora Ambassador to Indonesia and Founder of the Agora Speakers Jakarta club, with Novia Lukman (Left)

Welcome as a new member of Agora Speakers International. The club that you joined is one of the many that Agora has around the world.

So now what?

As a new member, you might feel a bit overwhelmed initially, and you may even think that all the existing members are already very advanced speakers. The truth is that only one or two months ago, they were exactly where you are now.

■ How to start

First and foremost, read all the introductory chapter, as well as the overview of our [educational program](#), so that you can understand how exactly clubs work.

Ideally, you should try to participate in meetings by taking roles. It doesn't matter if you're just beginning - there's always a first time for every role.

Look at the agenda posted for the next meeting (if any), check which roles are available, and volunteer for them. Even if you don't have a role, it's important to attend club meetings - at least twice a month.

The full list of possible roles is located here. We recommend that you start with a simple role such as [Timer](#), [Grammarians](#), [Filler-word counter](#), or [Thought of the day](#). To volunteer for a role, ask for it in the club's chat group or mailing list, or indicate it in the planning sheet.

The full documentation of Agora is located on this wiki. This is the [index](#). It's unnecessary to read it all in one go (in fact, you might find it overwhelming). It's usually enough to read the role that you'll be performing in the meeting. Many of the roles have video tutorials on how to perform them.

You can also participate by providing your general feedback to

speakers. Don't shy away from expressing how you felt during a particular speech, and don't be shy to point out if something didn't quite work well for you. While this is not yet a formal evaluation, any constructive feedback (especially from new members) is always welcome by speakers.

Finally, ask your VP of Education or your club President to assign you a Mentor. A mentor is a more experienced member who will help you make the most out of your club membership and guide you through the first projects.

■ Important things

- Attending at least twice a month - even if you don't have a role at the meeting. If you can't attend for a long period of time, let us know to avoid removing you due to inactivity.
- Most of the clubs have some internal communications channel. It may be a shared Facebook conversation, a WhatsApp or telegram group, or any other similar channel. Reading the club's group messages at least once every two days is crucial to keep up to date with changes and club news.
- Volunteer for roles and prepare them.
- Monitor our [International Group](#), since that group is where all news about the Foundation is published

We hope that Agora is useful to you and that when you have enough experience with our format, you step up and launch your own Agora club in your city.

NOTE

We're very open to new ideas, criticism, suggestions, comments - everything you want to throw at us. The Foundation grows through the joint wisdom, knowledge, and experience of all of its members. You're more than welcome to drop us a note at info@agoraspeakers.org.

OUR HISTORY

Agora was officially born on August 21, 2016, with a Facebook announcement by Alexander Hristov. Every year, we celebrate Agora's birthday at the Agora International Convention.

Although the initial announcement spoke of an "income-sensitive low fee structure" (which was initially going to be based on the per-capita GDP of the country), fees were waived for 2016 and 2017. Finally, in 2018, it was officially announced that, in fact, Agora would be free for all public clubs. The economic model shifted to one based on donations, state grants, payments by corporate clubs, and professional courses. Agora has always had a very ambitious transformational vision - much beyond public speaking -, and the benefit of being able to reach out to all people, everywhere, regardless of their economic level or social status, and help them become the leaders of the future greatly outweighed the loss of economic income.

Our beginnings were not easy - all the educational materials had to be written from scratch. A new educational system had to be developed, a completely new IT infrastructure, a new set of social media channels.

In addition to the expected "birth pains", we had to face some unexpected difficulties - many competing organizations viewed Agora as an existential threat to their business model: we were offering for free something they had been charging for, for many decades, and members of those organizations were taking notice and switching to Agora.

Both the founder and many of the initial supporters received all kinds of insults, hate mail, personal threats, and even official legal threats from top lawyers in the country to desist. People with leadership positions in other organizations were asked to step down or were directly expelled simply for expressing their support towards Agora. We even faced internal sabotage and backstabbing. Any mention of Agora was censored, and the person posting was admonished. People were explicitly instructed not to talk about Agora and not to post about us. The events during this period would warrant a thriller book all by themselves. At one point, we had to involve our own legal counsel to issue a clear warning that we would not tolerate such harassment of our members to continue. This whole saga motivated us to post the following:



Agora Speakers is here to serve its members, to train them and to empower them so that tomorrow's World may get a chance.

And the more training they get, *from everywhere*, the better, because there's never "enough" education, or "too much" knowledge, except in sects.







What is your organization here for?

However, we persevered, kept pushing forward, kept growing, and as of the beginning of 2021, Agora numbered over 160 clubs in over 70 countries. We're now firmly established, and we're here to stay. And this is only the beginning... The fire has only started to spread now.






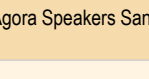

■ Agora Milestones

This is a work in progress. Click on any image to enlarge it. If you feel we missed an important milestone (especially the chartering of the first club in a country, please send us pictures of the meeting, and we will add them.

2021

2021	
Aug (planned)	Agora successfully completes the translation of the core materials to 20 languages. 
May 19	The first Agora Club in China opens - Agora China Connectors - with Aaron Leung at the helm 
Feb	The first Agora Club in Canada Opens - Stand By Me Speakers - with Fred Jones and Wayne Stanton at the helm. 
Feb 14	Membership System launched 
Jan 30	Second Agora Marathon organized by Clara Manzo - 36 hours of back-to-back club meetings 
Jan 29	Reflective Journals added to the Educational Program 

2020

2020	
Oct 21	Fred Jones records the first Video Tutorial for the Agora meeting roles. 
Oct 15	The first club in Ireland opens - Public Speakers Sligo, with Kieran Timmons at the helm. 
Oct 15	The first club in Paraguay opens - Agora Speakers Ñaña'e, with Susana Torres at the helm. 
Oct 15	The first club in Czechia opens - Amplion Speakers, with Radek Bartman at the helm. 
Oct 15	The first club in Austria opens - Agora Speakers Vienna, with Karin Silvina at the helm. 
Aug	The First Agora Club in El Salvador opens - Agora Speakers San Salvador, with William Martínez at the helm. 
Aug	The First Agora Club in Argentina opens - Agora Speakers Cordoba, with Fabiana Alicia Fa Luchini at the helm. 

Aug 21-22	First Agora Marathon, 24 hours of back-to-back online club meetings, organized by Clara Manzo, Ravi Bhattarai, Michael Nicholson, and Hélène Kemmere.	
Aug 21	The first version of the Agora Youth Program released - the culmination of a multi-month effort led by Fred Jones, Koka Prasad, Ravi Bhattarai	
July 25	Agora releases a completely new version of the wiki that includes automated creation of personalized club assets, multi-language support, and electronic evaluation forms.	
Jun 11	The first club in Guinea-Conakry opens - Agora Speakers Conakry, with Diané Bangaly at the helm.	
Apr 1	Given the continuing pandemic situation, Agora makes available paid Zoom accounts for free to all public clubs that want to continue meeting online.	
Jan 20	The first Agora Club in Germany opens - Redeclub Landshut, with Monika Gräter at the helm.	
Jan 20	The first Agora Club in Ukraine opens - Agora Speakers Kharkiv, with Mohammed Saif at the helm.	
Jan 13	The Contest Rulebook for our thematic contests is published.	


2019

2019		
Dec 19	Gea Ban Peng beats all attendance records with this mega-new-year party for Agora Speakers Singapore.	
Dec 14	In Ecuador, the First Agora Club is created - Agora Speakers Quito, with Tania Soledad Guerra at the helm. The club pulverizes all chartering records, with a whopping 33 founding members. Not too far behind is the Guayaquil club led by Hector Cedeño, with 23 founding members.	

Dec 13	The First Agora Club in South Korea opens - Seoul Agora Speakers, with Sara Walsh at the helm.	
Dec 12	The First Agora Club in Romania opens - Agoromania, with Gabriela Laslau at the helm.	
Dec 7	The First Agora Club in Ukraine opens - Agora Speakers Kharkiv, with Mohammed Saif at the helm.	
Dec 5	Mentorship Manual published	
Oct 23	The First Agora Club in The Philippines opens, with Celia A Iamo Jacob and Fabio Aromatici at the helm.	
Oct 18	The First Agora Club in Turkey opens, with Ashney Nicolle (Ashiny Ateghang Noline) at the helm.	
Oct 14	Thanks to the decisive help of Mitch Carson, Agora Speakers International features on CNN Philippines.	
Sep 30	The First Agora Club in Ghana Opens - Agora Speakers Accra, with Emmanuel Antwi at the helm	
Sep 29	The First Agora Club in Morocco Opens - Agora Speakers Rabat.	
Sep 21-22	First International Convention held in Lisbon, Portugal.	
Sep 19	The First Agora Club in Botswana Opens - Abigail's Window of Hope Club, with Moiteela Mo-Abi at the helm.	
Sep 19	Discussion Forums Opened.	
Sep 8	"Today we travel to" Educational Activity added.	

Sep 6	The First Agora Club in Cameroon opens, 2035 Speakers, with Mr. Diangha Clifford	
Jun	The First Agora Club in Kenya opens - Sani Agora Kenya Chapter	
Apr 10	The First Corporate Agora Club opens - as part of RSI (Rural Servicios Informáticos), with Jose Manuel Ropero Tagua at the helm.	
Mar	The First Agora Club in Malaysia opens - Agora Speakers Kota Kinabalu, with Johan Amilin at the helm.	
Mar	The First Agora Club in Taiwan opens - On Fire English Speakers in Taipei - with Jackie Chen at the helm.	
Feb	The First Agora Club in Mali opens - Agora Speakers Bamako	

2018

2018		
Nov 18	The First Agora Club in Thailand opens, with Danupol Siamwalla at the helm	
Nov 15	The Agora Youth Program sees its first implementation in Sierra Leone, led by Angel Zinsel.	
Jul 30	Agora Speakers International is officially registered within the European Union as a Foundation.	
Jul 8	The Agora Youth Program initiative is launched, spearheaded by Fred Jones and with the support of Jorge Dias, Ravi Bhattarai, and Koka Prasad.	
Jun	The First Agora Club in Japan opens, with Drian Von Golden at the helm	
Mar 26	First multi-club regional Agora meeting - Barreiro, Portugal	

2017

2017		
Dec	The First Agora Club in Indonesia opens - Jakarta Agora Speakers, with Attie Ringo at the helm.	
Oct	The First Agora Club in Ethiopia opens - Addis Agora Speakers Club, with Rajendra Singh at the helm.	
Ago	The First Agora Club in Singapore opens - Agora Singapore Speakers, with Gea Ban Peng at the helm.	
Ago	The First Agora Club in Liberia opens - Agora Speakers Monrovia	
Ago	The First Agora Club in Portugal opens - Agora Speakers Barreiro, with Jorge Dias at the helm.	
Jul	The First Agora Club in Jordan opens - Amman Speakers, with Osama Al Mosa at the helm.	
May	The First Agora Club in Mexico opens - Agora Speakers Guadalajara	
Apr	The First Agora Club in Nigeria opens - Agora Speakers Kaduna	
May	The First Agora Club in Mexico opens - Agora Speakers Guadalajara	
Mar 26	The first Agora Club in Zimbabwe opens - "The Future Speakers", with Patience Dube at the helm.	
Mar	The First Agora Club in Madagascar opens - Agora Speakers Tana - with Monique (Lene) Vieyra at the helm	
Feb 19	The first Agora Club in Lithuania opens - "Agora Speakers Kaunas", with Pius Abeshi at the helm.	
Feb	The First Agora Club in the US Opens - Agora Central Coast Speakers	
Jan 17	The first edition of the Agora Guide is published.	
Feb	The First Agora Club in the US Opens - Agora Central Coast Speakers	

2016		
Dec	The First Agora Club in the UK opens, with Hélène Kemmere at the helm.	
Nov 15	The first Agora club in South Africa opens. "King's Speakers", with Chris Callaghan at the helm	
Oct	The First Agora Club in Nepal opens - Agora Speakers Kathmandu.	
Oct 1	The first Agora club in India opens, and the fourth club worldwide. - "Visakha Orators", with Koka Prasad at the helm	
Sep 28	The first Agora club in Poland opens, and the second club worldwide - "Mówcy Gorzów", with Michal Papis and Wanda Łopuszańska at the helm.	
Sep 23	Successful Trademark Registration for "Agora Speakers International"	
Aug 21	Agora Speakers International officially launched	

LEGAL INFORMATION

■ Registration Information

Agora Speakers International is registered as a nonprofit Public Interest Foundation, under the Bulgarian Trade and Nonprofit Registry (Търговски регистър и регистър на ЮЛНЦ), with a registration number (EIK): 205228771.

The Foundation's current status can be verified using the above number at the following location: <https://portal.registryagency.bg/CR/reports/VerificationPersonOrg>.

The Headquarters of the Foundation are in Madrid, Spain

Goals

The registered goals of the Agora Speakers International Foundation are to :

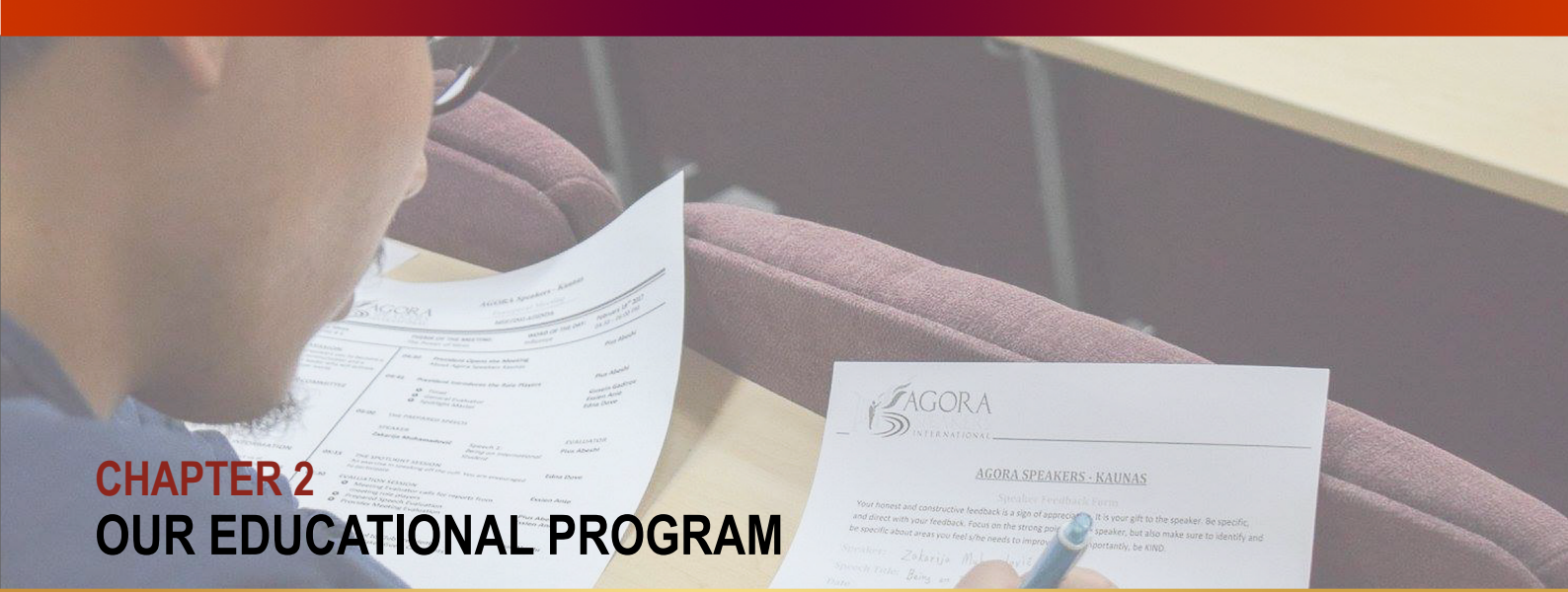
- Create and Strengthen an international network of local clubs that share, design, and implement the Foundation's goals at a local level.
- Encourage the development and personal growth of people, especially the young, in the fields of oratory, public communication, leadership, debating, critical thinking, and constructive feedback.
- Stimulate the interest in social and socially useful projects and entrepreneurship in these areas.
- Help in the development of the skills to design, plan and administer public interest projects.
- Encourage the multicultural exchange and the creation of informal networks and links between its different member communities.
- Encourage intellectual curiosity and interest in the fields of science and technology.
- Stimulate the scientific, technological, inventive, and other innovative activities in the youth.
- Encourage developing critical thinking skills as the main line of defense against manipulation and discriminatory stereotyping of population groups.
- Promote tolerance and the peaceful resolution of conflicts through cooperation, debating, and creative thinking.

Activities

The registered means through which Agora Speakers International Foundation achieves its goals are:

- Organization and participation in symposiums, conferences, courses, and other national and international events on the Foundation's general and specific goals.
- Organization of courses, practice sessions, and other extra-curricular school activities connected with the development of the leadership and public communication skills of students.
- Design, organization, and implementation of training programs.
- Creation and publication (both in physical and electronic forms) of materials in connection with our goals.
- Cooperation with other organizations, institutions, and people at national and international levels to achieve the Foundation's goals.
- Organization of contests and awards.
- Creation of mechanisms for partnership and networking within the Foundation.
- Creation of funds for the help and sustainment of people that might aid in achieving the Foundation's goals.
- Charity work
- Fundraising activities

CHAPTER 2 OUR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

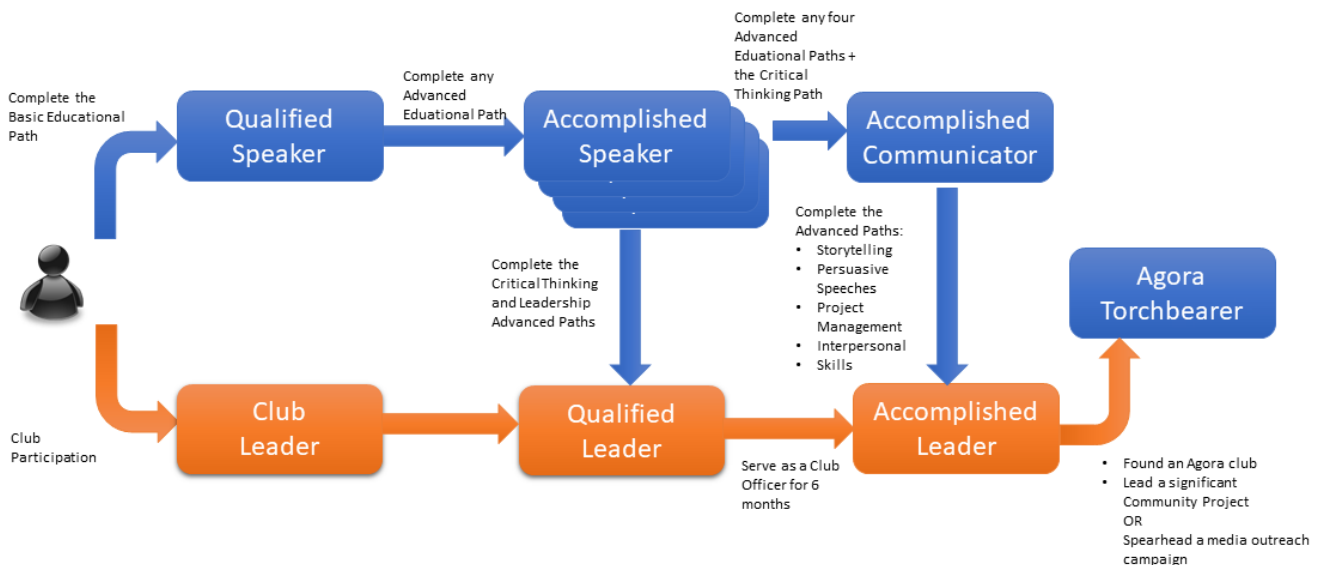


Providing feedback for a speaker - Agora Speakers Kaunas (Lithuania)

■ General Overview

Our Educational Program has been designed by experienced speakers and people with over 20 years of experience in adult education. It is based on solid, peer-reviewed scientific research about what works and what doesn't in terms of public speaking, persuasion, confidence, charisma, control of nervousness, motivation, and leadership.

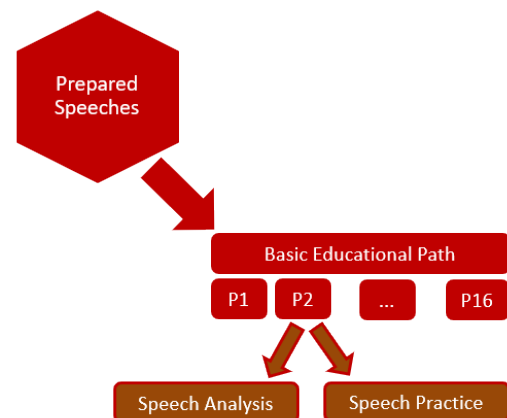
It has two main trunks: Communication and Public Speaking skills and a parallel one for Leadership Skills. As you progress through the program, you are granted different certificates of recognition



■ Public Speaking Track

The Public Speaking Track is composed of one mandatory Basic Path and many optional Advanced Paths. It leads you gently from very humble beginnings to more complicated and challenging projects, where you will first speak in front of your fellow club members. From there, proceed to spread your wings outside the nest and speak in front of ever-increasing and wider audiences.

Within each path, there are different projects. Each project has a specific learning objective and goals and is designed to help you acquire and practice specific skills - public speaking or leadership. Most of the Basic Educational Path projects have two parts: one that requires you to do a speech analysis and a second one that requires you to deliver a speech using a specific set of techniques. These parts need to be done in different meetings.



The documentation of each project is available online.

All projects follow a similar template, detailing goals, timings, what may and may not be used, how to evaluate the project, tips, and suggestions, etc.

You progress at your own pace, and you advance only when you feel comfortable. You can even repeat projects or go back to revisit old ones. There's no mandatory speed, and there's no stipulated time for completing any phase or project, although you should try to finish the Basic Educational Path in no more than a year.

Once you complete the basic educational path, you unlock access to more specific advanced paths that explore public speaking in special contexts or environments. You can learn to be a storyteller, a business presenter, an educator, or many other options.

All projects follow a similar template, detailing goals, timings, what may and may not be used, how to evaluate the project, tips, and suggestions, etc.

We believe that every speaker is unique, so the Educational Program is also designed to help you discover your own style, instead of imposing on you artificial techniques that will only result in your audience perceiving you as unnatural or - even worse - dishonest.

Structure

The Basic Educational Program is divided into two main blocks

The Basic Educational Path, which has three sections:

- **“The Initial Projects”** - A set of easy projects designed to help you make your first steps into the world of public speaking. Furthermore, you will lose the fear of being in front of an audience
- **“Basics of Speaking”** - A set of projects that introduce you to the basic techniques of public speaking, applicable to all kinds of speeches.
- **“Speaking Techniques”** - Projects become more demanding in this section. You will use more advanced techniques such as anecdotes, emotion, humor, etc., that greatly enhance the impact of some types of speeches.

The **Advanced Education Paths** - Upon completing the Basic Path, you will “unlock” the advanced education paths. Each advanced path consists of many projects that explore specific speaking techniques, contexts, or environments - such as speaking in business contexts, storytelling, educational speeches, and many others.

Progress along the advanced paths can be paused and resumed at any time. Here you will find some of the most advanced but also most gratifying projects. You will have to speak in front of other organizations, engage in actual leadership campaigns, and do a lot of work outside of your home club, in the real world hence in uncontrolled environments. The Advanced Education Paths are designed to help you “fly on your own” away from the nest.


■ Leadership Track

The Leadership track follows the same hands-on approach as the communications track by taking you from humble beginnings, such as taking the lead in specific activities in your club to much more ambitious goals that impact your community at large.

You will notice that the Communication Track doesn't require any leadership tasks: you can be a professional and very successful (and highly paid) public speaker without ever having to deal with any leadership activities. However, the Leadership Track is different: leaders need to have extensive technical knowledge and skills and top-notch public speaking abilities.

PROJECT TYPES

There are different types of Projects in the Educational Program. Some are just “normal” club projects, while others can feature

 several specific attributes, such as doing work outside the club, doing research, actually leading people that are non-members, etc. These characteristics are indicated with the following icons: (note that a single project may feature one or more of them simultaneously)

■ Basic Projects

Club project

Most projects involve preparing and presenting a speech in your club, according to specific goals. To help you prepare your speech, you can use our educational manuals and resources, and you can ask for advice from your mentor. After delivering the speech, you will receive detailed evaluation and feedback that will help you improve as a speaker.

Speech Analysis Projects

Speech Analysis Projects are part of almost every project in the Basic Educational Path. They require analyzing a famous speech from a particular viewpoint and presenting your analysis to the club. By doing this, you and your fellow club members are exposed to various world-class speeches that can provide role models or inspiration.



■ Advanced Projects

As you move to more advanced projects, especially those in the specialized paths, you will find more and more challenging situations, all of them geared to making you a brilliant communicator and a confident leader:

Research Project

A research project requires not only to prepare and deliver a speech but also to do some research before and after it. For example, for a Job Interview, you would not only have to prepare the job interview



itself but research the company and position you’re going to apply for. For a persuasive speech, you would have to know beforehand where your audience stands to see if they need to be persuaded in the first place.

Measured Project

In measured projects, you will get general feedback from your evaluator and a numerical measure of how effective your project



was. There’s no “pass mark” or “fail mark”, nor there is any threshold to surpass (other than the one you might set for yourself), but the measure is there to help align your own opinion on how the project went with the reality. Different projects use different metrics.

Real-World Project

As time goes by and you participate more and more in your club, you will get used to and comfortable speaking in front of your fellow members. Although this is a very welcome development in terms of



socializing, it’s not so good when it comes to learning or challenging you. In the Educational Program’s advanced paths, you will find a lot of “Real World” projects. Real-world projects require that you leave the comfort zone of your club and deliver speeches or lead people outside of the club environment. Whether it is delivering a stand-up at a comedy club, taking part in an improv theatre, or leading a campaign for a non-profit, these projects will make you fly away from the nest into the real world and expose you to a variety of challenging situations.

All these projects are designed to motivate and challenge you and expose you gradually to the “real world”, where things are not as controlled and predictable as in the comfort of your club.

Improving the world

The final and most challenging (and gratifying) projects of the Educational Program, especially in terms of leadership skills, will



not only be a great learning experience for you but will actually have a positive impact on the lives of real people outside Agora. In “Improving the World”, you will be leading nonprofit or charity campaigns, raising funds, organizing events, and in general, learning that even one person - you - can help make the world a better place.

BASIC EDUCATIONAL PATH

The basic educational path consists of 16 projects organized in three groups that teach you the basic skills essential for public speaking.

■ PART 1 - THE FIRST THREE PROJECTS

1. [The First Project.](#)
2. [Speaking about things you like.](#)
3. [Who am I?.](#)

■ PART 2 - BASICS OF SPEAKING

4. [Speech Structure.](#)
5. [Speech Message.](#)
6. [Speech Development.](#)
7. [Body Language.](#)
8. [Knowing Your Audience.](#)
9. [Presentation Software.](#)
10. [Inconvenient Allies.](#)

■ PART 3 - SPEAKING TECHNIQUES

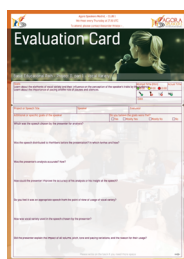
11. [Vocal Variety.](#)
12. [Researching A Topic.](#)
13. [Using Humour.](#)
14. [Using Anecdotes.](#)
15. [Using Emotion.](#)
16. [Stage Presence.](#)

Each project has specific time limits, goals, restrictions on the items that can be used (visual aids, lectern, etc...), and speech subjects. The projects have to be completed in order.

In general, you can talk about anything you like, except public speaking. This means, for example, that for project 11 ("Vocal Variety"), you cannot do a speech about vocal variety. The goal of this restriction is to help you realize that all of the techniques (body language, vocal variety, humor, etc...) are just tools in support of a central message, but they should not be the central message itself. Check the "[Speech Content](#)" article for a much more detailed description of what kind of content is valid in a speech.

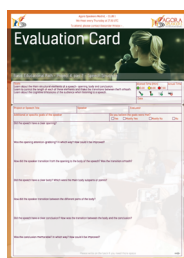
Each project has a specific evaluation scorecard that has to be filled in by the speech evaluator. These scorecards are found at the bottom of the page for each project.

Once you complete the Basic Educational Path, you'll receive the corresponding [certificate and badge](#).



Evaluation Card

Criteria	Score
Content	
Structure	
Delivery	
Body Language	
Vocal Variety	
Humor	
Emotion	
Stage Presence	



Evaluation Card

Criteria	Score
Content	
Structure	
Delivery	
Body Language	
Vocal Variety	
Humor	
Emotion	
Stage Presence	

ADVANCED EDUCATIONAL PATHS

Once the [Basic Educational Path](#) is completed, you can start progress along any of the Advanced Educational Paths available. Each advanced path is composed of between 7 and 15 projects.

You can work on any advanced paths at the same time and do them in any order. You can pause your progress in one path, start work on another (or just take a rest), and come back later. The only requirement is that the projects of each path must be completed in order.

Of course, you can repeat a project as many times as you want, and in fact, it is recommended that you don't move forward unless you're fully satisfied with the previous project results. There's no point in rushing forward just to get a badge or an award. Remember that the main goal is learning, practicing, training, and being ready for "the big stage". The goal should not be collecting badges. There's no time limit for completing a particular path.

■ Advanced Paths

[Storytelling](#)

Learn how stories are structured, how to create new ones, and how to use effectively one of the most effective tools in speechwriting and persuasion.



[Educational Speeches](#)

Deliver compelling, entertaining and illuminating educational speeches on the most complex subjects.



Against All Odds

Learn to handle all sorts of failures and situations during a speech.



Public Speaking for Entrepreneurs

From pitching your idea to speaking to investors - learn how to communicate as an Entrepreneur to make your startup successful



Broadcast Media

Speaking for interviews, radio, tv and internet streaming.



Public Speaking in Business Contexts

Everything about speaking in business contexts - from basic reports to corporate keynote speeches.



Critical Thinking

From detecting fallacies to being a formidable debater - critical thinking will help you professionally like no other path.



Dramatization

From dramatic reading to acting - explore all the nuances of theatrical performance.



Visual Storytelling

Learn to create compelling visual stories for the modern world.



Humorous Speeches

Humour can not only lighten up any situation, but it can also turn the tables around in a desperate business situation.



Interpersonal Skills

Develop your interpersonal skills - from speaking to strangers to creating long-lasting relationships.



Project Management

Learn to design and manage projects to a successful outcome.



Leadership

Become a successful leader that inspires others.



Public Relations

Learn to communicate with the media, write press releases and promote your ideas.



Negotiation

Learn how to negotiate and create win-win outcomes that satisfy everyone involved.



Persuasive Speeches

Learn to persuade and move people to action.



Special Occasion Speeches

Learn to deliver acceptance, presentation and many other special kinds of speeches.



CERTIFICATES OF RECOGNITION

■ Communication Awards

The Communication Awards represent your progress as a Public Speaker.

Qualified Speaker

After completing the Basic Communication Path, you're awarded the Qualified Speaker award Certificate and Digital Badge.



Accomplished Speaker

After completing every Advanced Path of your choice, you're also awarded the Accomplished Speaker award Certificate and Digital Badge for that particular path. For example, if you complete the Humorous Speeches path, you are awarded an "Accomplished Humorous Speaker" certificate.



Accomplished Communicator

After completing any four (different) Advanced Paths of your choice and the Critical Thinking path, you'll be awarded the Accomplished Communicator award, which is the highest communication-related that Agora Speakers awards.

Digital Badges conform to the Open Badges standard (openbadges.org), which is already being used by literally thousands of companies. Open Badges can be embedded in your professional profile (e.g., LinkedIn, Xing, and other social media), resumes, business cards, or other digital locations. The badge image contains metadata that provides more information about the badge and can be verified independently. For example, an employer can click on a badge to get more information about what it means and to check when and how the person showing it got it.

All Certificates carry a unique verification number that anyone can use to verify the authenticity of the certificate.



Optionally, you can order printed certificates to be mailed to you if you need them in physical form. Please note that this is a paid service, and depending on your location, it can take up to a month for a printed certificate to arrive.

How to get your certificate

Once you've completed the last project of a path, get in touch with your club VPE or President so that they can request a certificate for you.

Certificates are emitted by the country Ambassador at the request of the VPE or President of a club. If there's no country Ambassador, the VPE or President of the club should send a message to info@agoraspeakers.org providing the details of the member and each of the projects: title date, and place where it was delivered.

■ Leadership Awards

Club Leader

The Club Leader award represents your first step into leadership, and specifically into the kind of leadership that we promote: servant leadership and leading by example: leaders who inspire others by way of their actions and not their words. The requirements are oriented to ensure that you develop the basic skills that all leaders

have, especially in the areas of initiative, tolerance, attentive listening, ability to provide constructive feedback, and empathy, all of that while providing support for critical roles in the club.

To earn the Club Leader award, you need to:

- Serve at least twice in each of the analytical/evaluation roles: [Timer](#), [Grammarian](#), [Speech Evaluator](#), [Meeting Evaluator](#).
- Serve at least twice in a meeting leadership role, which can be any of the following: [Meeting Leader](#), [Hot Questions Master](#), [Language Improvement Leader](#), [Debate Moderator](#).
- Deliver at least one successful [Speechwriting](#) session/workshop.
- Deliver at least one “[Today We Travel To](#)” speech.
- Participate at least once in a [Crossfire](#), [Colloquium](#), or [Debate](#) as a defender of a position.

Qualified Leader

The Qualified Leader award represents your initial steps into leadership outside of the club. They build on the skills you learned as a Club Leader and extend your reach with the ability to properly and persuasively communicate your vision and implement that vision by leading small projects in the real world.

To earn the Qualified Leader award, you need to:

- Earn the Club Leader award.
- Complete the Basic Educational Path.
- Complete the Critical Thinking and Leadership Advanced Paths. Accomplished Leader

The Accomplished Leader award is the intermediate step in your leadership journey. The requirements are designed to make sure you're both a very well-rounded communicator who can use advanced techniques to persuade and inspire people and someone with hands-on experience in designing and managing projects successfully and delivering results.

To earn the Accomplished Leader badge, you need to:

- Earn the Qualified Leader badge
- Serve as a club officer individually for at least 6 months. “Individually” means that the role was not shared with more people. For example, if you were VP of Education, but there were two more VPEs in your club, this wouldn't qualify.
- Earn the Accomplished Communicator badge by completing the following additional Advanced Paths:
 - Storytelling
 - Persuasive Speeches
 - Project Management
 - Interpersonal Skills

NOTE

If you already have an Accomplished Leader badge and are pursuing a second (or successive) one, then for the second Accomplished Communicator badge, you may select any four Advanced Paths of your choice.

Agora Torchbearer

The Agora Torchbearer award is the highest Leadership award that the Agora Foundation offers. It not only certifies your leadership skills but also that you embody and promote Agora's ideals and vision of helping people around the world.

To earn the ultimate Agora badge, you need to:

- Earn the Accomplished Leader badge
- Found a new physical Agora club that is operational at the time of the badge award (Operational means meeting regularly with the minimum number of members and following all the Agora guidelines). The club must be at least 6 months old. You don't need to be an officer in that club.
- One of:

Spearhead a media appearance of Agora in your country. The appearance must explain who we are, what we do, our ideals and vision, and either a pointer to the website, wiki, or EMail. The appearance may take any form - an interview with you, a published article, a note on a project you've done, etc. The media where this appears must have a circulation or an audience of at least 5,000 people. vision, and either a pointer to the website, wiki, or EMail. The appearance may take any form - an interview with you, a published article, a note on a project you've done, etc. The media where this appears must OR

Lead a Community Project that is important enough to get reported or mentioned in the local (or national) media. The report needs to include a reference to the project, what you accomplished, and mention the Agora Speakers International Foundation, our role, and what we do. You need to make sure that it's clear that this is your project as a leader, not a project of the Foundation. (Not only because the credit belongs to you, but also to make sure the Neutrality principle is not violated). The media where this appears must have a circulation or an audience of at least 5,000 people.

Multiple Awards

You can earn an award multiple times by completing all the requirements for that award. For example, you may get the Qualified Speaker award twice if you complete twice the Basic Educational Path.

■ Achievement Awards

In addition to the awards for completing the educational paths, in Agora, you can obtain different Achievement Awards for specific milestones. There are four categories of awards:

- **Operational Awards** - Granted for milestones or exceptional performance in running a club, such as continuously operating the club for 1 year.
- **Community Awards** - Granted for achievements related to growing and strengthening the Agora community, such as founding a new club or hosting a Convention.
- **Educational Awards** - Granted for achieving specific educational milestones, such as the above educational titles.
- **Social Awards** - Granted for actions that positively impact your community, such as media outreach or successfully finishing a community project.



■ Content of Speeches - "What can I speak about?"

In a club, you may speak about anything you like within the following boundaries:

- **All speeches need to comply with the local legislation.** For online meetings, the jurisdiction where the club is officially registered will apply.
- **For the Educational Paths, subjects of speeches may not be about public speaking.** (For example, you may not choose "how to use Vocal Variety" as the subject of your speech for the Vocal Variety project). This limitation is that you need to learn how to use the different techniques to augment your speech, not as an end in itself. This limitation does not apply to speeches delivered in other sections of the meetings.
- **Hate speech is not allowed.** We use the United Nation's definition of Hate Speech. Specifically: "Hate speech is any communication in speech, writing or behavior, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language regarding a person or a group based on who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, descent, gender or other identity factors. This includes speeches that incite or promote violence, discrimination, hostility, or any animosity against groups of people".

Please note that humor, criticism, or just being "offensive" to someone is not considered hate speech and is not precluded by this section.

- Limitations introduced by clubs.
 - Each club may limit the kinds of subjects allowed in speeches, as long as the limitations are generic and do not violate the Neutrality and Intellectual Honesty core principles.
 - The limitations may be expressed either as a set of restricted subjects or as a set of mandatory subjects (especially for professional, corporate, or special-interest clubs)
 - The limitations must be objective.
 - The limitations may not go against any subject of the

Foundation's goals as per our bylaws.

- Here are some examples of valid limitations:

- ✔ No speeches on Religion
- ✔ No speeches on Football
- ✔ No speeches on Politics
- ✔ No speeches on Celebrities
- ✔ No speeches on Sex or Sexuality
- ✔ No speeches selling products or services.
- ✔ No self-promotion speeches.
- ✔ Only speeches about History
- ✔ Only speeches about Religion (note: this restriction must allow speeches on the absence of religion, such as Agnosticism or Atheism)
- ✔ Only speeches about Science and Technology
- ✔ Only speeches about Travel
- ✔ Only speeches with legal arguments.
- ✔ Only sales-speeches
- ✔ Only work-related speeches (usually in corporate clubs)

- Here are some examples of invalid limitations and the reason why they are invalid:

- ✘ Only feel-good speeches (Subjective)
- ✘ No offensive speeches (Subjective)
- ✘ No speeches disrupting the good mood of the club (Subjective)
- ✘ No speeches casting doubt on Science (Against the bylaws)
- ✘ No speeches about Islam (Non-neutral)
- ✘ No speeches about Socialism (Non-neutral)
- ✘ No speeches criticizing the government. (Non-neutral)
- ✘ Only speeches about the Socialist Party (Non-neutral)
- ✘ No speeches on Evolution (Against the bylaws)
- ✘ No speeches on Traditional Science (Against the bylaws)
- ✘ No speeches on Pseudoscience (Non-neutral)
- ✘ No speeches on our competitors' products (Non-neutral)
- ✘ No speeches on Nazism (Non-neutral)
- ✘ Only speeches about Homeopathy (Against the bylaws)
- ✘ Only speeches about Christianity (Non-neutral)
- ✘ Only speeches about Non-official science. (Against the bylaws)
- ✘ Only speeches about Non-traditional medicine. (Against the bylaws)

- Suppose a club chooses to limit the subjects of speeches. In that case, the limitations must be publicly communicated and visible in all of the club's online presence (website, Facebook group, etc.). It must explicitly point those limitations to guests and prospective members.
- Members must vote changes to the limitations.

Finally, note that some projects (usually in the Advanced Educational Paths) or activities (such as Contests) may limit the allowed kinds of speeches or even require that you speak about a particular subject.

- Speeches outside the club (for example, those given at Conventions, etc.) may have additional limitations.

In case of any doubts, feel free to send us a message at info@agoraspeakers.org.

■ What If I'm not happy with the limitations set by my club?

If you're not happy with the limitations in your club, you have three options:

- If you believe the limitations violate Agora Speakers International's rules, please try to solve it within the club first by engaging the club officers and pointing them to this page. If the issue cannot be solved, please send us a link or copy of the club speech limitations at info@agoraspeakers.org, indicating why you believe they violate the established rules. Please also indicate clearly the club name and number.
- You can promote a change within the club and put a specific proposal in front of your club's membership for voting.
- You can always start a new club that doesn't have those limitations.



CHAPTER 3 CLUB MEETINGS

Mr. Gea Ban Peng (to the right of the banner) - Ambassador of Agora Speakers to Singapore, at the New Year dinner of the Club.

CLUB PURPOSE

Agora Speakers' clubs provide a supportive and friendly environment where members can learn and practice the basic skills of public speaking and leadership. There you will find not only a welcoming atmosphere that encourages practice, but you will also be part of a community that will help you with your projects, share experience, and provides valuable feedback on the ways you can improve. You may also find a mentor who will guide you as you progress throughout the basic path's first projects.

In an Agora Speakers club, there are no "experts" or "teachers" (and club meetings are not - in general - "seminars" or "workshops") - everyone is there for their own learning process, everyone has something to learn and to improve, everyone is your peer and your equal.



Koka Prasad, leading the Vikasha Orators club

Clubs are legally independent entities, separate from Agora Speakers International but affiliated with it. As such, we try to strike a balance between ensuring a uniform experience for members around the world regardless of which club they attend and at the same time giving Clubs freedom and autonomy to organize themselves, be creative and innovate so for the benefit of the whole organization.

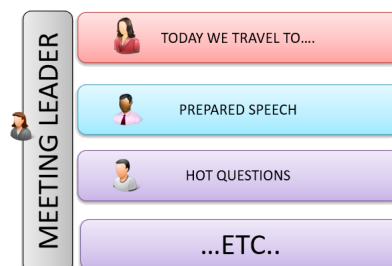
■ Club Meetings

Clubs can meet in English or many other languages, and some clubs are bilingual. Although English is the "official" working language of Agora Speakers, we actively encourage clubs and groups to use local languages to reach as many people as possible. In fact, you may find that some people come to clubs to improve their control of

a particular language.

A club may meet physically, virtually, or a combination of both. The largest educational benefit is reaped at physical meetings, and in fact, our Educational Program requires attending at least some physical meetings to complete it.

A club meeting is not a social improvised activity where members only meet and talk but is a carefully planned event with a specific Agenda and is conducted by a Meeting Leader (which is a volunteer role that changes from meeting to meeting). In a meeting, you will see different "sections" or "activities", such as "Today we travel To", "Hot Questions", "Prepared Speeches", etc.



There are literally dozens of possible activities that may happen at a club meeting, and they keep growing. We have a special chapter for the full list. Each activity trains a different set of skills. Here's a summary of some of the activities currently defined:



Skills that they train:



Who does what activity? That's decided by the members themselves, who volunteer for roles at the meetings, depending on their interests and skills they want to learn or practice.

Clubs also organize many other activities, such as parties, contests, leadership events, parties, and many others.

MANAGING MEETING ROLES

All regular Agora Speakers club meetings are structured, meaning they mostly follow the same flow and involve the same roles to ensure a consistent experience for members regardless of which club they visit and because the format is tried-and-true and it works. However, clubs are also free to innovate, add other roles, change the ordering, etc. See the sections about the Club Meetings for a detailed description of how a meeting usually proceeds.

How is it decided who does which role?

Every member can fulfill any role he or she wishes, and Agora Speakers does not impose restrictions or requirements on any of these. The general recommendation is that members sign up voluntarily for the roles they want for the next meeting(s), as long as it free.

However, clubs have freedom in deciding requirements for the roles. The most common limitation that one can find is the requirement that members who want to do Speech Projects also have to have volunteered before that meeting in other roles.

It is not recommended to repeat roles in consecutive meetings to give everyone a chance to be in all roles and experience the unique challenges each role poses. Furthermore, there's nothing more boring than a club in which the Grammarian, the Timer, or the Meeting Leader is always the same person.

What happens if someone doesn't show up?

It is not "exactly" unheard-of for someone taking a role not to show up at a meeting.

If you're the one that is not going to be able to make it to the meeting, it's very recommended that you talk to some fellow members that you know will be attending and ask them if they can take your place. If you don't know anyone, talk to your Vice President, Education, or the Meeting Leader for that meeting to warn them that you won't be able to attend.

At a meeting, if someone with a role doesn't show up without prior notice, it is generally the responsibility of the Meeting Leader to find a replacement.

However, please note that some roles cannot (and should not) be improvised, such as:

- Prepared Speaker
- Speechwriting Leader
- Today we travel to ... Speaker
- Workshop leader
- Crossfire participant

Roles such as the above require significant preparation and research that cannot be done on the spot. Unless there's a fortunate circumstance in which a member has already done one of these roles recently in a different club and still has everything fresh in their memory, it's better to simply remove that part from the meeting agenda.

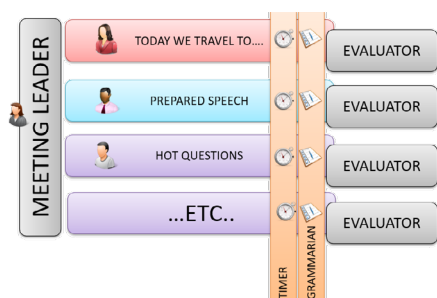
Timing and Evaluation

Usually, meetings last between 1 and 2 hours, although we've seen even 4-hour long meetings in some clubs.

All the activities have a strict amount of time allocated to them - a person cannot simply take the stage and deliver a four-hour speech. There are a minimum and a maximum duration for every activity, and that is specified in the Agenda:

Time	Role	Assigned to	Description	Start	End
18:00	Meeting Leader	Alexander Hristov	General Introduction	3:00	4:00
18:05	Timer	Carlos Fernández	Explanation of the role	4:00	5:00
18:07	Grammarian	David Harfield (CA)	Explanation of the role and word of the day	1:00	2:00

To learn and improve, each participant receives feedback about his performance based on the activity's general evaluation criteria. Additionally, members and guests may provide their own generic feedback.



Activity Types

As explained previously, many activity types can happen during a club meeting.

Most of these activities (such as Hot Questions, Thought of the Day, etc.) always have the same structure and educational goals. Although they do change in content (obviously, not everyone will always speak about the same thing in the Thought of the Day section), the purpose doesn't change.

Not so with the Prepared Speeches activity. Each Prepared Speech is a project that is part of a sequence that forms an Educational Path. Each project has concrete goals that differ from project to project. For example, one project can be about vocal variety, another about visual aids, and another about using emotion. Check the Educational Program Overview for a more detailed explanation.

TIP

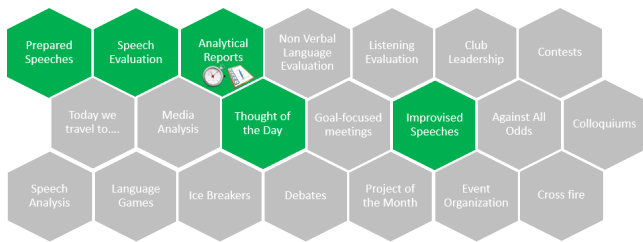
It's always a good idea to have a few activities in store in case there's a large gap in the agenda due to someone with a significant role not showing up. Activities that can easily be improvised include:

- Hot Questions
- Language Improvement Games
- Colloquiums

BASIC AGENDA

This Basic Agenda is intended for clubs that have just chartered and where the members don't have any prior experience with Agora. It should be used until the club is comfortable with all the roles present in it. Once all the members have a good grasp of how these work and a Vice President of Education has been elected, they can start adding new activities from the available set.

It is suitable even for the first meeting, and it requires a minimal number of people to execute while at the same time being very educational and fun. Of all the possible meeting activities, it features a basic set of them:



Agenda

This basic agenda requires at least 8 people, and it has the following roles:

1. [A Meeting Leader](#).
2. A Speaker that would do the first speech project. "[Speaking About the Things that you like](#)" (Project #2 from the [Basic Educational Path](#))
3. A person that would like to do the "[Thought of the day](#)" activity.
4. [A Timer](#)
5. [A Grammarian](#). He should also act as [Filler-word counter](#).
6. A [Speech Evaluator](#) to evaluate the speaker. The speech evaluator should also read [this article](#) on how to do effective evaluations and the [speech project](#) itself, which contains the evaluation card and criteria.
7. A [Hot Questions Master](#).
8. A [Meeting Evaluator](#).

Participants should volunteer for the different roles, or they can be assigned randomly if there's no agreement. Once assigned, everyone should familiarize themselves with what

the role needs to do by reading the linked materials.

If there are more than 8 participants, you can add additional "Thought of the day" roles or speeches and evaluations.

Materials - Physical Meetings

For carrying out a meeting with this format, you will need the following materials.

- An agenda with the sections and who's going to be doing each of them. Here you have a suggested [word template](#) that you can customize. There's no need to fill in the Officer roles at this point.
- A stopwatch or mobile phone with a timing app for the timer.
- A set of red, green, yellow signals (can be three sheets of colored paper) to serve as [timing signals](#).
- A sheet of paper for the timer's report. You can use this [word template](#).
- A sheet of paper for the grammarian's report. You can use this [word template](#).
- General evaluation forms. You'll need one per attendee per speech. So, for example, if you have two people doing speech projects and 10 attendees, you'd need 20 forms. Here you have a [simple template](#) (PowerPoint) and a [more elaborated template](#) (photoshop). You can personalize both of them with your club information. If you don't have PowerPoint or time to personalize, you can simply print this generic [PDF](#) form.
- The evaluation card for every speech project. Evaluation cards are at the bottom of each project, so for "[Speaking About the Things that you like](#)", scroll to the bottom to find it.

THE SILENT TOWNS 1 st AGORA CLUB ON MARS			
MEETING AGENDA			
Empowering People MEETING # 1	THEME OF THE MEETING: NEW BEGINNINGS	WORD OF THE DAY: VIGOR	OCTOBER 5 th 2016 9:00 – 11:00 PM
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE	2:30	Secretary Opens the Meeting Mission Statement, House Keeping Rules Call on President	AS Hagar Ehab
President AS Mob:	2:32	President Calls Meeting to Order Welcome Guests	AS Binoy Sebastian
VP Education AS Mob:	2:35	President Introduces Meeting Leader	AS Binoy Sebastian
VP Membership AS Mob:	2:39	Meeting Leader- Introduces the Role Players <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Grammarian + Filler Word Counter ○ Timer ○ Meeting Evaluator ○ Listening Evaluator ○ Impromptu Master 	AS Noor Mohammad AS Murali Krishna AS Carol McKinsey AS John Darwin AS Mathew Jacob
VP Marketing AS Mob:	2:45	PREPARED SPEECHES SESSION	AS Binoy Sebastian
Treasurer AS Mob:		SPEAKER	SPEECH EVALUATOR
Secretary AS Mob:		AS Manisha (CC # 1)	AS Noor Mohammad
VP Mentoring AS Mob:		AS Rishi Kumra (CC # 2)	AS Maya Seyno
		AS Priya Chandy (CC # 1)	AS Yousef Baniyan
		Vote for the Best Speaker	
Community Managers AS M:	3:30	IMPROMPTU SESSION	AS Mathew Jacob
	3:45	EVALUATION SESSION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meeting Evaluator calls for reports from meeting role players ○ Provides meeting evaluation 	AS Carol McKinsey
		Vote for the Best Evaluator	
OUR MISSION Agora empowers you to become a brilliant communicator and a confident leader who will actively build a better world	3:55	BUSINESS SESSION MF Returns Control to Club President Presents Awards & Guest Comments Business Session	AS Binoy Sebastian
MORE INFORMATION Read more about us at http://www.agoraspeakers.com	4:00	Meeting Adjourned	

"Set fire to the broken pieces; start anew." – Lauren DeStefano, Sever

- The grammarian will need to prepare a sheet of paper with his chosen word of the day. The word should be written in large enough letters so that everyone can see it.
- Pens for everyone.

■ Materials - Online Meetings

If the meeting is online, there's much less to be done as most of the elements are available online, and our [Asset Creator](#) can generate them.

The most important aspect of online meeting materials is to make sure that:

- Evaluators know where to find the Evaluation Card for the corresponding project. (These are located at the bottom of each project, role, or activity)
- The Timer needs to decide how he or she is going to signal the time. Again, you can use our Asset Creator to generate Zoom backgrounds with different suitable colors.



Unfortunately, zoom bombing or meeting hacking has become a major problem. Usually, the Meeting Facilitator is in charge of ensuring that people who disrupt the meeting are immediately removed from it. IF you don't have a Meeting Facilitator, you may ask any member you trust to perform the role. Whatever the scenario, make sure that you have a prepared strategy for dealing with disruptors rather than improvising on the spot.



Agoramania club in Bacau (Romania), with club founder and Agora Ambassador to Romania Gabriela Laslau (center)

MEETING FORMAT

This is a tried-and-true meeting format that can be used as a starting point for your own meeting design.

NOTE

This is just a suggestion of how roles could be ordered. If you're new to running an Agora club, we suggest you start with this format until you become experienced with it.

In this section, only the general ordering and suggested timings are explained, but no details are given about how each of the roles works. This information can be obtained in the "[Club Meeting Roles](#)" chapter.

The meeting format is essentially the same regardless of whether the meeting is physical or online.

■ Before the Meeting

The [Meeting Facilitator](#) should arrive well in advance of the scheduled starting time of the meeting. He or she should:

- Prepare the venue - tables, chairs, lectern, location of club and Agora symbols, etc.
- Prepare the tools that the Timer will use to measure and signal the time (stopwatch, "traffic" lights colored cardboard, etc.)
- Print the agenda
- If applicable, check that the lighting, sound system, and projection equipment work properly.
- If the club has recording equipment, set it up and prepare it for recording.

TIP

Some clubs enjoy a free-format "socializing" section, which usually can take up to 30 minutes before the meeting and many hours after it.

For Online meetings, the Meeting Facilitator should launch the meeting at least 15 minutes before the official starting time.

■ Materials needed

Physical Meetings

For a physical club meeting, you will need the following minimum materials:



- A stopwatch for timing speeches
- Some way to signal time limits to the speaker. This is done via green, yellow and red indicators. You can use lights or simply colored pieces of paper.
- Feedback forms for the audience. All members from the audience (even guests) can give their evaluation to every speaker on these feedback forms. You can get customizable templates for feedback forms - such as the one below - from the Branding portal (www.agoraspeakers.org/brand.jsp).

You can use the provided template, or you can create your own.

- Pens for the audience and (especially) for the Timer and the Grammarian
- Printed agendas for the meeting
- The Word of the Day, printed on one or two sheets of paper, in big letters, so that it can be seen by the speakers and by the audience at a distance.
- Sheets of paper (or preferably, templates) for the Grammarian, Timer, and Filler Word Counter.

Online Meeting

For Online Meeting, it's good to have at hand the following links and materials, in case their corresponding roles have forgotten to

- Links to the Zoom Backgrounds that the Timer can use
- Links to the [Asset Creator](#) so that the Grammarian and the Timer can generate their templates and backgrounds
- Pre-generated PDF versions of the Evaluation Sheets for each project and role. (These can be generated automatically from the page for each role and project)
- A pre-generated PDF for the [General Feedback Form](#) that members who are not evaluators can use to provide feedback to speakers

■ Meeting

Part I - Initiation

1. Usually, the [Meeting Facilitator](#) calls to order and opens the meeting, welcomes everyone, then provides a concise introduction to the person in the meeting leader's role for the

day and gives the floor to him.

2. The [Meeting Leader](#) welcomes everyone. Some good things that a Meeting Leader can do at this point are:
 - Reminding everyone to turn off their mobile phones. For Online meetings, apart from this, ask that people turn off any possible sources of interference and close the door of the room they're in.
 - Reminding everyone not to walk across the room during the speeches.
 - For Online meetings, remind everyone that safety and decorum must be present at all times. This means that no one should be driving or doing other dangerous activities during the meeting. Everyone should be dressed properly, and finally, everyone should have their cameras on at all times.
 - If there are any guests, providing a general introduction about Agora Speakers International and the club, its purpose, mission and what we do, and in which way.



TIP

One aspect that is always worth explaining to guests is that the meeting is not a free-form everyone-speaks meeting but follows a structured agenda, with people performing specific roles for which they have volunteered previously. This helps guests quickly clear out common misconceptions about Agora meetings

- The meeting is divided into different sections, with different people in charge of each section.
- The roles and sections have specific goals, which are explained in detail in the online materials.
- The roles are voluntary, and anyone can sign up for a role
- The roles change with every meeting - the meeting leader today is one person, next meeting will be someone else
- Everyone is evaluated so that everyone can improve and learn.

Sometimes it's also worth expressly pointing out these aspects during the introduction.

- If there are any guests, this is also a good opportunity to have each of them stand up and introduce themselves to the audience. Usually, the Meeting Leader can also ask a simple question like "how do you know us?" or "what brought you here?", etc.



Some guests confuse the invitation to introduce themselves with an invitation to deliver a 20-minute speech on the spot. The Meeting Leader should be quick to interrupt any such stray speeches that might derail the whole meeting.

INFO

In some meetings, the Grammarian and the Filler Word Counter roles are performed by the same person. Also, one of them can introduce the "Word of The Day". The Word of the Day's goal is to train people in being flexible when they speak and adapt to changes instead of learning speeches by heart.

Part II - The Evaluation Team

3. The Meeting Leader gives the floor to the [Timer](#) for 1-2 min, who explains his role, why timing is important, and how the time signals work
4. The Meeting Leader gives the floor to the [Grammarian](#) for 1-2 min, who explains his role and the things he is going to look for.
5. The Meeting Leader gives the floor to the [Filler Word Counter](#) for 1-2 min, who explains his role, the importance of not using filler words, and some examples of them.

Part III- Projects

6. For each Project, the Meeting leader:
 - Calls upon the [Speech Evaluator](#) to explain the objectives of the speech
 - Calls upon the Speaker to deliver the speech
 - Gives the audience between 1-2 minutes so that everyone can write their feedback to the speaker.

TIP

It is recommended that projects be ordered in increasing order of difficulty to avoid having a solid performer come before an inexperienced speaker.

7. After the prepared speeches part is over, the Meeting Leader gives the floor to the [Hot Questions Master](#), who proceeds with this section. Usually, this section is about 15 minutes long, with each answer to Hot Question being between 1-2 minutes long.

Part IV - Speech Evaluations

8. After the previous section is done, the Meeting Evaluator calls the Speech Evaluators to deliver their evaluations, each evaluation being 3-5 minutes long.
9. After all the Speech Evaluations are delivered, the [Hot Questions Evaluator](#) takes the stage and presents his report. This evaluation is about 5-7 minutes long
10. Optional. If your club has a [Listening Evaluator](#), now it would be a good opportunity for that role.

Part V - Technical Evaluations and Conclusion

11. After the previous part is finished, the Filler Word Counter, Grammarian, and Timer present their reports, for 1-2 minutes each, usually in reverse order in which they participated at the beginning of the meeting
12. Finally, the [Meeting Evaluator](#) presents his overall evaluation of the meeting and all the evaluators. This part usually lasts for 5-7 minutes

13. The Meeting Leader gives the floor to anyone (especially club officers) that needs to make announcements.

TIP

This is a good point for the Meeting Leader to ask guests about their opinions on the meeting, how they felt, etc.

14. The Meeting Leader gives the floor to the Meeting Facilitator, who closes the meeting.

MEETING REQUIREMENTS

In Agora, there's a lot of flexibility in terms of configuring the agenda for each meeting. We have so many activities that it's impossible to fit them all into a single meeting. This is one of the factors that make Agora meetings so distinctive - they are not always the same boring pattern applied repeatedly. They are much more varied, fun and yet they retain the educational focus.

■ Materials - Online Meetings

Clubs are free - and we encourage it - to introduce new roles, change the ordering of sections, introduce completely new ones or try other innovative ideas, as long as they are aligned with the goals, mission, and ideals of the Foundation and are educational in nature.

However, there are a set of very minimal required meeting elements that must be present in each regular club meeting to accomplish the main function of the meeting: the education of members in a particular set of skills and following the educational program of Agora Speakers International. This also helps ensure a minimum amount

of consistency among clubs worldwide.

The different types of clubs have different requirements regarding how closely they need to adhere to the Agora Educational Model.



TIP

You can use the [Meeting Activities](#) page as a template for configuring an agenda.

Please check the specific article for the type of club you're running. More specifically, the minimum required elements in a regular meeting are the following:

- There needs to be one single [Meeting Leader](#) throughout the whole meeting.
- All sections and participants of the meeting must be timed by a Timer and their use of language assessed by the Grammarian.
- Unless the club has chartered in the last month, there needs to be at least one project speech (a speech that is done according to one of the Educational Program projects).
- All speeches need to be evaluated.
 - If they are project speeches, they need to be evaluated according to the project's evaluation sheets by at least one evaluator.
 - If they are non-project speeches, they need to be evaluated according to the specific goals and objectives that the speaker has set for himself, which need to be known in advance. A club can choose to have more than one evaluator evaluate the same speech, delivering what is usually called "panel evaluations".
- At least one evaluator should also explain the speech's objectives before the speech itself so that the audience knows what to expect and what to give feedback on. This is not necessary if the objectives are the same as a previous speech and have already been explained (which can happen, for example, if two or more speakers in a meeting deliver the same project)
- The evaluation of every project must be delivered orally and publicly by the evaluator(s) in the same meeting so that both the speaker and the audience can benefit from the feedback provided. The evaluation must be done using the appropriate evaluation forms for the project.
- The audience needs to be given 1-2 minutes after the speech to provide written feedback to the speaker.
- There needs to be a Meeting Evaluator for evaluating the meeting overall and the roles that didn't receive feedback from specific evaluators.



NOTE

These are the requirements for the regular, periodic meetings. For special occasions, parties, gatherings, special sessions, contests, debates, etc., the format is free. However, the number of these special meetings may not be greater, per month, than the number of regular meetings.

THE AUDIENCE

In Agora, you always have a role, even if that role is that of an audience member. Why? Because Agora Speakers Clubs are expected to be friendly, supportive, and safe environments for practicing public speaking. The speakers are not experts; most of the time, they will be extremely nervous and self-judgmental. Sometimes they will have self-esteem or confidence issues, even if they are not immediately apparent. Sometimes they will have extreme shyness, and even the mere fact of standing in front of a group of people and saying a single sentence could be an ordeal for them. They will take anything that could be remotely seen (or imagined!) as negative and blow it out of proportion in their minds.

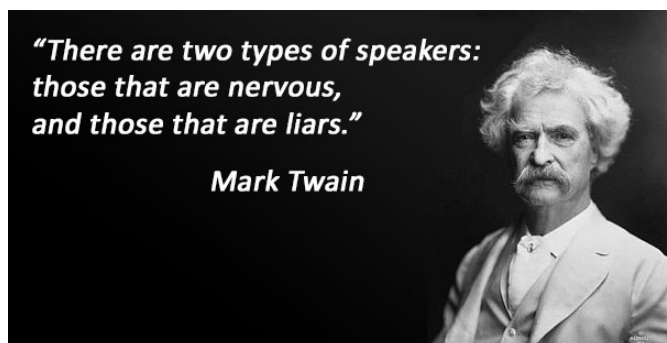
Don't be fooled by their credentials or experience - nervousness and self-judgment are something you will never get rid of. You will only learn to accept it, control it and channel the energy that it generates in a positive and useful way.



Visakha Orators, India. Photo: Koka Prasad

All this means that the audience also has a role to play - to support, be positive, be respectful, and exercise restraint and tolerance.

Being supportive and being positive means participating in applause, listening carefully to speakers, looking at them in a supportive way, and other similar small expressions of friendliness.



"There are two types of speakers: those that are nervous, and those that are liars.". Mark Twain

To be respectful is expressed in common-sense good manners, such as not talking to your neighbors during a speech, not checking your phone every two minutes, etc.

Finally, to exercise restraint and tolerance means that you should hold back your desire to shout back, interrupt or make negative or disproving gestures at the speaker when he's talking about a subject with which you deeply disagree - religion, politics, social issues ..maybe even football.

Giving Feedback

In many clubs, the audience will be asked to provide feedback to a speaker.



Giving feedback to a speaker. Agora Speakers Kaunas, Lithuania.

Please try to be honest and detailed in your feedback. Don't just say that everything was perfect just because of politeness. Also, try to be specific - if there was something you didn't like or think could be improved, please explain it specifically.

TIP

Feedback is not for debating or arguing with the speaker, evaluating the contents of the speech, or engaging in judging. Your goal is to help the speaker improve. And of course, don't ask the speaker for a date! (yes, we've seen that, too). Stay professional.

If the speech's subject was deeply disturbing to you, try to distance yourself emotionally from it when giving feedback. Many clubs have preprinted feedback forms like this one:



SPEAKER _____ SPEECH _____

CRITERIA

Organization & Structure

Speech Opening

Speech Conclusion

Diction & Pronunciation

Speed & Pacing

Vocal Variety

Pauses & Silences

Grammar & Vocabulary

Visual Aids & Props

Body Language

Naturalness

Anecdotes / Stories


Sincerity / Conviction

Overall impression

POSITIVE ASPECTS - THINGS THAT I LIKED _____

THINGS TO IMPROVE _____

Agora Speakers Madrid - CLUB 1
We meet every Thursday at 17:30 UTC
To attend, please contact Alexander Hristov - .

 www.agoraspeakers.org
info@agoraspeakers.org

Usually, the time for feedback will not be long - between 1 and 2 minutes after the speech. If you feel this is too short, write just the main impressions and finish your feedback after the meeting.

After you have finished writing your feedback, please wait for the end of the meeting before giving it to the speaker to avoid disturbing the meeting's flow and the next speakers.

GUESTS

Clubs are not only a friendly environment for members but should also be a friendly environment for guests.

Guests are interested in seeing for themselves what Agora Speakers is about and want to attend a club meeting. Anyone can invite a guest to a club, and guests may sometimes even pop up unexpectedly if they asked someone about your club details and decided to show up. Guests may come alone or accompanied by other guests.

The way your club treats these guests is how they will think - and speak, and write - of the whole organization. There's nothing better than good word-of-mouth references. And, of course, there's nothing worse for the health of the whole organization than bad word-of-mouth.

Unless there are exceptional circumstances (such as not enough physical space at the meeting location or for other safety reasons), Agora Speakers' bylaws require that all guests be allowed to meetings of public clubs.

Guests are also prospective members. In fact, experience has shown that people bringing guests to meetings is the main way membership grows.

■ Taking care of guests

For guests, especially if they show up alone, a club meeting can be initially a very intimidating environment, with so many new faces, a place where they don't know anyone, and sometimes they even don't know what the whole thing is about. Many of them may be very shy, and even mere attendance at such a public event might be very stressful.



It is the responsibility of every attending member to make sure that guests feel welcomed. There's nothing worse for a guest to enter a venue full of "small closed circles" of friends talking to each other and ignoring the new person.

If you see someone new, approach and greet him, introduce him to the rest of the members you know, and introduce the guest to the Meeting Leader. It's a good idea for the Meeting Leader to write down the names of the guests.

Some clubs like to ask guests to introduce themselves to the rest of

the audience at the beginning of a meeting. They can do that from the place where they are seated, no need to go to the front.

In an ideal situation, the Meeting Leader will already know who the guests are, so at the beginning of the meeting, he could say something like

“Before we continue, I’d like to ask the guests to introduce themselves and tell us how they found us and what they expect from the meeting. First, we have John. John, could you please stand up and tell us something about yourself? How did you find us?”

However, in many cases, the Meeting Leader will not be aware of who’s a guest and who is not. In this case, ask guests to raise their hands and then, in turn, ask them to introduce themselves:

“Do we have any guests today? Please raise your hands if you’re in our club for the first time. Thank you!

Before we continue, I’d like to ask the guests to introduce themselves and tell us how they found us and what they expect from the meeting. (points at someone) Let’s start over there. Could you please stand up and tell us something about yourself and how you found us?”

There are some portions of the meeting - such as the Impromptu Speeches / Hot Questions - that can be a delicate matter for shy guests or have an intense stage-fright. It’s up to each club to decide whether they want guests to participate in these sections. In any case, if they do, never force a guest to speak if you see that they are shy or very nervous.



At the end of the meeting, it’s a good idea to ask guests if they want to share their impressions. A guest’s opinion is always very fresh feedback.

Once the meeting is over, the Vice President, Membership, should talk to the guests and ask them explicitly if they liked the meeting and if they want to join. Many new membership opportunities are lost because club members don’t take this very small last step of asking the guest to join. If they are not ready to join yet, it’s also a good practice to have a guest book where guests can write down their names and contact information to be notified of new meetings or new developments in the club. Note that personal information obtained from guests in this fashion may not be used for any other purpose or shared outside of the club. Many countries also have specific data-protection laws, which is the responsibility of the club to comply with.

The requests to join should always be polite and never done so that

pressures or makes the guest feel uncomfortable.

■ Guest Packs

It’s recommended that clubs have a “Guest Pack” consisting of printed Club and Agora materials. This Guest Pack can include, for example:

- An introduction to Agora Speakers International and its mission and goals
- The Club charter and bylaws
- An explanation of the meeting structure and meeting roles
- A sample agenda
- The first three projects
- A club membership form detailing the club and Agora fees.
- Some tips about public speaking.
- Pins, stickers, or any other merchandising items.
- A card with all club officers and their contact information
- Club Business Cards with the club information and meeting schedule.

Guest packs can be handed out at the beginning of each meeting by the VPM (or the member he delegates to) to all guests.



CHAPTER 4 MEETING ACTIVITIES

Mr. Koka Prasad - Ambassador of Agora Speakers to India, leading a club meeting

MEETING ACTIVITIES

List of meeting activities

BASIC MEETING AGENDA			
MEETING OPENING	G	Y	R
Meeting Introduction	1:00	2:00	3:00
Meeting Eval Recap	1:00	1:00	2:00
Analytical Team Introduction	2:00	3:00	4:00
MAIN SECTION			
Add one or more activities from the "Main Activities" table →			
MAIN CONCLUSION			
Analytical Reports	3:00	4:00	5:00
Club Business	Varies	Varies	Varies
Meeting Evaluation	4:00	5:00	6:00
Meeting Closure	1:00	1:30	2:00

MAIN ACTIVITIES			
	G	Y	R
Speech Analysis	Varies	Varies	Varies
Speech Delivery	Varies	Varies	Varies
Prepared Speeches Evaluations	Varies	Varies	Varies
Club Debate	Varies	Varies	Varies
Hot Questions	10:00	13:00	15:00
Contests	Varies	Varies	Varies
Thought of the Day	2:00	3:00	4:00
Today we travel to	4:00	5:00	6:00
Colloquium	30:00	35:00	40:00
Crossfire	15:00	17:00	20:00
Ice Breakers	10:00	12:00	15:00
Language Improvement Games	10:00	12:00	15:00
Listening Evaluation	4:00	5:00	6:00
Speechwriting	10:00	12:00	15:00

MEETING OPENING

GENERAL INFORMATION		
This activity takes between 1:00 and 3:00 minutes		
G 1:00	Y 2:00	R 3:00
Difficulty	Basic Level	
Format		
Index of Meeting Activities		

SKILLS TRAINED	
Public Speaking	Leadership
Confidence	

STRUCTURE OF THE ACTIVITY				
Main roles for this activity		G	Y	R
1. Meeting Facilitator (Required)	Opens the meeting	1:00	2:00	3:00
2. Meeting Leader (Required)	Leads the meeting	Varies	Varies	Varies

The meeting opening is the very first part of a meeting. Usually, the [Meeting Facilitator](#) calls to order and opens the meeting, welcomes everyone, then provides a concise introduction to the person in the role of Meeting Leader for the day and gives the floor to him.

The Meeting Leader then also welcomes everyone and provides an outline of what lies ahead for the session.

Some good things that a Meeting Leader can do at this point are:

- Reminding everyone to turn off their mobile phones or put them in silent mode.
- Reminding everyone not to walk across the room during the speeches.
- If there are any guests, provide a general introduction about Agora Speakers, its purpose, mission, and educational goals and activities.
- If there are any guests, this is also a good opportunity to have each of them stand up and introduce themselves to the audience. Usually, the Meeting Leader can also ask a simple question like “how do you know us?” or “what brought you here?”, etc. From time to time, it happens that some guests turn out to be very talkative and engage in full-blown introductory speeches. The meeting leader should assert control politely but firmly in those cases. A short playful remark such as “Please, don’t spoil the surprise - we have a special project in which you will have to talk exactly about that. Let’s save the mystery till then” can help interrupt the guest in a non-offensive way.

Extra care must be taken not to prolong this part excessively. 2-3 minutes should be more than enough, possibly up to 5 if there are many guests.

RECAP OF LAST MEETING

GENERAL INFORMATION		
This activity takes between 1:00 and 3:00 minutes		
G 1:00	Y 1:30	R 2:00
Difficulty	Basic Level	
Format		
Index of Meeting Activities		

SKILLS TRAINED	
Public Speaking	Constructive Feedback
Intellectual Honesty	Leadership
Team Building	Positivity

STRUCTURE OF THE ACTIVITY				
Main roles for this activity		G	Y	R
Meeting Evaluator (Required)	Explains the objectives of the role and its purpose	1:00	1:30	2:00
Other roles related to this activity				
Photographer (Optional) , Videographer (Optional)				

This section - which takes place immediately after the meeting opening and is lead either by the Meeting Leader or the Meeting Evaluator -, serves two purposes:

■ Refresher of points for improvement

The Meeting Leader reminds attendees of the previous meeting's evaluation, highlighting the points for improvement that the previous meeting evaluator made. The purpose is to refresh the memory of attendees so that the same mistakes do not happen again.

For example, the Meeting Leader might say something like:

“At our previous meeting, Martha, in her role as Meeting Evaluator, reminded us that the grammarian needs to provide a detailed report of everyone’s filler words, and also the Hot Questions Evaluator only evaluated the impromptu speakers, but forgot to evaluate the Hot Questions leader himself. Let’s aim at improving on those details.”

If the Meeting Evaluator offered many suggestions for improvement at the last meeting, the Meeting Leader shouldn't reiterate them. Instead, only point at the most important or serious ones. It's better to advance in small incremental improvements than try to fix everything at once. Also, if the club has a meeting activity that doesn't happen every meeting, the Meeting Leader might refresh aspects that could be improved from the last time the activity was held.

It's also important that improvement suggestions are addressed at roles and not at people. For example, the Meeting Leader shouldn't say: “Carlos didn't provide a detailed report of everyone's filler words”, but instead should refer to “the grammarian”.

The meeting leader can also remind members of persistent errors that are frequently repeated:

“Although it didn't happen during the last meeting, I'd also want to remind everyone that evaluation forms should be handed back to the speakers at the end of the meeting, instead of passing papers during the meeting itself. This avoids disrupting the meeting and distracting the speakers.”

■ Continuity

The recap section can also point at some memorable moments from the last meeting, set an overall positive mood, or provide some context for some of the activities.

“In our last meeting, we had some very emotive speeches by Peter and Anna, who spoke about the hardships they had to endure during their childhood. I'm sure today we'll also hear some great speeches. We also had an equipment failure during Anthony's speech, so that he will be repeating it today, and hopefully, he won't set the house on fire”.

The section itself should be relatively short - no more than 2-3 minutes.

ANALYTICAL TEAM INTRODUCTION

GENERAL INFORMATION

This activity takes between 2:00 and 4:00 minutes

G 2:00

Y 3:00

R 4:00

Difficulty

Basic Level

Format



[Index of Meeting Activities](#)

SKILLS TRAINED

Public Speaking	Constructive Feedback
Logical Thinking	Tolerance
Time Management	Listening
Focus	

STRUCTURE OF THE ACTIVITY

Main roles for this activity		G	Y	R
1. Timer (Required)	Explains the objectives of the role and its purpose	1:00	1:30	2:00
2. Grammarian (Required)	Explains the objectives of the role and its purpose	1:00	1:30	2:00
3. Filler Word Counter (Required)	Explains the objectives of the role and its purpose	1:00	1:30	2:00
4. Body Language Evaluator (Optional)	Explains the objectives of the role and its purpose	1:00	1:30	2:00
5. Listening Evaluator (Optional)	Explains the objectives of the role and its purpose	1:00	1:30	2:00
6. Critical Thinking Evaluator (Optional)	Explains the objectives of the role and its purpose	1:00	1:30	2:00
Other roles related to this activity				
Photographer (Optional) , Videographer (Optional)				

The Analytical Team is composed of a set of people that evaluate specific aspects of all roles. At a bare minimum, it's formed by:

- [The Timer](#)
- [The Grammarian.](#)
- [The Word of the day/filler word counter](#)

Options: In some meetings, the Grammarian and the Filler Word Counter roles are performed by the same person. Also, one of them can introduce the "Word of The Day".

Optionally, it may also include:


- [A body language evaluator](#)
- [A listening evaluator](#)
- Any other specific evaluator that the club wants to have for that meeting for addressing a specific problem.

During this section, each of the members of the analytical team speaks for no more than 1-2 minutes and:

- Explains why the role is important
- Explains how they are going to perform the role. This is especially important for the timer, who needs to explain how the timing signals work.
- If time allows, provides some general tips for speakers.

SPEECH ANALYSIS PROJECTS

GENERAL INFORMATION

This activity takes between Varies and Varies minutes		
G Varies	Y Varies	R Varies
Difficulty	Basic Level	
Format		
Index of Meeting Activities		

SKILLS TRAINED

Constructive Feedback	Critical Thinking
Listening Honesty	Focus
Curiosity	

STRUCTURE OF THE ACTIVITY

Main roles for this activity		G	Y	R
1. Speech Evaluator (Required)	Explains the objectives of the role and its purpose	1:00	1:30	2:00
2. Speaker (Required)	Presents the project to the club	Varies	Varies	Varies
Other roles related to this activity				
Timer (Required), Grammarians (Required), Filler Word Counter (Required), Body Language Evaluator (Optional), Critical Thinking Evaluator (Optional), Photographer (Optional), Videographer (Optional)				

A Speech Analysis Subproject is a project where you need to analyze a speech from a specific viewpoint (for example, structure, body language, etc.). Members of the club are shown a selected speech, and then the presenter delivers a commentary on the relevant parts of the speech.

■ Determining the kind of speech format you need

Ideally, you should find a video of the speech you want to analyze in order to have the full experience of members of the audience. However, many great speeches are not available in that format.

The kind of speech format you need will depend on the specific project. For some basic projects - for example, speech structure or speech development, you can use virtually any speech format - video, audio, or maybe only a transcript of the speech itself.

For some projects, however, members will need to hear or see the speech. For example, it makes no sense to analyze the body language of a speaker based solely on a transcript of his speech. However, for vocal variety, audio recordings are good enough.

■ Finding a speech to analyze

There are many speech sources you can use, as well as techniques to find speeches of interest:

- Your first stop should be the links we provide in the [“Collections of Speeches”](#) area. There you will find many pointers of famous speeches by notable figures, both contemporary and historical, in a variety of formats - from text transcripts to video recordings.
- If the above resource doesn't match your needs, a good idea is to search YouTube for speeches. Usually, the combination

“speech on XXX “ or “top speeches on XXXX” or “best XXXX in a speech” work well, where XXX is your subject of interest. (For example, “speech on leadership”)

- Another good option is to search your favorite TV broadcaster for opinion pieces, editorials, comments, etc., especially by news anchors.
- A general search on Google also works well, especially if you combine your query term with “examples” or “top 10” or similar.

Make sure that the speech you want to use is appropriate from the viewpoint of the project. A speech by a TV news anchor can be great for structure and rhetorical devices but very poor from the viewpoint of body language, or even vocal variety, due to the medium's constraints.

The speech you select need not be a speech by a celebrity. It might be just a speech that you liked that exhibits traits that you find worthy of adopting. For example, it could be a simple graduation speech by a fellow student with great structure or that impacted you a lot.

Limitations:

- The speech to analyze may not be a speech that you have delivered in the past yourself (even if the text of the speech was written by someone else).
- If the speech is in video format, the speaker must be present in the video at all times, with at least the torso and his hands visible. It may not be an off-screen narration of a presentation or a voice-over for a generic video clip.
- A human speaker must vocalize the speech without alterations.

For example, this excludes speeches delivered by text-to-speech software or programs that alter the speaker's voice or that merely read a text.

- To avoid repetition, the speech you want to analyze must not have been used in the club in the past **three** months.

Suggestions:

- Try not to pick speeches on controversial subjects, or the audience's attention will be focused on the contents instead of the delivery techniques.
- Remember that you need to select a speech, not a theatrical or movie fragment or a dialogue. You can use speeches from movies or plays as long as the speaker is the only person speaking, uninterrupted by other events or sounds.
- It is very recommended to use not just any speech on any subject but to search for speeches on those subjects you are passionate about, as they will also benefit you by providing role models and inspiration on how to tackle these subjects.

Important: For the benefit of the whole community, please submit a link to your selected speech to info@agoraspeakers.org

Distributing the speech

The speech to analyze should be made available to members at least a couple of days before the meeting. Talk to your VP of Education or VP of Membership on how to achieve that. Depending on whether the club has a mailing list, a web page, or a social network group, they'll either send an EMail or post the link. To avoid wasting time during the meeting, members should watch or read the speech before the meeting itself so that during it, the focus is entirely on the analysis.

Note: Some clubs allocate special time at the meetings so that you can play the full speech at the meeting itself before proceeding to analyze it. Check with your VPE to verify if that is the case in your club.

Although, in theory, you can use speeches of any length, remember that members don't usually have the time to sit through a one-hour State of the Union speech (especially if your project is just one of the three speech analysis projects that happen to be on the same day). Ideally, the part of the speech that you analyze should be no more than 10 minutes.

If the speech is longer, you should try to provide members with an "abridged" version of it. You can use any open source video editing program to extract the parts that interest you, but be sure to preserve at least a few sentences before and after those parts so that the transitions in and out can be seen. If you don't want to use a video program, you can merely write down the time marks where the segment that interests you starts and ends (again starting at least a few sentences before) and send that together with the link to the full speech.

How many examples should I use?

A great speech will usually feature many examples of body language, vocal changes, rhetorical devices, etc. Most speech analysis projects are constrained to 5-7 minutes for your presentation and analysis of the speech. This means that you won't have time to explain more than 3, or in the very best case, 4 instances. Consider that every example you will be highlighting will take at least 30 to 40 seconds (including

the 5-10 seconds before and after the part of interest). Only playing the examples without any comment will take 2-3 minutes - half of your time.

How to perform the analysis

Once you have decided on a speech to use, it's time to do the analysis.

- First, read the project's description to understand the things you need to be looking for in your speech.
- Next, watch the speech once completely without interruptions.
- For the second viewing, watch the speech constantly looking for the things described in the project, writing down the time marks (e.g., "3:02") of the things that interest you, impact you or draw your attention. It's also recommended that you write a "score" for each segment, for example, from 1 to 3, to help to prioritize them.
- For the third viewing, watch only the segments that you marked down, analyzing what exactly the speaker is doing and what the transitions are into that segment. Write down next to each time mark that you wrote before your ideas, feelings, and thoughts, as they cross your mind. Don't censor or constrain yourself, nor try to give any structure or, much less, any "academic" format of your notes.
- At this point, select the top three examples from your list.
- As a next step, examine only the notes and try to expand them and give them some structure. Use no more than one or two paragraphs per each example. Write down why you think the example is relevant, what specific actions of the speaker impacted you and why.
- As the last step, give your notes the structure of a mini-speech, consisting of an up to 1-minute introduction with the project goals, then your previously written notes, then a 10-20 sec conclusion with your general summary about the speech you've chosen.



Remember that you're not evaluating the speech. You're using it as an example of good speaking practices.

Required Information

Regardless of which project from the Educational Path your analysis is for, you need to determine the following information for the speech:

- The social, economic, or historical context in which the speech was given.
- The type of speech
 - **Informative**
 - **Persuasive**
 - **Entertaining**
 - **Ceremonial**
- The audience it addresses

- The core message or goal of the speech

■ Project Delivery Project Delivery

Speech Analysis Projects are delivered as follows:

Before the Meeting

- First, EMail the speech of your choice to all club members. Ask the Club Officers for assistance in EMail all members. For transcripts, send the speech itself. For audio and video recordings, send a link to where the speech is located (the complete speech, not the fragments you selected). It's always an excellent idea to provide at least two sources for the speech itself, as you might find out at the very wrong time that the website that had the speech is no longer available for whatever reason.
- If your club provides printed agendas or EMail them, the speech links should be in them. Use an URL shortener to send the speech.



TIP

If you're using a video or audio speech, you should have it offline, downloaded to your computer. There's nothing worse than finding at the last moment that your venue lacks internet connectivity or that the website or network is down at the time of your speech.

During the Meeting

- Provide a short (max 1 minute) explanation of the project goals.
- Explain which speech you have chosen - who is speaking and what is the context (For example: "*This is a commencement speech delivered by Steve Jobs on June 12, 2005, at Stanford University*")
- For Audio and Video recordings of short enough speeches, play them wholly at the club meeting. For this, you would need either:
 - A projector. This is the ideal scenario, and all clubs should consider having one. There are many cheap options now on the market.
 - A TV set you can connect your computer to.
- If the speech is only audio, you can just use your computer connected to an external speaker.
- If all else fails, just use a computer to display it to members, who will sit around.
- For speeches available only as text transcripts, or when they are too long, proceed directly to the commentary section. In this section, play or read only the fragments you selected along with your comments. Usually, an excellent technique is to express **first** what you liked about a fragment (you can use your notes here, but try to avoid reading directly from them), and then play or read the fragment itself. Repeat this for every fragment you have chosen.
- Finally, deliver your conclusion.

PREPARED SPEECHES

GENERAL INFORMATION		
This activity takes between Varies and Varies minutes		
G Varies	Y Varies	R Varies
Difficulty	Basic Level	
Format		
Index of Meeting Activities		

SKILLS TRAINED	
Public Speaking	Speechwriting
Argumentation	Intellectual Honesty
Logical Thinking	Creativity
Perseverance	Time Management
Confidence	Focus
Research	

STRUCTURE OF THE ACTIVITY				
Main roles for this activity		G	Y	R
1. Speech Evaluator (Required)	Explains the objectives of the project	1:00	1:30	2:00
2. Speaker (Required)	Presents the project to the club	Varies	Varies	Varies
Other roles related to this activity				
Timer (Required), Grammarian (Required), Filler Word Counter (Required), Body Language Evaluator (Optional), Critical Thinking Evaluator (Optional), Photographer (Optional), Videographer (Optional)				

The Prepared Speeches section is one of the core parts of the meeting. In it, members deliver speeches that they have prepared in advance and that meet specific educational goals and evaluation criteria specified in the Agora Educational Program.

- All members start with the projects from the [Basic Educational Path](#), which need to be done in order. After the basic path is finished, they may start any of the Advanced Paths.
- Each speech needs to correspond to a specific project from the program.
- All prepared speeches are timed. Depending on the specific project, their length may be anywhere between 4 and 20 minutes. Usually, the more advanced the project is, the longer the speech to be delivered.
- Each speech needs to have a specific speech evaluator known in advance and who knows the goals of the speech.
- All prepared speeches receive two evaluations:
 - A verbal evaluation delivered during the meeting itself by the appointed speech evaluator. The speech evaluator also fills in the specific evaluation card that is at the end of each project.
 - A written evaluation feedback delivered by all members of the club. This written evaluation uses a standard “Speech Feedback Form” that can be downloaded from the Brand Portal.
- The topic of all prepared speeches is entirely up to the speaker, except that prepared speeches cannot be about public speaking or any related subject. This limitation aims to make sure that public speaking projects are seen as a tool

for transmitting messages that matter and not as an end in themselves.

■ Custom Speeches


Exceptionally, a prepared speech may be a Specialty or Custom Speech. These are speeches that do not correspond to any particular educational program project but that the speaker wants to practice for some reason - for example, because he or she has to present it elsewhere and wants to practice in front of the club. Custom Speeches need to have a clear set of goals and time defined in advance. These need to be communicated to the speech evaluator, meeting leader, and timer of the meeting. For example, imagine that you need to deliver a Best Man speech. Then you could write your evaluator and tell him what your goals are:

- Sounding natural and close
- Presenting the bride/groom/couple in a very positive way
- Being funny and entertaining
- Using personal anecdotes or stories about your relationship with the bride/groom.

You should also specify a clear time limit. For example, for a Best Man speech, it could be “3-4 minutes, a green signal at 3, a yellow signal at 3:30, a red signal at 4:00”.

SPEECH EVALUATIONS

GENERAL INFORMATION

This activity takes between Varies and Varies minutes		
G Varies	Y Varies	R Varies
Difficulty	Basic Level	
Format		
Index of Meeting Activities		

SKILLS TRAINED

Public Speaking	Argumentation
Constructive Feedback	Critical Thinking
Interpersonal	Time Management
Listening	Positivity

STRUCTURE OF THE ACTIVITY

Main roles for this activity



The Speech Evaluations section is where all the different speech evaluators provide feedback to the people that have delivered prepared speeches. The length of the section varies depending on the number of speeches to be evaluated.

For evaluators to provide more comprehensive and detailed feedback, it's recommended to separate this section from the last prepared speech by at least a 5-minute break (or a different activity unrelated to prepared speeches). During this break, evaluators can wrap up their thoughts, fill in the evaluation forms, write their evaluation structure, etc.

THOUGHT OF THE DAY

GENERAL INFORMATION

This activity takes between 2:00 and 4:00 minutes

G 2:00 **Y** 3:00 **R** 4:00

Difficulty Basic Level

Format 

[Sample Video](#) 

[Index of Meeting Activities](#)

SKILLS TRAINED

Public Speaking	Speechwriting
Creativity	Time Management
Confidence	

STRUCTURE OF THE ACTIVITY

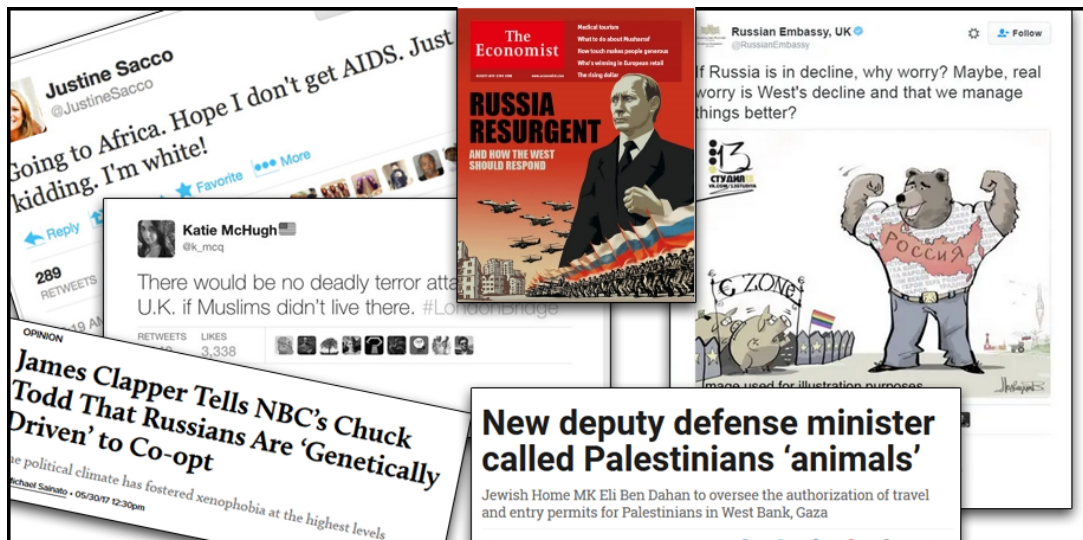
Main roles for this activity	G	Y	R
1. Speaker (Required)	Presents the project to the club		
	2:00	3:00	4:00
Other roles related to this activity			
Timer (Required), Grammarians (Required), Filler Word Counter (Required), General Evaluator for Speeches (Required), Body Language Evaluator (Optional), Critical Thinking Evaluator (Optional), Photographer (Optional), Videographer (Optional)			

The “thought of the day” is a small speech (between 2-4 minutes), usually delivered by people beginning their public speaking education, who are not yet comfortable giving longer speeches. Although the usual title of this role is “Thought of the day”, it can actually be about just anything:

- A favorite or recent movie
- A book
- A concert or a song
- A TV show or a particular episode from a series.
- An interesting piece of clothing or furniture
- A favorite spot in your city
- A favorite dish or drink
- A favorite website
- An actor or actress
- A person you admire. Need not be famous, could be someone from your environment.
- A memorable place on a recent trip
- A quote from a famous person
- An event that has caused a lasting impression on you

It’s an optional role in meetings.

TODAY WE TRAVEL TO



GENERAL INFORMATION

This activity takes between 4:00 and 6:00 minutes

G 4:00 **Y** 5:00 **R** 6:00

Difficulty Basic Level

Format

Index of Meeting Activities

SKILLS TRAINED

Public Speaking	Speechwriting
Intellectual Honesty	Tolerance
Creativity	Conflict Resolution
Empathy	Confidence
Positivity	Curiosity
Social Knowledge	Research

STRUCTURE OF THE ACTIVITY

Main roles for this activity		G	Y	R
1. Today We Travel To Speaker (Required)	Presents the project to the club	4:00	5:00	6:00
Other roles related to this activity				
Timer (Required) , Grammarians (Required) , Filler Word Counter (Required) , General Evaluator for Speeches (Required) , Body Language Evaluator (Optional) , Critical Thinking Evaluator (Optional) , Photographer (Optional) , Videographer (Optional)				

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

Find a collective of people that are being demonized in your environment.

Research that collective and find **one** thing that you **genuinely** like about them - culture, music, folklore, dancing, cuisine, traditions, clothing, customs, etc...

Deliver an **informative** speech on that **one** thing you like without actively defending the collective or asking people to empathize with them or pity them.

Do not explain the purpose of the section.

■ Our Group Identity

Humans are tribal creatures. From an evolutionary perspective, human creatures need the support of a social structure to survive. Human babies have the longest dependent period from their parents from all species, and even after that, Homo Sapiens Sapiens is not particularly skilled at running, climbing, or swimming. None of our senses is spectacularly developed. We're drawn to seek our next of kin to form groups that can collectively provide much higher chances of survival - from hunting together bigger prey to efficiently dividing labor to finding potential mates.



When you fall into the trap of demonization, you can be as easily manipulated as the bulls in the Spanish corridos. (Photo: Francis Heylighen)

In modern days, nothing really has changed. We still experience a strong desire "to belong" to some group. However, when taken to an extreme, this need of belonging turns into what anthropologists call "toxic tribalism" - an adherence so unconditional to one's own group that it becomes unconscious, dogmatic, and hostile against any other groups.

When something becomes unconscious or automatic, you're no longer in control of it. You're not examining critically whether what you're reading or being told makes any sense, as long as it matches the group identity. What is worse - your reactions become predictable. Thus, you become an easy target for manipulation - much in the same way a bull can be made to run in any direction by waving in front of him something that he perceives as dangerous.

■ Demonization (Dehumanization)

Demonization is a commonly used technique to fan the flames of toxic tribalism and move populations to specific behaviors. It consists of attributing an extreme negative generalization to members of a different group. The different groups may be geographical (demonizing people in other countries or regions), ethnical (demonizing specific races), religious (demonizing members of a particular religion), etc. You can see many examples of dehumanization in the opening picture of this activity.

Sometimes the demonization starts with an easier target - such as a leader or a visible representative of the selected target group. In words of the Cato Institute:

Once you start demonizing a president or leader of a country, you are permanently embedding ideologically-driven dehumanization into the heart and minds of Americans and justifying any future acts of violence against that country and her people.

Despite its bluntness, it's usually very effective due to the vivid images that it creates in the audience and because it creates a sense of threat against the groups that an individual holds so dear. Once enough fear or hate is instilled into him, he may be commanded to do things way beyond what he would willingly do in normal life, even up to the point of killing others or sacrificing his own life.

Hermann Göring, one of the most prominent leaders of the Nazi party, founder of the Gestapo, and the head of the German Air Force (the Luftwaffe), illustrated this perfectly with the following statement during the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials:

Why, of course, the people don't want war. Why would some poor slob on a farm want to risk his life in a war when the best that he can get out of it is to come back to his farm in one piece? Naturally, the common people don't want war; neither in Russia nor in England nor in America, nor for that matter in Germany. That is understood.

After all, it is the country's leaders who determine the policy, and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy or a fascist dictatorship or a Parliament or a Communist dictatorship.

The people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same way in any country.

Although demonization of other groups and their leaders has existed since the dawn of history, it has become widespread in recent times, aided by social media's virality. Amnesty International in 2016-2017 issued a report warning against the dangers of such tactics.

■ Why demonize?

People that use demonization of groups do so for basically two reasons:

- To push their own agenda. For example, it's much easier to increase military spending if people perceive that their way of life is threatened. It's much easier to increase police departments' budgets if people believe that there's a massive influx of criminals. In fact, demonization is a scarily cheap way of pushing agendas.
- To move the focus of attention to a different point or to distract. For example, if your party has just been caught embezzling money, it's much easier to wade through the storm if all the party starts pointing the finger at some other issue

■ Fighting toxic tribalism and dehumanization

Fighting toxic tribalism, dehumanization, and negative stereotyping, in general, is no easy task, especially if the former are done in a subtle and non-obvious way.

As this [satirical short video](#) illustrates, the so-called implicit stereotypes may kick in as a reaction to a social cue, even though the people involved may be aware of their existence and undesirability. One could think that tribalism can be fought by explicitly explaining the irrationality of the demonization or stereotyping and by actively asking people not to engage in it. Although that does have some effects, the [research shows](#) that the effects are very short-lived. This is one reason why in this project, your speech should not be asking people to stop doing this or that, nor trying to provide rational arguments for doing so.

There are several methods that research has shown to work against demonization and stereotyping in general.

Providing positive counter-examples

The first measure is exposure to people from the discriminated collective that are bearers of qualities contrary to what the stereotype implies (“counter stereotypic”). Given [enough exposure](#), the stereotype is greatly decreased. For example, if the stereotype is that “gypsies are thieves”, a counter-stereotype would be talking about honorable Roma people or Roma people who have succeeded or exemplary behavior.

The good news here is that counterstereotypes are effective even when they are merely [imagined](#). This is merely an application of the widely known visualization technique - in which merely vividly imagining or thinking about a situation helps prepare you for it. In the same way, merely imagining honorable Roma people already decreases the strength of the stereotype.



Warning - [research](#) also suggests that extreme counter-examples tend to have a boomerang effect, reinforcing the stereotype. A mechanism similar to “ah, but that must be the exception that confirms the rule” triggers in our brain. So if the stereotype is that “women are weak”, for example, the counter-examples should be ordinary strong women, not extremes like Queen Elizabeth or Joan of Arc (Jeanne d’Arc).

NOTE

There’s one more positive effect to presenting counter-examples to stereotypes. [Studies show](#) that when people are faced with counter-examples of their beliefs and process them, they become more flexible and creative thinkers.

Breaking the reinforcement loop

Social pressure and social norms (either real or perceived) can play a huge role in the formation and perpetuation of these stereotypes. Our beliefs are reinforced if we think a majority of the population

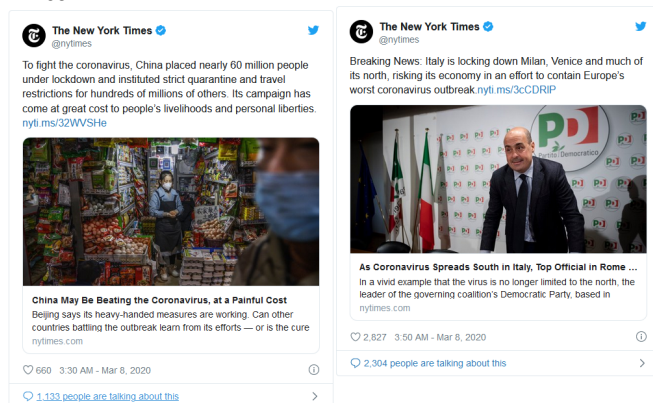
shares them. In fact, [Asch’s conformity experiments](#) show that social pressure can make us give up common sense and switch to ideas that are blatantly and visibly wrong.

Research shows that when people become aware that others do not share their prejudices, the [stereotyping decreases](#). In fact, one of the goals of this project is precisely providing a testimony that says, “Hey, I’m here, and I think differently about these people. If you believe what the demonization is telling you, I’m here to clearly state that I don’t share that opinion “.

■ Examining critically external messages, and our own beliefs

We can make a huge step against toxic tribalism by scrutinizing, fact-checking, and never taking at face value any statements we receive, especially if they contain judgmental nuances or generalizations. This is an area that we will extensively work on in the Critical Thinking path.

Here’s a short example of how demonization can subtly and slowly creep in. As a result of the COVID pandemic, many countries had to go into complete lockdown to prevent the virus from propagating exponentially. Can you sense the subtle differences in narrative and how the measure is portrayed in these two snippets from the NY Times?



Engaging in cooperative activities with representatives of the demonized groups.

Of course, working together or merely spending time together in a non-confrontational manner with representatives of the demonized groups greatly decreases the stereotyping with time. The ability to withhold judgment, work with different types of people, be flexible, creative, and have an open mind are all crucial characteristics of modern-day leaders, and we work on developing these traits in the Agora Leadership program.

■ The activity

In the meeting section “We Travel To...” you will need to do two things:

Research

1. Be attentive and observant to detect signs of demonization around you - either in social media, in friends' comments, TV, newspapers, etc., and to determine which is the collective being demonized. Maybe even you yourself engage in that kind of behavior?. It's important for this activity that the demonization must be happening in your context, not somewhere else or theoretically. If you live in Sweden, don't talk about how Africans are demonized in Spain. Probably you have much closer collectives.

In many countries, you won't need to make a lot of effort to do so. Russia and the US traditionally demonize each other in their respective spheres of influence. The same can be said about the political actors in the Middle East. China vs. Japan is another “traditional”. In fact, it's easy to find on the Internet tongue-in-cheek (but also serious) maps of “who hates what,” such as this map of “hate in Europe”:



💡 TIP

Most of the demonization is not explicit but subtle. A good practice for detecting it is to read/watch the popular opinion-makers (be that traditional media, popular blogs, influencers, etc.) and scrutinize the snippets that make you dislike, judge, or condemn someone. Anything that elicits in you a negative emotional reaction towards a group of people.

Club Speech

2. Once you've identified a demonized collective, your goal is to research that collective and present a 3 to 5-minute speech illustrating something positive about them that has drawn your attention.

You'll be using two techniques in this speech:

- Presenting one or two positive counter-examples.

- Sending an implicit signal that the demonized beliefs are not shared. After all, by speaking positively of the discriminated collective, you'll be acting as living proof that there are people with other beliefs.

The speech should be **entirely focused** on the positive aspects that you have discovered. These can be anything you can find: from folklore to cuisine, from customs to architecture, from traditions to art, from a historical event to advances in science by members of that collective. The speech should be **informative and factual**, not persuasive. You're not trying to persuade anyone about anything - merely shed a positive light on an otherwise ostracized collective.



It's also critically important that you actually like what you're talking about. Don't talk about things that “are good in theory” or “everybody should like” - talk about the ones you personally do.

It's also important to make the speech about something intrinsic to the collective (in other words, about things that are the way they are because of the active choice or action of that particular collective). For example, imagine that you want to speak about the Bulgarians. It's pointless to give a speech about how beautiful the mountains and lakes of Bulgaria are because - like every other nation in the world - it's merely a historical coincidence that Bulgarians live geographically where they live, and the mountains and lakes would be equally beautiful regardless of whether Chinese, Japanese, Gypsies or other collectives had instead occupied that place (Of course, the reality is a bit more subtle - the geographical attributes do shape over time the culture, traditions, and even the way a collective perceives the world. However, for this project's purposes, and since this shaping takes over very long periods of time, we will assume it's not relevant).

What you can do, however, is to talk about the relationship between the collective and its environment because that's entirely their choice. If a particular collective keeps the environment clean, values natural resources, has a sustainable development policy, etc. All of that is what preserves the beauty of the pre-existing mountain and lakes - that's a worthy topic for a speech.

💡 TIP

As with all speeches, try to keep the subject focused. You don't have a whole hour to speak, so try to transmit one or two core points and elaborate on them. For example, instead of conveying the whole history and folklore of the gypsies in 5 minutes, focus on either one specific festival or one specific tradition, and illustrate it in detail.

The speech should not:

- Mention that the collective is subject to demonization.
- Discuss why you chose this particular collective over another.
- Pity, sympathize with the collective, or dwell in their plight or difficulties. For example, if your chosen collective is immigrants

or refugees, the subject of your speech cannot be how difficult it was for them to make it to your country or how terrible is the war in theirs.

- Exhort the audience to like them or to do anything in particular. Remember - this is not a persuasive speech that ends with a call to action (Remember what research shows - you will only achieve the illusion of having changed people's minds, but in fact, the old stereotypes would be back almost the moment they leave the room)

If you do any of the above, you will only create resistance that defeats the activity's goal.



Don't overdo it. Remember the extreme-counterexample research above. If you try to go to the extreme of positivism, painting your collective of choice as the best in the world, or their music/cuisine/etc. as being exceptional and fill your speech with superlatives, you risk triggering a boomerang effect

The title of the speech should be based on "Today we travel to... ". For example:

- Today we travel to Russia
- Today we travel to California
- Today we travel to the world of the gypsies.
- etc

■ Evaluation

The project is evaluated according to the attached evaluation card.

NOTE

Note to the evaluator: There's a fine line between talking about a collective and where and how it leaves and giving merely a "travelogue"-type speech where the speaker simply narrates a nice place he has been to. A common confusion in this project - from speakers that don't read the full description - is to think that "Today we travel to..." is what the title literally says - going someplace nice and telling a story about that. Clearly, this is not the case, and if you see that the delivered speech is of this kind, you should clearly indicate that it didn't meet the goals, explain why, and suggest that the speaker repeats the role in a future meeting.

On the other hand, since the speaker on purpose won't explicitly indicate the collective he's speaking about, sometimes it's difficult to tell if we're in the first situation. This is especially true in meetings where people from different cultures and countries participate: a particular collective may be discriminated against in the speaker's environment but not in yours.

So the moment you decide to evaluate a "Today we travel to" speech (ideally, days before the meeting), it's a good idea to contact the speaker and ask him about his collective of choice. This will also serve as a subtle reminder of the non-tourist nature of the speech.

■ Resources

- TED Speech - [Why I have coffee with people who send me hate mail.](#) (Özlem Cekic)
- Open Book - [Principles of Social Psychology - Reducing Discrimination.](#)

Evaluation Card

Travel to Speaker Evaluation

Member	Evaluator	Allotted Time (min) <input type="radio"/> Green <input type="radio"/> Yellow <input type="radio"/> Red	Actual Time
Club name (or location/venue if not in a club setting)	Do you believe the goals were met? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly No <input type="checkbox"/> No		Date

Was the collective described clear? Did it correspond to a traditionally demonized collective?

Was the speaker convincing about the things he liked?

Was the nature of the speech mainly informative and not persuasive?

What were the main points that you liked from the speech?

What was the effect of the speech on the public? How did they react (if at all)?

Was the subject researched with enough depth? Were you left with a desire to know more?

What could have the speaker done to be more effective?



Please write on the back if you need more space 

COLLOQUIUM

GENERAL INFORMATION

This activity takes between Varies and Varies minutes

G 30:00 **Y** 35:00 **R** 40:00

Difficulty	 Intermediate Level.
Format	
Index of Meeting Activities	

SKILLS TRAINED

Public Speaking	Speechwriting
Argumentation	Debating
Intellectual Honesty	Logical Thinking
Tolerance	Critical Thinking
Creativity	Conflict Resolution
Time Management	Listening
Confidence	Focus

STRUCTURE OF THE ACTIVITY

Main roles for this activity		G	Y	R
1. Colloquium Evaluator (From 1 to 5)	Explains the objectives of the activity	1:00	1:30	2:00
2. Colloquium Moderator (Required)	Leads the section	Varies	Varies	Varies
3. Colloquium Participant (From 2 to 5)	Participates			
4. Colloquium Evaluator (From 1 to 5)	Provides feedback for the participants			
Other roles related to this activity				
Timer (Required) , Grammarian (Required) , Filler Word Counter (Required) , Photographer (Optional) , Videographer (Optional)				

(This activity was created based on an original suggestion by Ana Clara Spitz Manzo)

The Colloquium activity is designed to train you to present and defend an opinion in a logical and argumentative way and ask inquisitive questions, and dispute assertions made by others.

In this activity, you'll be taking turns with the rest of the participants by both defending your own statements and attacking and refuting the arguments of your opponents.

NOTE

Ideally, the number of colloquium participants should be between 3 and 5.

The activity is managed by a Colloquium Moderator, which prepares a set of questions for the participants. The questions should be open-ended, on which the participant can formulate a well-founded and argued point of view. They may be either about current events or general social or universal human or social topics.

- Questions should be formal and based on reality, sufficiently general to allow for an interesting and realistic debate.
- There should be at least twice as many questions prepared as participants.

- Except for thematic clubs, all questions must be on different topics (For example, it's not appropriate if all 10 questions are about sports, or about politics, etc.)
- Questions shouldn't be disclosed until the activity.



As a Colloquium Moderator, It's important to be unbiased when selecting and writing down the questions and presenting them in a neutral way, without hinting at a "correct" response or presenting your own opinion as part of the question. For example, you shouldn't be asking, "What do you think about vegans? Should everyone become a vegan to stop the endless torture and slaughtering of animals?"

It's generally a good idea to include some context in the question. For example, instead of just asking, "Do you think it's ethical to change the fiscal residence to benefit from lower taxes?" the Moderator could say: "Recently we read in the news that a famous youtube vlogger with millions of followers had decided to move to a place with lower taxes. He said that he felt as if he was constantly being treated as a criminal, constantly suspected of tax evasion in his own country. Do you think it's ethical to change the fiscal residence to benefit from lower taxes?"

 **TIP**


Since the interactions during the Colloquium can become quite complex, it's a good idea to have as many evaluators as participants and have each evaluator focus on evaluating the performance (both defence and rebuttal) of just one participant.

The activity also requires several Colloquium evaluators - these can be volunteers or selected by the Moderator.

For each Colloquium participant, the activity proceeds in "turns". In each of them, one of the participants acts as a presenter (defender) of a viewpoint, and the others will try to refute it.


The participant receives a random question from the set that the Moderator has prepared. The Moderator will start reading it, and the participant can accept it or reject it if he doesn't feel prepared or knowledgeable enough to speak about the subject. If the question is rejected, the Moderator will present another random question, and this second time there's no possibility of rejection.

After the question is received and accepted, the participant has up to 30 seconds to think about the opinion they want to defend on the subject.

 **NOTE**

To prevent rushed defenses that are poorly thought-out, the Moderator should insist that participants think during the 20-30 seconds they have allotted for that, instead of jumping to speak immediately.

Once the thinking period is over, the participant has up to 2 minutes to present his or her opinion and defend it. Once the defense is complete, the Moderator will give the floor to the challengers. Each challenger has one minute to try to refute the view presented by the defender.

 **NOTE**

The section format and goals require that challengers try to refute the que, even when in their "normal life (outside of the meeting)," they would agree with it. Challengers are evaluated on the thoroughness and strength of their arguments and questioning.


During that minute, they may present evidence that contradicts what the presenter said, point to errors in reasoning, ask questions, put forward alternative views, etc. After that minute, the floor goes back again to the presenter, who has to counter what the challenger just said. After that, the floor passes to the next challenger, and the procedure repeats until all the participants have had their turn in trying to refute the presenter. Once that happens, roles are switched, and the participant that was asked the question acts as a challenger, whereas one of the remaining challengers becomes the new presenter that has to defend a viewpoint.

The activity finishes when all Colloquium participants have had the opportunity to be presenters once.

Personal attacks or generalizations, hate speech, or violent reactions

of any kind are not allowed during this section. Anyone doing so will be automatically disqualified, and the Moderator will prevent that person from continuing to speak - either by silencing their microphone or starting to clap. If the offender was the presenter, the questioning round is considered closed, and the activity moves to the next presenter. If the offender was a challenger, then the presenter won't be required to answer any of the arguments put forward by him, and the floor moves to the next challenger.

Neither the presenter nor the challengers may be interrupted while they speak, except if they commit the offense described above or exceed the speaking time.

 **NOTE**

Timing is a critical aspect of the colloquium. It's very easy to go overtime a lot in this section if the Timer doesn't enforce timing strictly.

Once the section is over, evaluators will have a short break of 1-2 minutes to write down their notes and feedback on each participant. All roles will be evaluated using the same criteria, specifically:

- Time management.
- Respect towards the opponents
- Truthfulness and accuracy of the data or arguments presented.
- Intellectual honesty (absence of fallacious reasoning or manipulative techniques, etc.)
- Delivery - body language, vocal variety, etc.
- Quality and robustness of the presented arguments
- The ability to make the opponents concede partially or totally a point, or even change their minds

Each evaluator will have up to 2 minutes to deliver his or her evaluation. It should contain an assessment on whether the participant defended the opinion convincingly against the opponents' attacks or whether the opponents were more successful and defeated the opinion.



There's a great temptation to have a "colloquium winner", but you should be careful as people are not always happy to be dragged into a competition they didn't intend to participate in. To avoid that, before the activity, ask all colloquium participants privately whether they would like to compete and have a winner elected. You should go ahead only if no one objects.



■ **Sample Development**

Here's how a Colloquium session with three participants - John, Peter, and Martha would proceed:

- The Colloquium Moderator presents a question to John. If he accepts the question, he takes 20-30 seconds to develop an opinion and up to 2 minutes to present it. After John's time is out, Peter has one minute to ask John questions or try to refute his viewpoint. After that, John has 1 minute to respond to the issues raised by Peter. Then Martha's turn comes for questioning, and she also has up to 1 minute to dispute John's

- assertions, to which John has 1 minute to respond.
- After the first round is over, participants switch places:
 - Peter accepts a question from the Moderator, thinks for 20-30 seconds then presents his opinion for up to 2 minutes.
 - John has 1 minute to try to refute Peter's viewpoint or to ask questions. Peter has 1 minute to reply to John.
 - Martha has 1 minute to try to refute Peter's viewpoint or to ask questions. Peter has 1 minute to reply to Martha.
 - Finally, it's Martha's turn to defend:
 - Martha accepts a question from the Moderator, thinks for 20-30 seconds, then presents her opinion for up to 2 minutes.
 - Peter has 1 minute to try to refute Martha's viewpoint or to ask questions. Martha has 1 minute to reply to Peter.
 - John has 1 minute to try to refute Martha's viewpoint or to ask questions. Martha has 1 minute to reply to John.

CROSSFIRE

GENERAL INFORMATION		
This activity takes between 15:00 and 20:00 minutes		
G 15:00	Y 17:00	R 20:00
Difficulty	 Intermediate Level.	
Format		
Index of Meeting Activities		

SKILLS TRAINED	
Public Speaking	Speechwriting
Argumentation	Debating
Intellectual Honesty	Logical Thinking
Critical Thinking	Creativity
Self-Control	Conflict Resolution
Time Management	Confidence
Research	

STRUCTURE OF THE ACTIVITY				
Main roles for this activity		G	Y	R
1. Meeting Leader (Required)	Explains the objectives of the activity	1:00	1:30	2:00
2. Crossfire Presenter (Required)	Presents the project to the club	Varies	Varies	Varies
3. Audience Member (From 1 to 10)	Participates	Varies	0:30	1:00
Other roles related to this activity				
Timer (Required) , Grammarian (Required) , General Evaluator for Speeches (Required) , Filler Word Counter (Required) , Body Language Evaluator (Optional) , Critical Thinking Evaluator (Optional) , Photographer (Optional) , Videographer (Optional)				

The goal of the Crossfire section is to prepare you to face inquisitive or outright hostile questions that might appear in debates, interviews, press conferences, or high-stakes meetings. If you're the presenter, you'll develop your ability to think quickly, answer in powerful and argumentative ways, and control your emotions and reactions. For the rest of the participants, it encourages them to research, think critically, and create solid arguments. The section requires the following roles.

- A Presenter who will be defending a specific decision or act.
- A Crossfire moderator that ensures the smooth and orderly development of the section. The Meeting Leader may act as a crossfire moderator if there no specific volunteer willing to do so.
- An arbitrary number of members that will act as "interested stakeholders". They can assume the role of employees, shareholders, board members, journalists, or simply concerned citizens, depending on the context. At least 2-3 participants are required for the section to proceed, and their identity shouldn't be known to the Presenter until the meeting itself. Meeting attendees - or even guests - may also decide to participate on the fly during the meeting.

■ Topic Selection

The person acting as a Presenter will select a topic to be defended. The topic needs to meet the following requirements:

- It must refer to a concrete decision with concrete (and identified) actors. The topic may not be a pie-in-the-sky general proposition.
 - ❌ "There should be peace in the world" (Not valid since it's just a wish - not a decision)
 - ❌ "We have decided to work in favor of world peace". (Not valid since it's not specific, nothing concrete was decided)
 - ✅ "To contribute to the development of a more peaceful world, my company - IBM - has decided to donate all of its profits to the United Nations".
 - ❌ "To contribute to the development of a more peaceful world, my company has decided to donate all of its profits to the United Nations". (Doesn't identify which company the presenter is role-playing)
- It must be a **real situation in a real context** so that all participants can research different facets of it. It cannot refer to fictitious or hypothetical scenarios on which it's impossible to gather data:

- ❌ “Due to China’s invasion of Mongolia, we’ve decided to deploy nuclear weapons in Taiwan and Japan”. (Not valid since China hasn’t invaded Mongolia)
 - ❌ As the president of Elbonia, I will defend that we implement a universal basic income of \$1000/month. (Not valid because the country of Elbonia doesn’t exist, so it’s impossible to research whether the proposal makes economic sense).
 - ✅ “Due to what we feel is an increasing hostility of China towards the regime in Mongolia, we’ve decided to deploy nuclear weapons in Taiwan and Japan.”
- It must be a decision or situation that **affects third parties**, and not only the presenter.
 - ❌ “I have decided to donate my salary to the United Nations” is not a valid subject because it represents a free individual decision that cannot be disputed on factual grounds.
 - ✅ “As the president of the company, I’ve decided that 10% of all employees’ salaries will be donated to the United Nations”.
- The decision must have **tangible, real effects**.
 - ❌ “As a member of the UN Research Panel on Tobacco, we’ve decided to advise people not to smoke” is not a valid subject because the advice can be ignored.
 - ❌ As the president of Facebook, I will defend that social networks are good. (Not appropriate because it doesn’t include any decision - just an opinion)
- **The effects must be important**, or at least they must be more than a nuisance to the affected people.
 - ❌ “To save money, IBM has decided that all employees should bring their own paper and pens” is not a valid subject because the effect of the decision is marginal.
 - ✅ “To save money, IBM has decided that all employees should use their own means for working, including their own computer.”
- The context of the situation and the actions must be at least partially known, and there should be public information about them so that the rest of the participants can research it. For example, the following subject is not valid: “As the president of our owners’ community, I’ve decided to stop payments to the company that services our lifts.”
- It’s not a requirement that the context or actors have to be previously known by all participants - it’s their responsibility to research the subject and prepare for it.
- The decision might be present or future. For example, the Presenter might be simply reporting about the outcomes of a decision made in the past. Note, however, that the event in the

past must be real. It may not be hypothetical.

- ✅ “Last year, we decided to impose steep tariffs on Chinese products, in line with our policy of Making America Great Again. Here are the wonderful effects that we’ve seen in our economy as a consequence.”.
- ❌ “Last year we decided to re-open the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. I’m here to report on the great effects that this has had on our economy”. (Not valid because Chernobyl has not been reopened)

The Presenter should share the situation/decision and his or her role at least several days in advance before the meeting (ideally - a full week in advance), as well as a short context in which that decision occurs. The Moderator or Meeting Leader may ask for clarifications or ask the presenter to pick a different topic if the chosen one doesn’t meet the above requirements. However, other members may not debate or ask questions on the subject after it’s presented. The final decision on whether a particular subject is valid for a Crossfire section rests upon the Vice President of Education.

■ Development

The section’s Moderator starts by briefly introducing the context and the Presenter - indicating its role - and gives him or her the floor. The Presenter will have between 2 and 4 minutes to explain and justify the decision that was made.

After that, the Moderator will give the floor in an orderly way to different participants. Each participant has a maximum of 1 minute to ask questions or make refuting statements, after which the Presenter will have up to 1 minute to reply. It’s ok for the same presenter to ask follow-up questions, although the Moderator should ensure that no single participant monopolizes the section. It is also ok if participants fire their questions interrupting the presenter or without being given the floor by the moderator, as long as it doesn’t end in a situation where everyone is talking at the same time.

The Moderator should not intervene in any other way except to guarantee that there’s some order and things are kept within the time limits. In particular, they shouldn’t express opinions, comment on answers or questions, and should make sure that the section develops in a fast and dynamic way.

The process continues until no more participants are willing to ask or until the time is over. After this, the Moderator will give the floor one last time to the Presenter for up to 1 minute for his or her concluding remarks.

Finally, once the section is over, the Moderator will ask for feedback and evaluation for the Presenter. Optionally, a private vote may be carried on whether the presenter defended their idea successfully.

■ Types of Questions

In real life, we don’t get to choose the questions that people ask us, so this section doesn’t have some of the limitations that colloquiums or debates have.

Except for insults or personal attacks, any other type of argument is valid, including:



- Questions that contain fallacious or faulty reasoning. It's the responsibility of the presenter to detect and point out logical inconsistencies.
- Questions that contain false or misleading data. Again, it's the responsibility of the presenter to handle that.
- Participants that instead of asking a question, just engage in a monologue to express their own opinion.
- Participants that ask questions or ramble about completely different (off-topic) subjects.

■ External Resources

- [“In the Line of Fire : How to handle tough questions .. when it counts”](#) from CEO-coach Jerry Weissman is a great book on handling difficult or hostile questions.
- [Mastering the Media](#) - A set of tips published by UNICEF for their employees.
- [How to answer difficult media questions.](#)

LANGUAGE IMPROVEMENT GAMES

GENERAL INFORMATION

This activity takes between 10:00 and 15:00 minutes		
G 10:00	Y 12:00	R 15:00
Difficulty	 Basic Level	
Format		
Index of Meeting Activities		

SKILLS TRAINED

Public Speaking	Listening
Confidence	Foreign Language
Language Richness	Research

STRUCTURE OF THE ACTIVITY

Main roles for this activity		G	Y	R
1. Language Improvement Leader (Required)	Explains the objectives of the activity	1:00	1:30	2:00
2. Language Improvement Leader (Required)	Leads the section	Varies	Varies	Varies
3. Audience Member (From 3 to 10)	Participates			
Other roles related to this activity				
General Evaluator for Speeches (Required), Timer (Required), Grammarian (Required), Filler Word Counter (Required), Photographer (Optional), Videographer (Optional), General Evaluator for Speeches (Required)				

Language Improvement Games is a section designed for improving the fluency, correctness, and vocabulary of members in clubs that use a language other than their native (for example, an English club in Spain).

■ Procedure

1. The decision to have a meeting containing a Language Improvement Games section is the responsibility of the Vice President of Education. The meeting is announced in advance, as well as the time allocated to the language improvement game. Usually, anywhere between 10 to 20 minutes are devoted to this section. It should not monopolize the meeting.
2. A special Game Master role is appointed, and it's up to her to select and conduct the game. The Game Master should explain, at the beginning of the section the game, its purpose, and its rules.
3. If a club decides to have a Language Improvement section in a meeting, it should focus on a single game and attempt to involve all attendees (or, at least, as many as possible). Physical activities during games should be avoided.
4. The Language Improvement Game section is evaluated by the Meeting Evaluator.
5. The Timer needs to time only the overall duration of the section.
6. The Filler-Word counter does not evaluate this section. The Grammarians should only focus on the most significant issues (if any) and not strive to provide an individual report for all participants.

■ Language Games

There are literally hundreds of possible games that can be played. Here are some of the most popular ones. Each club has a unique atmosphere and preferences for what kind of games they prefer to play.

Chained Stories

The Game Master says the first one or two sentences of a story. Each member, in turn, will have to add one sentence to the story.

“Fortunately - Unfortunately”

A variation of the above, in which members have to add one sentence to the story, but each sentence has to start with or include either “Fortunately,” or “Unfortunately,” - and it should be the opposite of the previous member.

For example:

Game Master: A big, loud bang grabbed John and transported him back to reality.

Member 1: Unfortunately, everything was pitch black when he opened his eyes.

Member 2: Fortunately, John always kept a flashlight in the upper drawer, as power outages were frequent in this area.

Member 3: So frequent, in fact that unfortunately, the batteries had run out of juice a long time ago.

Chained words

Members participate in turns. The Gamemaster starts with a word, and each succeeding member has to come up with a word that starts with the ending letter of the previous word and bears some relation to it.

For example:

Game Master: Airplane

Member 1: Experience

Member 2: Exotic

Member 3: Caribbean

Member 4: Navigation

Niceties

Members participate in turn. Each member has to compliment the previous member. The compliment should be realistic and can refer both to personality, skills, or physical appearance.

Puzzles and Riddles

The game master prepares a series of riddles and presents them to the audience for solving.

For example:

1. What word is always misspelled? (Answer: "incorrectly")
2. Give me food, and I will live; give me water, and I will die. What am I? (Answer: Fire)

20 questions

A member thinks of a thing (it must be a noun), and members take turns in asking yes/no questions until they guess it. A maximum of 20 questions is allowed per try.

For example:

Member 1: Is it alive? Answer: no

Member 2: Is it in this room? Answer: yes

Member 3: Does it fit in the palm of a hand? Answer: yes

Clerihews

Each member is given 5 minutes to come up with a Clerihew, and they read them in turn.

A Clerihew *\ˈkler-i-ˈhyü * is a four-line biographical poem style invented by Edmund Clerihew Bentley, a popular English novelist and humorist of the 20th century. The main properties of a clerihew are:

7. It is of biographical nature or revolves around a famous person mentioned in the first line. Often the first line contains only the name of the person.
8. The rhyme structure is AABB - 1st line rhymes with the 2nd one, then the 3rd rhymes with the 4th.

9. It is irregular: usually, the 3rd and 4th lines are longer.
10. It is satirical or comical, poking fun at the famous person or showing him in from a new or unexpected perspective.

Some examples of Clerihews are:

Word Race

Our art teacher, Mr. Shaw,
Really knows how to draw.
But his awful paintings
Have caused many faintings.

William Shakespeare
Made a career
Writing poems and lots of verse
Which scholars praise, and students curse.

Tim Berners-Lee
Invented HTTP
Thus the world wide web was born
For Nigerian Diplomats and porn

Stephen King,
Keeps on writing.
Each volume as good as the last.
I only wish I could read that fast.

Members are divided into two or more teams. The Gamemaster picks a letter ("C") and a topic at random ("Animals"), and each team has to say in turn one new word starting with that letter and from that category. A team that cannot think of a word within the allotted time or repeats a previous word is disqualified. The process continues until only one team remains.

Some ideas for categories are:

- Animals
- Professions
- Things that are big
- Things that are round
- Things that are green
- Games and Sports
- ...etc.

Pictionary

This game hardly needs any introduction. Usually, what works best is:

- Divide the attendees into teams, with all having the possibility of trying to guess the word.
- Have a single person drawing for the whole meeting. Depending on the facilities, the drawing can be performed either on a whiteboard, on a flipchart, or on a computer whose screen is being projected).

One of the keys in this game is setting up clear rules beforehand. For example:

- No letters, numbers, or symbols may be drawn.
- The member drawing cannot interact with the audience or answer questions in any way.

Absurd Headlines

Members are given 5 minutes to come up with an absurd and comic news headline, and then each member has between 30 seconds and 1 minute to read the headline in a serious, news-anchor way and to elaborate a bit on it.

Sample headlines could be:

Cure for cancer discovered and forgotten by Alzheimer-stricken professor. "I've got it on the tip of my tongue, just give me a minute... wait, who are you?", he says.

Meteorite hit imminent. The world ends this Sunday at 14:36

Scientist invents mind-reading machine. Discovers there's actually nothing to read in most people

The UN publishes "Quality of Life Statistics". North Koreans the happiest people on Earth

SENSORY WORDS

You've probably always heard that great public speakers use very vivid language. Painting an image (or further - a complete sensory experience) in your audience's minds is a way to guarantee that your speech will be remembered. Sensory experiences are the first step to eliciting emotions in the public.

There's solid scientific research behind this often-repeated advice:

- A study published in The Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology showed that sensory words are processed faster by the brain.
- Another study published in Brain and Language showed that the brain's sensory areas were activated upon hearing sensory words in a similar way as if they were actually experiencing that feeling.

Note, however, that the above findings are related mainly to oral speech. In written language, the effect may well prove to be the opposite.

■ Sensory words

SIGHT

Bleary	Blurred	Brilliant	Colorless	Colorful
Dazzling	Dim	Dingy	Faded	Foggy
Faint	Flashy	Gaudy	Glance	Gleaming
Glimpse	Glittering	Gloomy	Glossy	Golden
Glowing	Hazy	Shadowy	Shimmering	Sparkling
Shiny	Streaked	Striped	Contoured	Fancy

SMELL

Aroma	Fragrance	Odor	Scent	Perfume
Flavor	Fetid	Smoky	Sting	Tang
Musky	Flowery	Putrid	Polluted	Odorless

HEARING

Loud	Quiet	Shriek	Yell	Bang
Bang	Buzz	Drip	Sputter	Crackle
Blast	Wail	Hum	Chirp	Growl
Hiss	Howl	Murmur	Ring	Roar

TOUCH

Abrasive	Balmy	Bumpy	Coarse	Cottony
Damp	Dry	Elastic	Cold	Fluffy
Goosey	Glassy	Smooth	Furry	Leathery
Oily	Pulpy	Powdery	Sharp	Spongy

TASTE

Acid	Appetizing	Bitter	Bittersweet	Crispy
Creamy	Juicy	Delicious	Tasty	Salted
Ripe	Savory	Buttery	Charred	Peppery
Sugary	Sweet	Stale	Putrid	Savory

MOTION

Stillness	Vibrating	Flickering	Pounding	Jumping
Pulsating	Quietude	Rhythmic	Restless	Slow
Dizzy	Rotating	Swift	Measured	Languid

■ Sensory Words Exercise

This exercise has several purposes:

- Enhances the richness of your language.
- Trains your creativity
- Makes you think in terms of sensory words and allows you to practice creating vivid descriptions.

The leader of the section presents a picture of an environment that is rich in detail. It may be urban or rural, or it may be an uninhabited place. It may be a drawing or a photograph. Here are some examples of the kinds of pictures that may be suitable (click on the images to enlarge):





for the grammarian), the density of sensory words can be reported at the end of the meeting. For this purpose, the participants hand over to the grammarian their written fragments.

Every speaker should take no more than 1-2 minutes to read their fragment so that the activity leader can pick ask at least 3-4 members to share their composition.

The exercise participants are asked to imagine themselves in that environment and describe in a few sentences a full sensory experience.

This is not a speech improvisation exercise. Unless all members are native speakers, the leader should give them around 5 minutes of silence after presenting the picture so that they can come up with a speech fragment. It's ok if they read the fragment - it's not a memorization exercise either. It's important to resist the temptation to turn this exercise into a story writing exercise. The goal is actually the opposite - being able to freeze time and describe a scene fully without developing it.

If a participant is not very fluid in English, a hint could be using the following pattern:

"I **see** ...
I **smell**...
I **hear** ...
I **can feel** ...
I **taste** ..."

The pattern itself is not as important as providing the full set of senses. The participant may refer to elements that are not in the picture but can be reasonably presumed to be appropriate for the environment or related in some way to it.

Here's what a sample description could look like for the first picture:
"I'm barefoot in the magical forest. My feet feel the **soft** moss, **mushy** under my weight. The morning dew has **painted** everything in a **glittery green**, with **golden sparkles** here and there. The forest has just awoken, and there's a feeling of stillness and quietude. A silence that is only pierced by the occasional chirps of the robins. The air is **cold**, but not in an unpleasant, icy, and painful way. It's fresh and pure. It carries the fragrance of the berries for which this forest is famous. The pleasant flavor evokes memories of my childhood, **looking eagerly** at my granma as she prepared her **delicious** berry pie. Not even the ambrosia of the gods could beat its **sweetness**."


In a more sophisticated version of the exercise (and more demanding


LISTENING EVALUATION

GENERAL INFORMATION

This activity takes between 4:00 and 6:00 minutes

G 4:00 **Y** 5:00 **R** 6:00

Difficulty  Basic Level

Format 

[Index of Meeting Activities](#)

SKILLS TRAINED

Listening	Focus
Curiosity	Confidence

STRUCTURE OF THE ACTIVITY

Main roles for this activity		G	Y	R
1. Listening Evaluator (Required)	Explains the objectives of the activity	1:00	1:30	2:00
2. Listening Evaluator (Required)	Asks questions	4:00	5:00	6:00
Other roles related to this activity				
Timer (Required) , Grammarian (Required) , Body Language Evaluator (Optional) , Critical Thinking Evaluator (Optional) , Photographer (Optional)				



One of the biggest problems of interpersonal communication is that people don't actually listen to each other. They spend more time thinking about what they are going to say when it's their turn to speak rather than concentrating and actively listening to what the other person is saying.

However, listening is a crucial skill nowadays. It would be challenging for a leader to move anyone to action if they perceive they are not being listened to and their concerns are not addressed.

The Listening Evaluation is a special section whose goal is to motivate people to listen carefully. It is lead by a distinct role called the "Listening Evaluator". He or she writes down, as the meeting proceeds, a series of questions about what has been said and by whom. Then, at the end of the meeting and during the section of Listening Evaluation, he asks random attendees these questions. The questions should be of general nature and not be excessively specific - the goal is not to have members taking notes during the meeting. Check the Listening Evaluator role documentation for specific examples.

SPEECHWRITING

GENERAL INFORMATION

This activity takes between 10:00 and 15:00 minutes		
G 10:00	Y 12:00	R 15:00
Difficulty	 Basic Level	
Format		
Index of Meeting Activities		

SKILLS TRAINED

Public Speaking	Speechwriting
Argumentation	Intellectual Honesty
Logical Thinking	Problem Analysis
Creativity	Empathy
Curiosity	Language Richness
Research	

STRUCTURE OF THE ACTIVITY

Main roles for this activity		G	Y	R
1. Speechwriting Leader (Required)	Explains the objectives of the activity	1:00	1:30	2:00
2. Speechwriting Leader (Required)	Presents the project to the club	5:00	6:00	7:00
3. Speechwriting Leader (Required)	Leads the section	10:00	13:00	15:00
4. Audience Member (From 3 to 10)	Participates	1:00	1:30	2:00
Other roles related to this activity				
Timer (Required) , Grammarians (Required) , Body Language Evaluator (Optional) , Critical Thinking Evaluator (Optional) , Photographer (Optional)				

As the name implies, the speechwriting section's goal is to help members become better at writing speeches and encourage members to think creatively. It can be considered as a mini-workshop within the meeting. A special role - the SpeechWriting Leader - is in charge of it.

The section requires some work before the meeting itself.

■ Before the meeting

The Speechwriting Leader selects the goal of the section, which should be developing a particular speechwriting skill, such as:

- Creating compelling openings.
- Powerful speech conclusions.
- Using vivid language.
- Using rhetorical devices.
- Using quotes.
- Using data.
- Using a particular type of story.
- Using personal memories.
- Using anecdotes.

- ... etc... You can get more ideas on subjects to work on just by looking at the index of the Educational Paths, especially the Basic one.

The section's goal can even be a sub-topic of the above categories, such as "Opening with a challenging question".

The Speechwriting Leader should validate the selected subject with the Vice President of Education of the club to ensure that it hasn't been already done recently and that it is aligned with the educational path that the VPE has designed.

Once the goal has been chosen, the Speechwriting leader should research ways good speeches use the selected topic. For example, if the topic was "powerful conclusions", the speechwriting leader should research what constitutes a powerful conclusion, examples of such conclusions in speeches, etc.

Unless the goal is working on speech openings, the Speechwriting Leader should select a speech that members will use as a starting point. The speech should be a pre-existing one, in which the parts to work on have been omitted (For example, if the goal is working on conclusions, the end of the speech should be removed), and it should be shared before the meeting.

■ At the meeting

During the meeting itself, the section proceeds as follows:

- The Speechwriting Leader explains and delivers a short 5-7 min presentation that summarizes the results of his/her research and provides tips and guidance on how to achieve it.
- Then, he presents a situation or topic on which a speech is needed. The topic can be stated in a way similar to the Hot Questions. For example:

"You're the president of the country, just emerging after the COVID19 crisis. Many people have died, the economy is in tatters, and your goal is to give hope to your people. We're going to focus on writing a great speech opening for this speech. You need to give hope to people and make them believe that we will overcome the current situation. "

- If the speechwriting section's subject is something other than speech openings, the Speechwriting leader can offer members to improve someone else's speech. For example, if working on speech conclusions, he may share with members John Kennedy's inauguration address (without the ending) and ask members to think about a possible ending to that speech. If the subject is "visual aids", he may share the full speech and ask members to think of visual aids they could use to increase the speech's effectiveness.
- Next, the Speechwriting Leader gives attendees 5 to 10 minutes of silence so that they can write down their ideas or improvements.
- Finally, the Leader asks members to share their improvements and ideas and asks for feedback on them. If the section's subject was trying to come up with part of a speech that was removed (a conclusion, an opening, etc.), it's very instructive if the Leader shares the actual part that was removed so that members can compare it with their own ideas. This doesn't mean that the real ending is necessarily better or that it's how it should be done - it merely shows the choices that the original speech author made.

ANALYTICAL TEAM REPORTS

GENERAL INFORMATION

This activity takes between 3:00 and 5:00 minutes

G 3:00 **Y** 4:00 **R** 5:00

Difficulty  Basic Level

Format 

[Index of Meeting Activities](#)

SKILLS TRAINED

Public Speaking	Constructive Feedback
Logical Thinking	Tolerance
Time Management	Listening
Focus	

STRUCTURE OF THE ACTIVITY

Main roles for this activity		G	Y	R
1. Timer (Required)	Provides a report on how the participants did	1:00	1:30	2:00
2. Grammarian (Required)	Provides a report on how the participants did	1:00	2:00	3:00
3. Filler Word Counter (Required)	Provides a report on how the participants did	1:00	2:00	3:00
4. Body Language Evaluator (Optional)	Provides a report on how the participants did	1:00	2:00	3:00
5. Critical Thinking Evaluator (Optional)	Provides a report on how the participants did	4:00	5:00	6:00
Other roles related to this activity				
General Evaluator for Feedback (Required) , Photographer (Optional) , Videographer (Optional)				



During this section, the members of the Analytical Team present their reports.

The order in which they participate isn't really relevant. Still, it's customary that the Timer intervenes the last to make sure that he times even his fellow members from the Analytical team.

All analytical team members must keep a detailed, per-participant tally of all the items for which they're responsible (e.g., the Timer should keep track of the time each speaker used, the Filler word counter should keep track of the filler words of each speaker, etc.). However, it's not necessary to recite all the numbers during this section. The analytical team may focus on general tips, highlight best and worst performers, offer advice, etc. and send the detailed report either by EMail to all members or post it on the club's website or some other system. What is important is that every individual participant should learn, one way or another, how they specifically performed at the meeting.

CLUB BUSINESS

GENERAL INFORMATION

This activity takes between Varies and Varies minutes		
G Varies	Y Varies	R Varies
Difficulty	 Basic Level	
Format		
Index of Meeting Activities		

SKILLS TRAINED

Public Speaking	Leadership
Management	Interpersonal
Confidence	Delegation
Team Building	

STRUCTURE OF THE ACTIVITY

Main roles for this activity	G	Y	R
1. Meeting Leader (Required)	Leads the section	Varies	Varies
Other roles related to this activity			
Photographer (Optional) , Videographer (Optional)			

The Club Business section is a section near the end of the meeting where different club life aspects are announced or discussed.



Some possible examples of topics for this section are:

- Determining who wants to be the Meeting Leader for the next meeting
- Asking for other roles for the next meeting
- Announcements of contests, events, workshops, club parties, etc.
- Club Officer Elections
- Other announcements of interest to members.

The section is led by the Meeting Leader, who gives the floor to the people who want to make the corresponding announcement.

Asking for roles for the next meeting should be done by the Meeting Leader itself. At least the next meeting leader should be clear at the end of the meeting - this allows the club to have continuity and a "person in charge" to fill in the agenda. If this is not done, the responsibility may end up in "no man's land", or always on the shoulders of the VP of Education.

MEETING EVALUATION

GENERAL INFORMATION		
This activity takes between 4:00 and 6:00 minutes		
G 4:00	Y 5:00	R 6:00
Difficulty	 Basic Level	
Format		
Index of Meeting Activities		

SKILLS TRAINED	
Public Speaking	Argumentation
Constructive Feedback	Critical Thinking
Interpersonal	Time Management

STRUCTURE OF THE ACTIVITY				
Main roles for this activity		G	Y	R
1. General Evaluator for Speeches (Required)	Provides feedback for the participants	4:00	5:00	6:00
2. General Evaluator for Feedback (Required)	Provides feedback for the participants	4:00	5:00	6:00
3. Meeting Evaluator (Required)	Provides feedback for the participants	4:00	5:00	6:00
Other roles related to this activity				
Photographer (Optional) , Videographer (Optional)				

The Meeting Evaluation section is led by the [Meeting Evaluator](#). The goal of the section is to evaluate the roles that haven't had their own separate evaluation. This usually includes evaluating:

- The Meeting Leader
- All the Evaluators (including the Listening and Body Language Evaluators if the club has them).
- The Timer
- The Grammarian
- The Filler Word Counter

The Meeting Evaluator also evaluates the meeting overall:

- Did it start on time?
- Was the venue prepared?
- Were there any disturbances, and were they handled properly?
- Were the guests properly treated?
- Was the purpose of the Club and Agora Speakers International explained at the beginning of the meeting?
- Any other thoughts about improving the meeting.

If there is a guest from another Agora club (or any other public speaking organization), it's usually an excellent idea to give the Meeting Evaluator role. These guests are a real treasure in terms of the number of suggestions and ideas they can offer since they can compare their own club experience to what they have seen.


MEETING CLOSURE

GENERAL INFORMATION

This activity takes between 1:00 and 2:00 minutes

G 1:00 **Y** 1:30 **R** 2:00

Difficulty  Basic Level

Format 

[Index of Meeting Activities](#)

SKILLS TRAINED

Public Speaking	Leadership
Management	Interpersonal
Confidence	

STRUCTURE OF THE ACTIVITY

Main roles for this activity	G	Y	R
1. Meeting Leader (Required)	Varies	Varies	Varies
2. Meeting Facilitator (Required)	Varies	0:30	1:00

For closing the meeting, the Meeting Leader gives back the floor to the person that opened the meeting (usually the Meeting Facilitator), and he or she declares the meeting adjourned.

Some clubs like to use a gavel or a bell to mark the end of the meeting.



Usually, if the club continues with some social activity, it's the moment to announce it.

"Thank you, everyone, for being here today and I hope to see you at our next meeting on Saturday 24, 7 pm. And now let's enjoy some beers in the nearby Pub. I declare the meeting adjourned".

CHAPTER 5

MEETING ROLES

A Timer signaling that the speaker has fulfilled the minimum required time - Mówcy Gorzów club in Poland

GENERAL INFORMATION

Difficulty: Basic Level

10 TO 30 MIN.
Preparation time.

1 TO 2 MIN.
Speaking time.

DETAILS

This role is evaluated by Meeting Evaluator

Sample Video

This role may also be performed by:
Meeting Leader

Index of Meeting Roles

SKILLS TRAINED:

- Problem Analysis
- Creativity
- Conflict Resolution
- Time Management
- Confidence
- Team Building
- Risk Management

MEETING FACILITATOR

The Meeting Facilitator is the person that is in charge of making sure that the venue is properly prepared and - if you're on-premises that are not yours - that it is properly cleaned up afterward. Of course, he may ask for help in this.



Visakha Orators, India. Club President and Agora Ambassador Koka Prasad, leading a meeting.

The Meeting Facilitator should arrive well in advance of the scheduled starting time of the meeting. He or she should:

Prepares the venue - tables, chairs, lectern, location of club and Agora symbols/banners, signs, posters, etc.

- Prepares the tools that the Timer will use to measure and signal the time (stopwatch, "traffic" lights colored cardboard, etc.)
- Ensures that there's proper air conditioning or circulation in the room (opening the windows, etc.)
- Ensures that the agenda for the meeting is printed and that there are enough agendas for the members
- Ensures that there are enough feedback forms and pens.
- If applicable, check that the lighting, sound system, and projection equipment work properly.
- If the club has recording or photography equipment, set it up and prepare it for recording. Also, if there is a projector or other A/V equipment, it should be connected and tested.

Usually, the Meeting Facilitator is also the one that opens and closes the meeting.

An opening statement could be something like

"Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to the meeting of the Silent Towns Agora Speakers Club, the first Agora Speakers Club on Mars. I want to give the floor to our Meeting Leader of the day, Mr. Walter Gripp. Please help me welcome him with a warm round of applause."

After the introduction and during the applause, wait on stage till the Meeting Leader comes, shake his hand, and retreat. The floor is now his.

A closing statement could be something like:
"Thank you for coming to our meeting. The meeting is now closed,

and I invite you all to stay for some beers at the nearby Martian Bar.”

Some clubs like to use a gavel for signaling the opening and closing of the meeting.

■ **Specifics for online meetings**



For online meetings, the Meeting Facilitator is in charge of all the details to ensure that the meeting actually happens and people can access it. These include:

- Scheduling the meeting on the platform that the club uses and creating and distributing the link for the next meeting.
- Ensure that the online meeting is up and running no later than 10 minutes before the scheduled starting time.
- Accepting people into the meeting if there's a "Waiting room" functionality or similar.
- Ensuring that the Meeting Leader has hosting privileges during the meeting.
- Handling privately or publicly any technical issues or questions that arise during the meeting, such as (for example) a participant not knowing how to share its screen.
- Working with the members that have technical issues in a breakout room or separate meeting to help fix the issues (note that the meeting facilitator is not expected to provide technical support, but merely an off-meeting partner with which to fix an equipment issue without disturbing the main room)
- If the club records its meeting, then - recording the meeting, copying the recording to its permanent location (e.g., dropbox, a website, youtube, etc.), and sharing the link as per the club's policies.

Please note that the Meeting Facilitator is not in charge of providing all the infrastructure required for the above - he's merely a user of an existing platform. Providing and configuring the platform initially is a shared task for all the club members, especially the most tech-savvy ones. For example, if the club decides to use Zoom, then the club officers should create and configure the Zoom account and manage the access credentials, while the task of the meeting facilitator would merely be logging into the platform and setting up the meeting.

Evaluation Card

Evaluation of the Facilitator and the Environment

Member	Evaluator	Allotted Time (min) <input type="radio"/> Green <input type="radio"/> Yellow <input type="radio"/> Red	Actual Time
Club name (or location/venue if not in a club setting)	Do you believe the goals were met? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly No <input type="checkbox"/> No		Date

Was the environment(venue) suitable for the meeting? Why?

Were all attendees seated comfortably?

Were there any noises or interruptions? Please describe

Were the temperature and lightning comfortable?

Were all the materials and equipment ready for the meeting?

Were there appropriate signs leading to the specific meeting location room within the venue?

Did any guests or members express difficulties in finding the meeting location? What kind of difficulties?

(Online meetings only) Did the facilitator make sure that there were no disturbances during the meeting?

How can the environment be improved?

Please write on the back if you need more space 

MEETING LEADER

GENERAL INFORMATION

Difficulty

Basic Level



10 TO 30 MIN.

Preparation time.



1 TO 2 MIN.

Speaking time.

DETAILS

This role is evaluated by Meeting Evaluator

Sample Video

This role may also be performed by:
Meeting Leader

Index of Meeting Roles

SKILLS TRAINED

- Public Speaking
- Argumentation
- Leadership
- Self-Control
- Management
- Interpersonal
- Time Management
- Listening
- Confidence
- Team Building
- Positivity
- Scheduling
- Focus



Agora Speakers Madrid Patricia Sanz, leading the meeting.

The Meeting Leader is the person in charge of preparing and leading the meeting, giving the floor to each person according to the planned agenda, greeting them on the stage, sending them off, and ensuring that the meeting flows smoothly.

Here's how you should proceed when you're the meeting leader for a meeting.

■ Preparing the Meeting

Your work as a meeting leader starts well before the meeting itself, and you have three main tasks:

- Speak to the Vice President of Education to determine the planned agenda for the next club meeting.
- Ensure that all roles of the meeting agenda are covered.
- Come up with a short novel introduction for each of the people performing the role.

Filling the agenda

If your club has a Vice President of Education (VPE), he or she will provide the next meeting's agenda. Otherwise (especially if the club is still very new and still hasn't elected the club officers), the agenda will be the [basic one](#) specified in the documentation for new clubs.

You should actively ask for volunteers for all the roles present there.

For example, you could message club members saying:

"Hi everyone, for the next meeting, we're still missing a Timer, a Meeting Evaluator, and a Hot Questions Master. Who wants to volunteer?"

If there are not enough volunteers, you could even be more proactive:

"Peter, will you be attending the next meeting? How about being the Timer?"

TIP

The meeting leader should always seek the advice of the club's Vice President for Education when looking for people to fill specific roles.

Preparing Introductions

During the meeting, one of your tasks will be introducing the members who will be performing the different roles.

In terms of introduction, you could mention the member's profession, or how long he has been with the club, or whether he's a club officer, etc. An excellent practice that is followed in many clubs is for the Meeting Leader to contact all participants several days before the meeting and ask all of them some question such as "what is your favorite movie?", "if you could have a superpower, which would it be?", etc., and then use the answer during the introduction.

■ During the meeting

Since the Meeting Leader is also the one who should handle any unexpected situations (such as a person with a role not showing up at the meeting), it's a good idea to arrive at least 10-15 minutes before the scheduled starting time of the meeting.

Usually, the Meeting Leader is introduced by the Meeting Facilitator. Still, clubs can decide otherwise (for example, they might decide that it is always the Club President, the one opening the meetings, some other officer, etc.). In any case, if you were introduced by someone else, don't forget to shake their hand and start by thanking them by

their name before moving on.

Some things you can say at the beginning:

- Welcome everyone
- Ask everyone to turn their mobile phones off or in silent mode
- Explain the purpose of Agora Speakers International and the club
- Ask guests to introduce themselves (as explained in the "Taking care of guests" section).
- If the club records the meetings, notify that the meeting will be recorded, where the recording will be available, and when the recording starts.

A typical introduction could be something like:

"Thank you, Mr. (name of the person introducing you), and welcome everyone to our meeting. Before we start, I'd like to ask everyone to please turn off your mobile phones or put them in silent mode. Agora Speakers International is a worldwide nonprofit organization devoted to helping people reach their full potential as communicators and leaders. (you can add more details about Agora or your club). We're here to learn and help each other learn. Please respect the speakers and don't talk while they are speaking."

You can also add some short anecdotes, jokes, or anything that you might consider useful to break the ice or spice up the meeting. For example, instead of the previous formal request for everyone to turn their mobile phones off, you could use something like: *"At the last Christmas Concert conducted by William Christie, during the aria of Handel's Messiah, a mobile phone went off. Immediately, Christie asked the musicians to stop and then directly faced the audience member and yelled at him, "You've just ruined one of the most beautiful passages of one of the most beautiful works ever written. OUT, NOW!"... Now, I won't go as far as Christie if this happens during this meeting, but for sure, you won't be making any friends if your mobile phone rings during the meeting, so please turn them off NOW."*

In any case, try not to use too much time for this introduction. A maximum of 2-3 minutes should be enough. After this general introduction, proceed to introduce the guests.



TIP

Some clubs have a very good tradition of introducing the recently joined members to the club and handing them a pin, a membership certificate, or similar.

Some possible humorous formulas could be:

"Today, I'd like to welcome our newest club members. First I'd like to introduce Peter, who, after being a guest for six - SIX no less - meetings, FINALLY decided to join. Let's everyone give warm applause to Peter while he comes to the stage."

"Unlike Peter, with Anna, it was love at first sight. The very moment she crossed the doors of the club, she knew she would join, and so she did - immediately after her first meeting. Welcome to the stage, Ana, please a round of applause for her".

With time, each Meeting Leader develops his or her own "style" of leading meetings. Unless you are leading a formal event outside of Agora with a strictly set protocol about what to say and when to say it, there's no "correct" style, and you should find the one you're comfortable with. With practice, it will inevitably emerge by itself. Accept it and let it develop. And as with speeches, it's extremely important that you let your natural style be, instead of trying to copy the style of someone else.

After you have finished introducing the new members, you should introduce the guests, usually by asking them to state their name, how they learned about the club and a couple of sentences about themselves.



Agora Speakers Madrid Patricia Sanz, leading the meeting.



It's important to remember that, as a Meeting Leader, your role is to make others look great. You shouldn't be the star of the meeting, but merely someone that helps others shine.

As such, when you give the floor to someone and after you shake hands with him, discreetly retreat to a location that gives the stage completely to the speaker. See how in the picture to the left, the Meeting Leader has completely moved away from the spotlight, and all the attention of the audience is focused on the person speaking.

■ Giving and taking the floor

For each participating member, provide a short introduction, explain what the member is going to do, and then lead the applause by being the first to applaud. The applause should last until the speaker is on stage. At that point, extend your hand, wait for the handshake, then retreat.

Applauses - especially at the end - are not only courtesy, but they are also a way to make the member feel comfortable and appreciated. They help defuse the tension and nervousness of the speaker. As such, they are a significant factor in creating a friendly environment.

Try not to read as you're introducing the next participant. This doesn't mean that you have to memorize the details of every single participant. Instead, when a participant is on stage, read and memorize just what

you want to say about the next one.

While the participant is on stage, do not intervene in any way. Not even if the participant “goes blank”, as that usually only worsens the situation. Allow him to recover by his own means.



Chris Callaghan (right) - Agora Ambassador and President of the Agora Speakers Queenswood Club in Pretoria, South Africa, greeting speaker Aaron Masemola (left).

Once the participant has finished speaking, people will usually applaud naturally. If they don't and it's clear that the participant has concluded, you should lead the applause again. Approach him and again shake hands, continuing to applaud after the participant has returned to his seat.

After the applause has died out, thank the participant, and at this point, you can add some humorous or relaxing comment about what the audience just heard. Your humor should always be positive and never disparaging or judgmental.

18:05	Timer	Peter Johnson	Explanation of the role			1:00
18:07	Grammarian	David Brin	Explanation of the role and word of the day	1:00	1:30	2:00
18:10	Thought of the Day	Martha Robertson		2:00	2:30	3:00
18:15	1st Speaker Evaluator	Sania Renic	Explain the objectives of the speech	1:00	1:30	2:00

“Timing is critical in public speaking, and in today's meeting, our timer will be Peter Johnson. The superpower he would like to have is flying like Superman because that would allow him to travel anywhere and visit many exotic and inaccessible places... without having to go through airport security ... Peter, please come on stage and tell us about your role.” (start the applause, Peter comes to the stage, you shake hands with him and retreat. Once Peter has finished explaining his role, you take over):

“Thank you, Peter. Make sure to finish your speeches on time because we all want to go home tonight and not exactly flying. Next, we have our Grammarian of the day, David Brin, from Canada, and the superpower he wanted to have is mind reading. So don't even think of making grammatical mistakes. Let's give a warm welcome to David.” (start the applause, David comes to the stage, you shake hands with him and retreat. Once David has finished explaining his role, you take over):

and the process repeats...



Sometimes you might be tempted to ask the introductory question to the participant itself, right before his role. This doesn't work well - it forces the speaker to switch to a completely different mood from what the speech may require. Imagine the awkwardness of the moment when a speaker has prepared a speech about the Rwanda Genocide, for example, and you ask which is his or her favorite cartoon character before the speech.

As a meeting leader, it's your responsibility to introduce the member - don't delegate that to him or herself.

The beginning of the speech is the most delicate part of any speech - don't ruin that part by asking the speaker to do things that will destroy that moment. If you want to have any Q&A moments, share funny anecdotes, comment, etc., do that after the speaker has concluded, and always in alignment with the mood of the speech. If the speaker has just finished a somber speech about animal extinction, don't crack a joke about Peppa Pig.

■ Handling disturbances

As a Meeting Leader, it is your responsibility to ensure that the meeting proceeds smoothly and timely.

This means that if you notice something that is disturbing the meeting, you should act on it. Disturbances can include:

- Mobile phones
- People walking in and out
- People becoming noisy
- People taking pictures with flashes

These actions - and many more - should be addressed, but **never while a speaker is speaking**. (Speakers do not need or want to be babysat, and they also need themselves to learn to deal with these unexpected circumstances). Wait for the speaker to finish, and then from the stage ask politely - in general, never pointing at anyone in particular - for that behavior to stop, always explaining why. For example:

“I'd like to ask everyone not to take pictures with flashes as the flash can be very distracting and unpleasant due to its brightness to the speaker”.

or

“I'd like to ask everyone not to walk in and out during the speech as it is very distracting for the audience. Please wait till the speech is over.”

■ Concluding the meeting

At the end of the meeting, the Meeting Leader should ask for roles for the next meeting. At least the next Meeting Leader should be appointed at this time, so that there's continuity and that the preparation of the next meeting doesn't become “no one's responsibility”. Although

the agenda for the next meeting is not yet set, some roles must be present in all meetings so that you can ask for volunteers for them:

- Meeting Leader
- Timer
- Grammarian
- Meeting Evaluator.

■ **Specifics for Online Meetings**

The Meeting Leader acts as a host or administrator of the online meeting. Although the technicalities of allowing access into the meeting are handled by the Meeting Facilitator, during the online meeting, the Meeting Leader:

- Mutes or unmutes participants as needed (this is especially important for handling disturbances, feedback loops, etc.)
- Instructs participants to work with the Meeting Facilitator for solving technical issues (using the breakout room facility if needed)
- Asks for members to turn on their webcams so that all members can be seen.
- Enables screen or whiteboard sharing.
- Creates breakout rooms if the activities so require it.
- Removes participants from meetings if their behavior prevents the meeting from progressing normally.
- Monitor the members' videos and verify that they are participating in the meeting from an appropriate and safe environment, asking them to leave if this is not the case. For example, if a member participates while driving, the Meeting Leader notify the participant privately and remove him from the meeting until the situation is resolved.

Evaluation Card

Evaluation of the Meeting Leader

Member	Evaluator	Allotted Time (min) <input type="radio"/> Green <input type="radio"/> Yellow <input type="radio"/> Red	Actual Time
Club name (or location/venue if not in a club setting)	Do you believe the goals were met? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly No <input type="checkbox"/> No		Date

How did the meeting leader ensure that all the roles of the agenda were filled up correctly?

How did the meeting leader handle any role no-shows (if applicable)?

Did the meeting start and end on time? If not, why?

Did the meeting leader ensure a smooth meeting? How?

What kind of introduction did the meeting leader provide for the club?

What kind of introduction did the meeting leader provide for Agora Speakers International?

How did the meeting leader introduce guests?

How did the meeting leader introduce new members?

What problems (if any) appeared during the meeting and how did the meeting leader overcome them?

How did the meeting leader introduce each of the participants when giving the floor to them?

Did the meeting leader encourage applause as each of the participants was coming to / leaving the stage?

Did the meeting leader avoid taking too much protagonism over the participants? How?

Did the meeting leader explicitly ask for volunteers for roles for the next meeting, including especially the next meeting leader?

Did the meeting leader explicitly indicate when the next meeting would take place?

What did you like from the way the meeting leader led the meeting?

How can the meeting leader improve further?

Please write on the back if you need more space



TIMER

GENERAL INFORMATION

Difficulty	Basic Level
10 TO 15 MIN. Preparation time.	
3 TO 6 MIN. Speaking time.	

DETAILS

This role is evaluated by Meeting Evaluator

Sample Video

Index of Meeting Roles

SKILLS TRAINED:

- Public Speaking
- Listening
- Confidence
- Focus

As the name implies, the Timer measures and records the timing of all participants and provides a report at the end. During their participation, he provides them with three visual signals – green, yellow and red – to inform them of how they’re doing with their timing.

Timing signals are the only indication of the time that is given to speakers. It’s very important that speakers don’t see the actual time they have used or that remains. This is done to train speakers to develop a precise “inner sense of time”, since in most public speaking venues, there is no such indication anyway, and not even timing signals are present.



AGORA SPEAKERS MADRID
Club 1 - info@agoraspeakers.org

Nov 26th , 2016

Time	Role	Assigned to	Description	G	Y	R
18:00	Meeting Leader	Alexander Hristov	General Introduction	3:00	4:00	5:00
18:05	Timer	Carlos Fernández	Explanation of the role			1:00
18:07	Grammian	David Harfield [CA]	Explanation of the role and word of the day	1:00	1:30	2:00

In the above example, for the General Introduction, the timings are 3:00, 4:00, and 5:00, which means that you should show the green signal 3 minutes into the participant’s speech, the yellow signal 4 minutes into the speech, and the red signal 5 minutes into it. Each signal replaces the previous one, so for example, if you’re using lights, turn off the green light after the yellow light is turned on. If you’re using sheets of paper, make sure that at most one is visible at any time.

You should start timing as soon as the participant starts speaking or makes a significant gesture that can be considered part of the speech. This means that you shouldn’t time while the participant is greeting the Meeting Leader or while he’s waiting for the Meeting Leader to retreat and the applause to stop. For the Hot Questions section, don’t start timing the speaker as soon as the question is asked since speakers are entitled to some thinking time. Again, wait for the speaker to start speaking or make a significant gesture that can be considered the beginning of the answer.

Once a signal is shown, it should remain visible. For lights, this means that the light stays on until the next signal or until the end of the speech. For sheets of paper, it means that you place the sheet of paper in some place that can be clearly seen by the speaker and leave it there.

Each club has a different policy on how to deal with overtime, with the basic rule is that at least 30 seconds of grace after the red light are allowed. What happens afterward is up to the club. Some clubs penalize economically, and some clubs advise the timer to start clapping (and the rest of the members join him) to signal the speaker that the speech is over with no extension possible.

Usually, at the beginning of the meeting, you will be asked by the Meeting Leader to explain your role. It is important to explain how you will be timing and using the signals and why timing is important.



Timing with traffic lights



Timing with sheets of paper.



Timing with ... just about anything

Timing thresholds are indicated in each project and should also be written in the agenda so that you don’t need to hunt down that information. Here’s an example from an actual meeting

(Of course, the agenda format may vary from club to club)



A timer raising the green sign. Gorzow Speakers. Poland.

For example, you could explain your role in the following way (using a bit of humor):

“Thank you, Mr. Meeting Leader. Today I’ll be in charge of tracking and reporting your time usage. In today’s world, the attention span of people is usually concise. You need to get your message across quickly, precisely, and without distractions, or people will automatically switch off their brains and start thinking about what’s for dinner.”

As you can see on the agenda, each speaker has a minimum and maximum allotted time. When the minimum time is passed, I will turn on the green light, which means you’re safe. One minute later, I will turn on the yellow light, which should be a signal that you need to wrap up and finish. Once the speech reaches the maximum permitted time, I will turn on the red light, which means basically that’s enough! We’re fed up with you, and please, please finish already. If you don’t finish after 30 seconds, I will start clapping, and I hope the rest of the members join me, and you need to leave the stage”.

When signaling the time, do it without distracting the speaker and especially the audience. Preferably, the signal should be visible mainly to the speaker and not to the rest of the people. Especially avoid waving the signal or making any gestures to draw the speaker’s attention: it’s each speaker’s responsibility to look at you to know how they’re doing in the timing department.

In a meeting, there can be lots of different parts, each with its own timing, so in general, it is recommended to use a template (or the agenda of the meeting itself) in which all the timing information is written down, and where you only need to fill in the actual timings. Here’s an example from an actual meeting:



AGORA SPEAKERS MADRID
Club 1 - info@agoraspeakers.org

Timer Template - Nov 26th , 2016

Time	Role	Assigned to	G	Y	R	Actual Time
18:00	Meeting Leader	Alexander Hristov	3:00	4:00	5:00	
18:05	Timer	Carlos Fernández			1:00	
18:07	Grammarian	David Harfield [CA]	1:00	1:30	2:00	
18:10	Thought of the Day	Hélène Kemmere [UK]	2:00	2:30	3:00	
18:15	1st Speaker Evaluator	Sanja Jelic	1:00	1:30	2:00	
18:20	1st Speaker	Eric David	4:00	5:00	6:00	
	Break		1:00	1:30	2:00	
18:30	Hot Questions Evaluator	Agustin Millán	1:00	1:30	2:00	

18:30	Hot Questions Evaluator	Agustin Millán	1:00	1:30	2:00	
18:32	Hot Questions	Richard Morley	8:00	9:00	10:00	
	HQ Speaker 1		1:00	1:30	2:00	
	HQ Speaker 2		1:00	1:30	2:00	
	HQ Speaker 3		1:00	1:30	2:00	
18:45	1st Speaker Evaluator	Sanja Jelic	2:00	2:30	3:00	
18:50	Hot Questions Evaluator	Agustin Millán	3:00	3:30	4:00	
18:55	Grammarian	David Harfield	2:00	2:30	3:00	
19:00	Timer	Carlos Fernández	2:00	2:30	3:00	
19:03	General Evaluator	Sanja Jelic	4:00	5:00	6:00	
19:10	Meeting Leader	Alexander Hristov	2:00	3:00	4:00	

The Meeting Leader can ask you to time other portions of the meeting, such as breaks, pauses for feedback, etc. In this case, there are no signals, merely indicate to the Meeting Leader that the requested time has elapsed.

At the end of the meeting, you will be asked by the Meeting Leader to report on the time. Usually, everyone that spoke is interested in knowing their own timing, so don’t just say, “Everyone was on time. Congratulations!” and then sit down. Instead, try to report the timing of each person that spoke, including the Hot Questions speakers. Also, try not to make the report as boring as reading a phone directory. Here’s an example of what a timer’s report could look like:

“Today, the timing was great; we only have one big offender. Carlos, our Grammarian, used 1:20 minutes when explaining the role and 2:30 minutes in his report. Well done, Carlos. Peter used 3:30 for his Book of the Day, and he was a millisecond away from being kicked out of the stage, as the allotted time was only 3 minutes. (... continue for each of the participants).”

■ **Timing for people with disabilities**

About 8% of the world population suffers from some form of color-blindness, meaning that they cannot distinguish between two different colors, and about 3% suffers from total blindness or low vision. If your club has such members, you need to adapt the timing signals to them. Unless any of your members are completely blind, though, do not discriminate by using separate signals for members with disabilities. Use the same set of signals for everyone, making sure that those signals are suitable also for people that are color-blind or have low vision.

For people with color blindness or low vision, you need to use signals that differ from each other not only in color but in some other way (shape is usually a good idea)



Timing Signals suitable for color-blind people, created by Santiago Becerra.



A set of timing signals suitable for color-blind people and people with low vision.

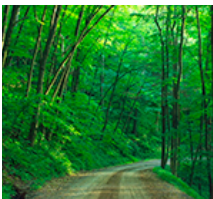
For speakers that are completely blind, you can use sound signals - like a small bell - using 1, 2, and 3 chimes depending on the timing signal you want to convey.



■ Specifics for online meetings

In an online meeting, you can use the traditional signals explained above, or you can use virtual backgrounds, which are very convenient. It's better if the virtual background isn't just a solid color (which will be problematic for color-blind people) but instead features also some objects associated with that color. For example:

Green



Yellow




Red




In any case, remember that the same rule about not drawing attention applies: it's up to the speaker to watch your timing signals - you shouldn't be making any specific gestures to draw his attention (flashing backgrounds, waving, etc.).

You can download these and other backgrounds from our [brand portal](#) or create personalized ones for your club using our online asset creator.



If you want to use physical objects as timing signals, be mindful of the kind of lighting in your environment, as sometimes it's difficult to tell what color the object that you're showing is. For example, what color do you think this card is?



Evaluation Card

Evaluation of the Timer

Member	Evaluator	Allotted Time (min) <input type="radio"/> Green <input type="radio"/> Yellow <input type="radio"/> Red	Actual Time
Club name (or location/venue if not in a club setting)	Do you believe the goals were met? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly No <input type="checkbox"/> No		Date

What timing device and timing signals were used during the meeting? Were they ready at the beginning?

Was the purpose of the role explained, providing examples? How?

Did the timer provide an accurate report of everyone's time?

Did the timer make sure that no one went over time? How?

How did the timer avoid distracting the audience while using the timing signals?

What aspects of the way the timer performed the role did you like?

In which ways could the timer improve?

Please write on the back if you need more space 

GRAMMARIAN

GENERAL INFORMATION

Difficulty

Basic Level



10 TO 15 MIN.

Preparation time.



3 TO 6 MIN.

Speaking time.

DETAILS

This role is evaluated by Meeting Evaluator

Sample Video 

Index of Meeting Roles

SKILLS TRAINED

- Public Speaking
- Creativity
- Listening
- Confidence
- Focus
- Language Richness

The Grammarian is a person that watches for language correctness during the meeting and also provides a report at the end. Usually, he also provides a “word of the day” for people to try to use in their speeches. In this case, language correctness means things that were incorrectly worded or pronounced and things that were exceptionally well done, such as very appropriate use of an idiom, a spot-on expression, an interesting rhetorical device, an uncommon word, etc.

Sometimes - especially in clubs using a language that is not the native one - even the correct pronunciation of a word by a speaker can stand out if there's a habit of mispronouncing it. For example, in your report at the end of the meeting, you could note: “I'd like to commend Anna on her correct pronunciation of the word Image, as most people here tend to pronounce it as /'ɪmeɪdʒ/ when, in reality, it is /'ɪmɪdʒ/”

As with all roles, at the beginning of the meeting, you will be asked by the Meeting Leader to explain your role. Use this opportunity not only to explain what the role is about but to point to frequent types of mistakes that are made in the club and ask people to watch out for them:

“ Thank you, Aneta. Today I will be the Grammarian of the meeting. There's probably nothing more damaging to your message and your authority as a speaker than poor grammar and poor language. I will be listening carefully to your language use to note both good and bad things. I'll be especially on the lookout for a mistake that we often make in this club - mispronouncing the th sound, so that 'think' sounds as 'sink' Please be careful “.

At the end of the meeting, provide a report of everything that you've written down. Unlike the timer, it's ok if you summarize a common mistake and mention it just once:

“Before I comment on the individual use of language for each of the speakers, I'd like to note some common mistakes. First, the plural of child is children and not childs. Also, remember that in English final consonants are especially important. Many times I heard 'think' when the speaker really meant 'thing'.”



A word of warning about grammarians: Many times, a club will be using a non-native language (let's say an English-speaking club in Spain, for example) but will have a couple of native speakers. There's a big temptation to ask them to be grammarians very frequently since, obviously, they're in the best position to be judges of how their language is being used. However, this can quickly become boring or tiresome for them (especially if they work as language teachers as it usually happens). They might accept your request, but many times it will be out of politeness, and someday, they will just become fed up and stop coming to the club. Although Agora Clubs are a great way to improve your foreign language control, that's not the primary goal, and an Agora Club Meeting is not a foreign language class. If the grammarian has to be someone non-native that isn't exceptionally proficient with the language, then so be it. In this case, they'll concentrate more on the positive things and on counting filler words and the word of the day, rather than on noting and correcting other people's grammatical mistakes, and this will also be fine.

If you have the infrastructure, you could consider inviting remote Agora members from other countries to attend virtually and act as grammarians in your meeting. The role of the grammarian is exceptionally well-suited for that purpose.

■ Word of the Day

The “Word of the Day” is a word, idiom, or proverb that the Grammarian chooses and that all participants should try to use in their speeches. It serves two purposes:

- It enriches the vocabulary of the members.
- It trains members to adapt their speeches on the fly to new circumstances and factors instead of simply memorizing them.

The Word of the Day should be a word that is not excessively easy, as in that case, it would defeat the first purpose, but neither excessively hard as to make any use of it impossible.

Once you've selected the word of the day, you need to prepare:

- A short explanation of the word.

- A couple of examples of proper usage
- A couple of paper sheets with the word printed so that you can place them in locations visible to the speaker and possibly the audience. These sheets of paper could look like this:

Epitome

(i- 'pi-tə-mē)

Definition:

A Typical or ideal example. *"This movie was the epitome of boredom"*

■ Specifics for Online Meetings

In an online meeting, try to paste the word of the day, its definition, and examples of usage in the meeting's chat window so that everyone can refer to it easily.

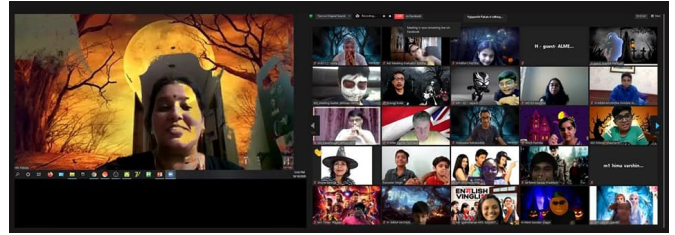


Another exciting option is using a background showing the word of the day, as in the following example.

You can use our online asset generator to quickly generate such backgrounds right during the meeting.

■ Theme of the Meeting

A slightly more difficult approach is to provide a "Theme of the Meeting" instead of merely a Word of the Meeting. For example, a meeting could be devoted to "Exotic Countries", or to "Science" or to "New Year Celebrations". This can be great if combined with specific costumes, such as this Halloween-themed meeting:



In this case, the Grammarian should watch for any expressions or idioms related to the meeting's overall theme, not just explicit mentions of the words. Since the goal remains the same - training members to adapt their speeches on the fly instead of memorizing them, these expressions or idioms should be counted only if they were not obviously in the speech before the theme was decided (otherwise, it would be just a case of luck).

Different clubs have different policies on who decides the Theme of the Meeting. It could be the [VPE](#), or the [Meeting Leader](#), or the Grammarian.



Thematic Halloween meeting in Agora Speakers Kota Kinabalu (Malaysia), with Johan Amilin (fourth left) - Agora Speakers Ambassador to the country.

Evaluation Card

Evaluation of the Grammarian

Member	Evaluator	Allotted Time (min) <input type="radio"/> Green <input type="radio"/> Yellow <input type="radio"/> Red	Actual Time
Club name (or location/venue if not in a club setting)	Do you believe the goals were met? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly No <input type="checkbox"/> No		Date

Was the purpose of the role explained, providing examples? How?

Did the grammarian highlight examples of good and bad language use?

What aspects of the way the grammarian performed the role did you like?

Do you feel there were significant omissions (either positive or negative) by the grammarian that should have been pointed out? Which ones?

In which ways could the grammarian improve?

Which was the word of the day? Was it explained?

Was a recap / reminder of previous words of the day provided?

Do you feel the word of the day was novel enough to enrich your vocabulary, yet not so obscure as to be purely academic?

Was an accurate report of everyone's use of the word of the day provided?

Please write on the back if you need more space



SPEAKER

GENERAL INFORMATION

Difficulty	Basic Level
30 TO 180 MIN. Preparation time.	
5 TO 15 MIN. Speaking time.	

DETAILS

This role is evaluated by Meeting Evaluator

Sample Video

Index of Meeting Roles

SKILLS TRAINED:

- Public Speaking
- Speechwriting
- Creativity
- Perseverance
- Time Management
- Confidence
- Focus

The role of the speaker is probably the most obvious and straightforward one.

A speaker delivers a speech according to the instructions and goals described in the Educational Program's different projects. All speakers must start with projects from the Basic Educational Path, do all the projects in order, and after they have finished them, they can continue onto any of the Advanced Paths.

Usually, there are between 1 and 3 speakers in a meeting, depending on the available time.

Speakers in Agora Clubs can also deliver speeches outside of the educational program (or following other educational programs or manuals). The only requirement is that the set of goals must be known in advance, that the speech must be timed, and an oral and written evaluation must be received.



Delivering a speech at the Visakha Orators club, India. Photo: Koka Prasad

Every project in that program has a very clear pedagogical goal and tries to teach a specific tool, technique, or approach in the world of public speaking or leadership.

The whole Educational Program of Agora Speakers is available for free to members online. Most projects follow a template such as:

BODY LANGUAGE

Basic Educational Path 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

GOALS

Learn about the main concepts of body language and how they increase the effectiveness of a speech. Examine how great speakers use body language to enhance the impact of their speeches. Learn about the possible cultural differences of the same gesture. Learn about the difference in how you perceive your own body language subjectively vs how the audience sees it.

REQUIREMENTS

To do this project you must have completed all the previous projects in this path.

TOOLS

Microphone	May be used
Lectern	May not be used
Notes	May be used
Presentation Software	May not be used

ALLOTTED TIME (MIN)

Part 1 - Speech Analysis	Part 2 - Speech Delivery
● 8 min.	● 5 min.
● 9 min.	● 6 min.
● 10 min.	● 7 min.

Some projects - such as the Body Language one showcased above - contain restrictions about what you can and can't do for pedagogical purposes. In this case, notes should not be used, which means that it is not recommended to use them, but if you absolutely can't do without them, then ok, go ahead and use them. It also says that the lectern must not be used, and in this case, "No means No. Really". The speech must be delivered without you standing, leaning, or interacting in any way with a lectern.

You will also see that some projects have more than one part, which means that they must be delivered in more than one meeting (not necessarily consecutive, but try to keep them relatively close together). For example, the Body Language project has a Speech Analysis part and a Speech part (each with its own timings).

When you're doing a Speech Project, read the project's description, the outline carefully, and try to follow all the advice given there.

As a speaker, you can also do Specialty or Custom Speeches. These are speeches that do not correspond to any particular educational program project but that you want to practice for some reason. In this case, you should contact your Speech Evaluator well in advance of your speech and clearly tell him which are the goals of your speech, what do you want to practice/learn, and what do you want to be evaluated on. For example, imagine that you need to deliver a Best Man speech. Then you could write your evaluator and tell him what your goals are:

- Sounding natural and close
- Presenting the bride/groom/couple in a very positive way
- Being funny and entertaining
- Using personal anecdotes or stories about your relationship with the bride/groom.

You should also specify a clear time limit. For example, for a Best Man speech, it could be “3-4 minutes, a green signal at 3, a yellow signal at 3:30, a red signal at 4:00”.

■ Contents of Speeches

In terms of Speech Content, Agora has very few “universal” limitations, one of them being hate speech - which is not allowed in any Agora events. Also, note that clubs can vote to [restrict the kind of content](#) they allow, so you should always check with the club guidelines. Regardless of these hard rules, It’s recommended, though, that you choose your speech’s content in good taste and be careful with the different sensitivities existing in the club.

NOTE

We recommend that you speak about things that actually matter to you - things that you feel passionate and care about. The fact that you’re speaking about something important to you will permeate through the speech and make it lively, energetic, and passionate. Additionally, you will also be able to gauge how your arguments are received by club members, which will help you tune them for the “real world”.

Don’t be afraid that your speech might offend someone. One of Agora’s [Core Principles](#) is Tolerance, which means that all members should be able to listen to any viewpoint with an open mind. We also explicitly protect criticism, humor, and satire.

There’s one significant exception to the above freedom, though, and it is for pedagogical purposes. In most Basic Educational Path projects, you will see that you’re not allowed to do speeches about public speaking. For example, you can’t do a speech explaining body language for the “Body Language” project (although you might do such a speech if later you want to follow the Educational Speeches advanced path). The reason for this limitation is that all the techniques in the Basic Educational Path should be just tools supporting and enhancing a central, unrelated message. The tools used should not be the message itself.

That’s why for example, you’ll find a text very similar to the following one (from the “Using Anecdotes” project) in many basic projects:

“Storytelling should have a supporting and not primary role. If all that the audience can remember from your speech are your stories or anecdotes, then you’ve failed: the main goal is still getting your message across.”

Also, please note that your particular country may have some specific legislation about the kinds of public speech content they allow, and you should, for your own and your fellow members’ safety, ensure that you comply with these restrictions.

NOTE

As a corollary to the above, note that sales and promotion speeches are, in general, allowed. You’re free to practice your elevator, sales, and other pitches of your products, services, books, etc., in an Agora club, as long as they don’t run against an established club policy on Speech Content.

■ Backup Speakers

In terms of Speech Content, Agora has very few “universal” limitations, one of them being hate speech - which is not allowed in any Agora events. Also, note that clubs can vote to [restrict the kind of content](#) they allow, so you should always check with the club guidelines.

Clubs can also have the role of the “Backup speaker”. Since usually speaking slots are scarce and many people are waiting to give a speech if a speaker doesn’t show up.

Evaluation Card

Travel to Speaker Evaluation

Member	Evaluator	Allotted Time (min) <input type="radio"/> Green <input type="radio"/> Yellow <input type="radio"/> Red	Actual Time
Club name (or location/venue if not in a club setting)	Do you believe the goals were met? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly No <input type="checkbox"/> No		Date

Was the collective described clear? Did it correspond to a traditionally demonized collective?

Was the speaker convincing about the things he liked?

Was the nature of the speech mainly informative and not persuasive?

What were the main points that you liked from the speech?



What was the effect of the speech on the public? How did they react (if at all)?

Was the subject researched with enough depth? Were you left with a desire to know more?

What could have the speaker done to be more effective?

Please write on the back if you need more space 

SPEECH EVALUATOR

GENERAL INFORMATION		DETAILS	SKILLS TRAINED:
Difficulty	Basic Level 	This role is evaluated by General Evaluator for Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public Speaking• Speechwriting• Argumentation• Constructive Feedback• Critical Thinking• Listening• Empathy• Confidence• Focus
 20 TO 30 MIN. Preparation time.		Sample Video 	
 4 TO 6 MIN. Speaking time.		Index of Meeting Roles	

The role of the Speech Evaluator is probably one of the most critical in the whole system of public speaking clubs. Evaluators provide feedback and comments for improvement to other participants.

Although speakers receive written feedback from all audience members, the primary way they improve is through the detailed feedback of their speech evaluators.

In Agora Speakers, all speeches must be evaluated. After all, Agora is, above all, an educational organization. There's absolutely no point in giving a speech in a club unless it is for the speaker to learn something or improve somehow. Learning requires an outside perspective since we're usually terrible judges of our own performance.

As a speech evaluator, you will be usually asked by the Meeting Leader to intervene two times - once before the speaker and once after the speaker.

During your first participation (before the speaker), your goal is to explain to the audience what project the speaker is doing, the learning objectives and goals, and what the audience should be watching for. Try to finish with an encouraging or uplifting remark for the speaker.

It's crucial that when you finish this part, you give the floor back to the Meeting Leader instead of giving it directly to the speaker. This is necessary since the Meeting Leader still has to introduce the speaker. For example, you could say:

"Thank you, Jane. Today I'll be evaluating John's speech. John is doing the project about Body Language, a project in which the goal is to use expressive and clear body language to support a central message. Body language is the whole set of nonverbal cues that a speaker can use. The most visible ones are facial and hand gestures, but it's also essential how he moves on the stage or his general posture and demeanor. The gestures must be natural instead of forced and relevant, appropriate, and supportive to what is being said at the moment. We've seen John speaking before. We all know he's quite expressive, so I'm sure this project will be a piece of cake for him. Madam Meeting Leader"

(after which you extend your hand to shake that of the Meeting Leader, giving the floor back to her).

Learn more about the best way to evaluate by reading [Giving Feedback - The Role of the Evaluator](#)



Clara Costa, from Funchal Agora Speakers, performing an evaluation

Evaluation Card

Evaluation of the Speech Evaluator

Member	Evaluator	Allotted Time (min) <input type="radio"/> Green <input type="radio"/> Yellow <input type="radio"/> Red	Actual Time
Club name (or location/venue if not in a club setting)	Do you believe the goals were met? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly No <input type="checkbox"/> No		Date

Did the evaluator know the project he or she was going to evaluate, and its goals and evaluation criteria?

Did the evaluator have the evaluation card for the prepared speech project ready? (Either in print or electronic form)

Did the evaluator highlight both the positive and negative aspects of the prepared speech?

Was he or she specific when pointing at those aspects?

Did the evaluator analyze whether the evaluation goals were met? How?

Did the evaluator focus on the delivery rather than on the content of the speech?

Did the evaluator offer specific suggestions to the speaker on how to improve?

How did the evaluator motivate and encourage the speaker?

Was the evaluator thorough in his assessment? How? Was there anything missed?

What aspects of the evaluation do you think were particularly appropriate?

How can the evaluator improve?

Please write on the back if you need more space



HOT QUESTIONS MASTER

GENERAL INFORMATION

Difficulty

Basic Level



20 TO 60 MIN.

Preparation time.



5 TO 10 MIN.

Speaking time.

DETAILS

This role is evaluated by [Hot Questions Evaluator](#)

[Sample Video](#)

[Index of Meeting Roles](#)

SKILLS TRAINED:

- Public Speaking
- Creativity
- Time Management
- Empathy
- Confidence
- Social Knowledge

As a Hot Questions Master, your job is to prepare a set of challenging questions for a series of people. The number of questions depends on the total time allotted for the Hot Questions section of the meeting. Each speaker has to speak between 1 and 2 minutes, and you should add some time for yourself - for explaining your role, its purpose, and for all the clapping before and each person comes to the stage and for the question itself. All in all, plan about 2 minutes for yourself plus about 3 minutes per participant. So for a 10-minute session, plan about 3 participants.

the best approach. Speakers can take some time (5-15 seconds) to think about their answers. It's a good idea to remind them of that possibility during the introduction to your role.

Good questions are those that are:

- **Realistic** – Questions should be of the type likely to occur in a realistic setting. Unless the speaker aims to become an improv theatre actor, the value of practicing answers to questions such as “*I saw you the other day dressed as a gorilla running across the park. What were you doing?*” is unlikely to be of much use.
- **Not too easy** – Questions should be somewhat challenging. A question such as “*what is your favorite color?*” is not exactly the most challenging one.
- **Not too obscure** – Questions on obscure topics should also be avoided. After all, the speaker has only 2 minutes to speak. Also, they shouldn't assume too much prior knowledge, like asking, “*What do you think about all the debate regarding the lightsaber design in the last installment of Star Wars?*”. Unless you are a fan of Star Wars, the first normal thought after that question would rightfully be “WTF?”. However, questions that assume some prior knowledge that the speaker turns out not to have are perfectly ok. For example, “*What do you think about the series finale of Breaking Bad?*”. If the speaker hasn't seen it, he still has to answer so and then elaborate (possibly explaining that he hasn't got the time or doesn't like that type of series, or...)
- **Open-ended** – Yes/no or two-choice questions don't give speakers enough material to elaborate.
- **Inconvenient, uncomfortable, or difficult** questions are completely fine because these do get asked constantly by people with less-than-ideal manners. Yet, the way we answer them greatly impacts how the listeners perceive us. If a person is asked, “*How much sex do you have with your wife?*” and the reply is a furious diatribe full of insults, then the perception of the offended person also suffers. A good speaker should never lose control, composure, or manners. Replies to these questions should be polite yet firm and assertive.



Rosa Icela Terán Hermida, founder of the Lichan club in Mexico, as a Hot Questions Master during a thematic meeting for Mexico's National Day

The Hot Questions section's main goal should be to get a natural, sincere and convincing answer from the speaker. Sometimes the speaker will weasel out of the question and speak about something else. If done properly and naturally, that's fine. Ideally, the answers should be mini-speeches, but the speakers shouldn't sacrifice naturalness for structure. A fully-blown speech is never expected as an answer to a simple question, and if that is what is received, it will sound like a canned memorized speech unless the speaker is truly passionate about the subject.

Usually, people are tempted to start answering right away. That's not

In a Hot Questions session, you're not limited to merely asking questions, and you're not limited to having just one speaker on the stage. A Hot Questions section can consist of playing some melody to each participant and asking them what memories it brings, or doing the same with different scents, or bringing different objects and ask them to present a sales (or anti-sales) pitch, or you could

bring several people to the stage and ask them to defend opposing positions in a debate, or one to start a story and the other to finish it, etc.

Of course, for the answers to be truly improvised, don't share your questions or ideas about the session with anyone.

Ideally, you should pick your Hot Questions targets from people who don't have any role in a meeting to give everyone a chance to participate. You should have your list ready before the start of the meeting by checking the agenda and seeing who's attending. A member should not be able to decline the request to participate, if they do so, you can politely press, but if you see fierce resistance, it's better not to press further. Of course, if there are not enough members, or if you sense that someone is "too confident" that they won't be picked because they have a role, you're free to do so.

Clubs have different views on whether you should ask for volunteers or not. If you do, this should come before the question is asked. After all, the point is not asking a question and getting a reply from someone already prepared to answer.

Clubs also have different views on whether you should or should not ask guests to participate. If your club has such a tradition, they need to follow the rules just as everyone else – if you want to pick a guest or accept guest volunteers, that should happen before the question is asked.

NOTE

Hot Questions is a very delicate section. Don't expect very structured speeches, and sometimes you'll need to come to the rescue of a participant that has spoken for a while then goes blank or doesn't know how to finish. If this is clearly the case, intervene with a "Thank you", extend your hand to shake theirs, then lead the applause as they walk off the stage.

■ **Out of ideas? In a rush?**

Feel free to use our [Hot Questions Generator](#) (English Only) for an ever-increasing list of random hot questions. Also, feel free to send suggestions for interesting activities in improvisational speaking to info@agoraspeakers.org.



Kwame Djokoto, from Agora Speakers Accra in Ghana, surprising everyone with his questions

Evaluation Card

Evaluation of the Hot Questions Leader

Member	Evaluator	Allotted Time (min) <input type="radio"/> Green <input type="radio"/> Yellow <input type="radio"/> Red	Actual Time
Club name (or location/venue if not in a club setting)	Do you believe the goals were met? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly No <input type="checkbox"/> No		Date

Were the purpose and goals of the section explained?

Were the questions prepared beforehand?

Were the questions realistic? Why do you think so?

Did the Hot Questions Leader call people that hadn't participated in the meeting so far?

Did the Hot Questions Leader encourage all participants to think before answering?

Did the Hot Questions Leader greet and applaud all participants upon entering/leaving the stage?

What aspects of the Hot Questions session did you like the most and why?

How can the Hot Questions Leader improve?

Please write on the back if you need more space 

HOT QUESTIONS EVALUATOR

GENERAL INFORMATION

Difficulty

Basic Level



10 TO 15 MIN.

Preparation time.



4 TO 6 MIN.

Speaking time.

DETAILS

This role is evaluated by [General Evaluator for Feedback](#)

[Sample Video](#)

[Index of Meeting Roles](#)

SKILLS TRAINED:

- Public Speaking
- Argumentation
- Constructive Feedback
- Critical Thinking
- Listening
- Empathy
- Focus

The Hot Questions Evaluator evaluates both the Hot Questions Master and the picked speakers. As all evaluators, most of the advice given in the “Speech Evaluator” section applies, keeping in mind that the main goal of a speaker answering a question is to be able to speak fluently and naturally for at least 1 minute.

In your report, try to give something to improve to each of the speakers and the Hot Questions Master. Improvised speeches are, in general, much more complicated to deliver than prepared speeches. As such, please focus on whether the speaker met the following core criteria:

- **The participant took some time to think.** Most speakers jump to answer the question immediately, and unless by pure chance the question is on a topic that they have very close to their heart, that’s usually a mistake. They either run out of fuel, start repeating themselves or begin to ramble. Even if the topic is very familiar, it still pays off to adapt your traditional arguments to the audience and the context where the question is being asked. In the evaluation, encourage everyone that fell into this trap to make it a habit always to pause and think for at least 5-10 seconds before starting to speak.
- **The speech had a clear structure.** Any provided answer should be a cohesive mini-speech and not merely a series of rambles or thoughts. The answer should have a clear opening, a body, and a conclusion and have a recognizable pattern.
- **The speech had a single, clear message.** The provided answer shouldn’t merely entertain the audience for a couple of minutes but should actually transmit a viewpoint and a clear message.
- **The participant spoke for at least one minute.** The Hot Questions section’s goal is not actually answering the question but speaking coherently for at least 1 minute.

NOTE

It’s perfectly valid for a participant to not answer the question, as long as they do it smoothly and still speak coherently for over 1 minute about something somewhat related. In fact, not answering questions is an art that needs to be developed in some professions, such as politicians.







Zazila Roslan, from the Agora Speakers Kota Kinabalu club in Malaysia, delivering her Hot Questions evaluation

- Something that they could improve - maybe the structure? maybe the way they delivered the speech? maybe their body language? maybe even their argumentation?
- Something you particularly liked - Hot Questions are a difficult section. Try always to be encouraging by highlighting something that you particularly liked. It might be something as funny as the way the participant scraped some additional seconds for thinking by asking the Hot Questions Leader to repeat the question, or it might be how quickly they turned around the tables on an uncomfortable question, etc.

In addition to the above criteria, try to also point out, for each participant:

MEETING EVALUATOR

GENERAL INFORMATION		DETAILS	SKILLS TRAINED:
Difficulty	Basic Level 	This role is not evaluated	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public Speaking• Argumentation• Constructive Feedback• Critical Thinking• Listening• Empathy• Confidence• Focus
 10 TO 30 MIN. Preparation time.		Sample Video 	
 4 TO 6 MIN. Speaking time.		Index of Meeting Roles	

The Meeting Evaluator's role is to provide feedback for all people that have not been evaluated up to this point. The Meeting Evaluator should also be the last role to speak before the meeting's conclusion (except for the Meeting Leader and the Meeting Facilitator).

This usually means the Meeting Evaluator evaluates the following people:

- The Meeting Leader
- All the Evaluators (including the Listening and Body Language Evaluators if the club has them).
- The Timer
- The Grammarian
- The Filler Word Counter
- Any other roles that have not had their own evaluation.





If there are too many people that need to be evaluated, it's better to have those evaluations performed by the General Evaluator for Speeches and the General Evaluator for Feedback.

The Meeting Evaluator also evaluates the meeting overall:

- Did it start on time?
- Was the venue prepared?
- Were there any disturbances, and were they handled properly?
- Were the guests properly treated?
- Was the purpose of the Club and Agora Speakers International explained at the beginning of the meeting?
- Any other thoughts about improving the meeting.

If you have a guest that is a member of another Agora club (or of any other public speaking organization), it's usually an excellent idea to give the Meeting Evaluator role to him. These guests are a real treasure in terms of the number of suggestions and ideas they can offer since they can compare their own club experience to what they have seen.

BODY LANGUAGE EVALUATOR

GENERAL INFORMATION		DETAILS	SKILLS TRAINED:
Difficulty	Basic Level 	This role is evaluated by General Evaluator for Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public Speaking• Argumentation• Constructive Feedback• Creativity• Focus
 30 TO 60 MIN. Preparation time.	Sample Video 	Index of Meeting Roles	
 4 TO 6 MIN. Speaking time.			

The Body Language Evaluator is another role that not all clubs have and is not required in a minimal meeting format. It's an evaluator that examines the nonverbal demeanor of all speakers, including the Meeting Leader, the Hot Questions Master, etc. The only excluded speakers are the ones who already have their own evaluators, such as the ones doing speech projects.

The most important items a body language evaluator should be concerned about are:

- Did the movements of the speaker feel natural?
- Was the eye contact good? Was it with all sectors of the audience? Was it sustained?
- Were the gestures seamless and appropriate for what was being said?
- Did the speaker fiddle with his hair, accessories, or clothes?
- Was there any defensive body language, such as arms crossed in front of the chest, or similar?
- Did the speaker have any repetitive gestures?
- Was there enough energy in the gestures?
- Did the speaker move along the stage with purpose?
- Was the speed of the gestures appropriate? Did they last long enough so that the audience could actually perceive them?
- Were there any excellent gestures in support of some part of the speech?
- Were the gestures distracting (as opposed to supportive of the main message)?



Evaluation Card

Evaluation of the Body Language Evaluator

Member	Evaluator	Allotted Time (min) <input type="radio"/> Green <input type="radio"/> Yellow <input type="radio"/> Red	Actual Time
Club name (or location/venue if not in a club setting)	Do you believe the goals were met? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly No <input type="checkbox"/> No		Date

Was the purpose of the role explained, providing examples? How?

Did he or she highlight the best gestures and expressions from the meeting?





Did the Evaluator provide points for improvement for all the main roles?

In which ways could the Body Language Evaluator improve?

Please write on the back if you need more space



LISTENING EVALUATOR

GENERAL INFORMATION		DETAILS	SKILLS TRAINED:
Difficulty	Intermediate Level 	This role is evaluated by Meeting Evaluator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public Speaking• Argumentation• Constructive Feedback• Creativity• Listening
 10 TO 30 MIN. Preparation time.	Sample Video 	Index of Meeting Roles	
 3 TO 6 MIN. Speaking time.			

Your goal as Listening Evaluator is to test how focused attendees were during a meeting by asking about the main topics mentioned in the different speeches and their most memorable moments.

The questions should be of general nature and not be excessively specific. After all, you want people to listen, not to take notes of speeches!. For example, a reasonable question would be:

*“In John’s speech, who was the person that most influenced him?” or
“What did Ann think about the role of Technology in the current economic downturn?”
“From which country was our guest?”*

Inappropriate questions would be questions aiming for excessive factual details, such as:

*“On which day was John born?” or
“In Ann’s speech, how many jobs did she say were lost due to outsourcing?”
“From which city was our guest?”*

Aim for questions that can be answered with one or two sentences. The questions can be about anything of significance that has been said by any of the participants – by the Meeting Leader, or any of the Speakers, or Evaluators, or even the Hot Questions Speakers.

As with most roles, usually at the beginning of the meeting, you will be called by the Meeting Leader to explain your role. Explain not only what you’re planning to do but also why this is important. It is also important that people should not be taking any notes or memorizing anything, and your questions should not require it. This is not realistic in an out of club environment. After all, when you’re talking informally to your boss, you’re not taking notes (unless you’re in North Korea).

A sample introduction could be something like

“Thank you, Peter (the Meeting Leader). If you want to lead and influence people, it’s imperative that you’re able to understand and address their concerns and motivations. Which is not that difficult, because most of the time they themselves will tell you which are those. Most of us face the problem that we don’t actually and actively listen to what others tell us; we merely think about what we’re going to say next. As a Listening Evaluator, my role will be to prepare a set of questions about what has been said during the meeting by any of the participants. The questions will be of generic nature, so don’t

worry, this is not an exam about, and you don’t need to be taking notes.”.

Try to write at least 5-6 questions to ask different people.

Usually, if someone is doing a speech project, it’s not a good idea to ask him about anything that was said before his speech. These speakers are too nervous and completely focused on their speech, which should be understood and respected. However, once they have delivered their project, the nervousness disappears, and it’s completely fair game to ask them questions about what was said during that period.

As in the case of the Hot Questions, check with your VPE or Meeting Leader if it’s ok to ask guests or to ask for volunteers. And exactly as it was for that role, if you want to ask a guest or someone volunteers, that should happen before you ask the question.

For this part, and since the answers should be short (maximum one or two sentences), it’s unnecessary to make people come to the stage, shake hands or applaud. Just pick your victim, and ask the question. If they fail to respond, ask the audience in general, in a non-judgmental way, for example:

“Peter, In John’s speech, who was the person that most influenced him?”

(wait)

Can’t remember? Anyone, can you help Peter? Who was the person that most influenced John’s life?”

If no one remembers, then maybe your question was too specific or in some detail that wasn’t really memorable. Whatever the reason, you should provide an answer.

Evaluation Card

Evaluation of the Listening Evaluator

Member	Evaluator	Allotted Time (min) <input type="radio"/> Green <input type="radio"/> Yellow <input type="radio"/> Red	Actual Time
Club name (or location/venue if not in a club setting)	Do you believe the goals were met? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly No <input type="checkbox"/> No		Date

Were the purpose and goals of the section explained?

Were the questions picked at the right level of detail? Why?



Was the Listening Evaluator respectful towards people that didn't remember what was asked?

Did the Listening Evaluator provide correct answers to the questions he or she asked?

In which ways could the Listening Evaluator improve?

Please write on the back if you need more space 

FILLER WORD COUNTER

GENERAL INFORMATION		DETAILS	SKILLS TRAINED:
Difficulty	Basic Level 	This role is evaluated by Meeting Evaluator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listening• Focus
 10 TO 15 MIN. Preparation time.	Sample Video 	This role may also be performed by: Grammarian	
 3 TO 6 MIN. Speaking time.	Index of Meeting Roles		

Filler words are all those words, sounds, or gestures that are superfluous (don't add any meaning) to the speech and decrease its effectiveness and sometimes (when excessively used) even the speaker's authority or credibility. Common filler words are:

- *So, You know, I mean, okay?, basically, right?, well..., I mean*
- *Er, Ehm, Ahm*
- Repetitions "And then he said... said: 'What are you doing here?'"
- Long vowels: "I will shut down three agencies, commerce, education aaaaaaanddd"
- Tongue clicks or other similar sounds
- Excessively long silences or pauses.
- Ticks or repetitive gestures, such as constantly nodding with the head or adjusting one's tie or watch.

train of thought and hesitates, which in turn causes more filler words, causing more bell rings, and so on in a vicious circle.

Note that speakers of different languages use different filler words, and also, some speakers develop their own set of "personal" filler words.

Your role as a filler word counter is to listen carefully to all speakers and record all instances in which a filler word is used and what kind of filler word it was. At the end of the meeting, you report the results. Often, the Filler Word Counter and the Grammarian are the same person and are actually just one role.

At the beginning of the meeting, you will be asked by the Meeting Leader to explain your role. Try to explain not only what you will be doing but why having filler words all over someone's speech is bad.

Some clubs have the tradition to make participants literally "pay" for the filler words they use - for each instance of a filler word; they could pay 0.10€ or \$0.15, or whatever amount the club decides. This usually drives down the number of filler words rather quickly. If this is the case, you should include that both in your initial description of the role and your final report.

Some clubs like to ring a small bell every time the speaker uses a filler word, up to a certain number. Sometimes this technique is used only for more or less experienced speakers. We advise against any such interruptions, as they are not only distracting to the audience but can also cause a "cascade effect" in which the speaker loses his

Evaluation Card

Evaluation of the Filler Word Counter

Member	Evaluator	Allotted Time (min) <input type="radio"/> Green <input type="radio"/> Yellow <input type="radio"/> Red	Actual Time
Club name (or location/venue if not in a club setting)	Do you believe the goals were met? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly No <input type="checkbox"/> No		Date

Was the purpose of the role explained, providing examples? How?

Did the filler word counter provide a report highlighting the most common mistakes?

Did the filler word counter record and write down everyone's filler words?

Is there any way in which you feel the filler word counter could improve?

Please write on the back if you need more space 

SPEECHWRITING LEADER

GENERAL INFORMATION

Difficulty

Basic Level



30 TO 60 MIN.

Preparation time.



4 TO 6 MIN.

Speaking time.

DETAILS

This role is evaluated by [General Evaluator for Feedback](#)

[Sample Video](#)



[Index of Meeting Roles](#)

SKILLS TRAINED:

- Public Speaking
- Argumentation
- Constructive Feedback
- Creativity
- Focus

The Speechwriting section is a workshop-type section led that aims to improve the members' skills in a specific area of speechwriting.

Your goal as a SpeechWriting leader is to prepare a short presentation on the subject of your choice, provide some examples, and then lead an interactive exercise where members will put to practice what they've just learned and then get some feedback.

NOTE

There's no need to turn the section into a full-blown course on public speaking. Resist the temptation to increase the scope - neither will you have enough time to prepare, nor will the members be able to assimilate so much material.

Focus on a single subject, and maybe even just part of it. For example, don't try to cover "Rhetorical devices" in general. Pick one (let's say "Metaphors" and deliver a short session on that, and let the members practice just Metaphors)

Select a Subject

Here are some suggestions on topics you might want to cover:

- Speech Openings (Or even focus on just one type of speech opening)
- Use of vivid language
- Subject topics: speaking about rights, abstract concepts, emotions, current topics, etc.
- Speech Closings (as in the case of speech openings, you may focus on just one type of closing, such as "Call to action" or "Circular closing")
- Structure
 - Topical
 - Monroe
 - Comparison / Contrast
 - Spatial
 - Chronological
 - Biographical
 - Causal
 - Problem-Cause-Solution
- Rhetorical devices - there are literally dozens of rhetorical devices you might want to select to practice.

- Use of Arguments and Logic
- Using charts
- Using statistics
- Using anecdotes
- Using personal stories
- Storytelling - there are many storytelling patterns (the most popular is [The Hero's Journey](#), but there are many others). Pick one and create a workshop for practicing that particular one.
- Eliciting different types of emotion - happiness, sadness, emotional contrast.

Research the subject

For example, let's imagine that you've chosen to talk about the Hero's Journey. Spend about 3-4 hours researching the subject, especially from the viewpoint of the skills we train. Try to find examples of that story pattern in speeches, sales pitches, leadership actions, etc.

NOTE

In many countries, the use of snippets of copyrighted works is legal under the "Fair Use" doctrine - if you use it for educational purposes, if you cite the origin and provide a link to it, and if you use only a small portion of the work.

NEVER claim ownership of things you didn't write, and never use them without attribution.

Note that it's perfectly fine if you read, assimilate all the information you find, and then narrate it with your own words, style, and structure. In this case, this work is entirely yours.

Use primarily the Internet to search for resources. Take notes of all the interesting links and the advice you read everywhere. See, for example, [this excellent analysis](#) of one of Obama's speeches that used the Hero's Journey archetype.

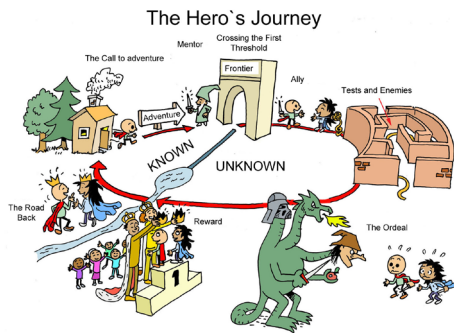


Illustration by Esbjorn Jorsater.

Sometimes just having a general idea or a speech outline is more than enough. No professional speaker can come up with a full polished speech in 10 minutes.



TIP

It's a good idea to have your own pre-written example that you can use to break the ice. However, never read the example before the exercise is over; otherwise, many people will use it as a template, and the whole point of the workshop will be ruined.

■ **Create a short presentation**

After you have all the raw information, create a short presentation on the subject. Don't go overboard! Usually, 4-5 slides are more than enough, and remember the golden principle of presentations: each slide should have just one picture, one idea, one message. You can add all the links to the different sources at the end of the presentation **in a slide that is not shown**. Make sure you upload the presentation before the meeting to a place where it's easy to share (Google Drive, WeTransfer, etc.)



TIP

Although Agora will be developing its own presentations to support you, it would be great if you shared back your presentation with us so that we can make it available to everyone. (Send it to us at info@agoraspeakers.org)

At the meeting, deliver a small training based on the presentation and material that you researched. After you have finished, share the presentation with all the members.

■ **Present an Exercise**

After you have finished the workshop, present a challenge or exercise to the attendees. For example, in Hero's Journey, you could say, "And now let's put this to practice. Imagine you're the head of corporation XYZ, which has just been the target of a hostile takeover. You need to come up with a speech or speech outline using the Hero's Journey to address employees/shareholders/board of directors and inspire them / convince them to follow your lead and reject the takeover."



TIP

Some clubs might even divide the Speechwriting activity in two, with the exercise to be done as homework and the results presented at the next meeting. Consult with your VPE as to what the mechanics are in your particular club.

The SpeechWriting section is not an exercise in improvisational speaking. You should give the attendees at least 10 minutes to work on the exercise. Also, don't expect full-fledged speeches.

■ **Results and Feedback**

After the time for the exercise is over, ask for volunteers willing to read their speeches (or speech outlines). If there are no volunteers, pick at random and gently push them to share their ideas. Always be encouraging, even if the member hasn't been able to come up with any ideas.

All participants need to receive their feedback. That can rest upon you or can be done by the [General Evaluator for Speeches](#).

GENERAL FEEDBACK EVALUATOR

As with the case of the General Evaluator for Speeches, the General Evaluator for Feedback is a support role that is intended to relieve part of the pressure from the Meeting Evaluator in meetings where there are a lot of people providing feedback.

Giving constructive feedback is a fundamental leadership skill that needs to be developed and learned through practice. Since all the Agora members are peers, there are no “experts” whose feedback is an unquestionable truth or given without any possible room for improvement. Many times evaluators will make mistakes, will focus on the wrong areas of the speech, will not use evaluation cards, will provide advice that is not specific or not constructive, etc. As such, all evaluators need to receive feedback on how they did their role also to improve.

Traditionally, the task of evaluating the evaluators fell upon the Meeting Evaluator, which had become a kind of a “mish-mash evaluator of everything”. Consider a traditional meeting with one Thought of the Day, three speech projects, a Hot Questions section, and possibly a Speechwriting section. Under the traditional scheme, this would mean that the Meeting Evaluator has to evaluate:

- The meeting itself
- The Meeting Leader
- The Timer
- The Grammarian and Filler word counter
- The thought of the day
- Each of the speech evaluators
- The hot questions evaluator
- The speechwriting section and its evaluators

all of that in the timespan of 5-6 minutes. Obviously, this doesn't make too much sense and deprives all of the above people of any meaningful feedback that would help them really improve.

Enter the “General Evaluator of Feedback”. This role is tasked specifically with evaluating everyone that has provided feedback to others. In the above example, it means that you would be providing feedback on:

- Each of the speech evaluators
- The Thought of the day Evaluator (if there is one)
- The Hot Questions Evaluator

If the meeting has a General Speech Evaluator, then you also evaluate them.

If you have this role, here are some of the things you need to focus on:

- Did the evaluator provide the feedback applying the general guidelines? In particular - was the feedback specific, constructive, actionable, encouraging...?
- Did the evaluators use a proper speech structure? Evaluation

and feedback speeches are still speeches. They should have a clear structure and not simply be an unsorted list of improvements.

- Did the evaluators end on an encouraging and motivating note for the speaker?
- Did the evaluators refrain from entering a debate or discussion with the people they were giving feedback to? Sometimes the people that are evaluated feel the need to defend themselves or apologize for not meeting a particular goal. The evaluator should not reply to that and instead proceed with the evaluation.
- Did the evaluator pay an equal level of attention to everybody? Did they correctly manage the available time for giving feedback? Especially for roles such as the Hot Questions Evaluator, it's very common to observe the member spend most of their time speaking about the first couple of speakers, and then when they notice that time is running out, rush through the other 3.
- Did the evaluator use the correct evaluation cards? Too often, the evaluators don't have time or don't even know that some projects (“Today we travel to” is a common victim) need to be evaluated using a specific evaluation card. Instead of following it, they provide generic speech feedback.

GENERAL SPEECH EVALUATOR

The General Evaluator for Speeches has the task of evaluating all those participants that deliver presentations that do not have a specific evaluator appointed. Originally, this task fell upon the Meeting Evaluator. Still, with the addition of more and more speaking roles, it becomes impossible for the Meeting Evaluator to give speakers the reasonable and detailed feedback they deserve (since the meeting evaluator also has to evaluate the Grammarian, the Timer, etc.)

The General Evaluator for Speeches is there to relieve part of those evaluation tasks. In particular, you evaluate:

- [Thoughts of the Day](#)
- [“Today we travel to” speeches](#)
- Speeches performed during the [Speechwriting](#) section.
- Speeches performed during the [Language Improvement](#) section (such as the [sensory words](#) section)

The sections for prepared speeches and Hot Questions have their own evaluators, so this would be out of scope for the role.

Whether a meeting has the General Speech Evaluator or not depends a lot on the agenda. If a meeting has two members delivering a thought of the day and then a “Today we travel to” speech, it would be appropriate to appoint someone to provide feedback for them. If the meeting only has a single Thought of Day and the remaining sections are educational speech projects and Hot Questions, then it's not necessary to have this role, and the Meeting Evaluator can provide the feedback to the Thought of the day speaker.

When you're assigned this role, all the usual criteria for providing feedback to speeches apply, so make sure you read the section on providing feedback. Also, keep in mind that some sections have very different evaluation criteria. You should download or have printed (depending on the type of the meeting) the evaluation card for each of the activities. As always, the evaluation cards can be found in each section at the bottom of the page.

CRITICAL THINKING EVALUATOR

The Critical Thinking Evaluator is a “thematic” evaluator, similar to the [Listening Evaluator](#) or the [Body Language Evaluator](#) - they focus on one and just one specific kind of feedback for all members that speak during a meeting. This evaluator role is also very special because - unlike most other evaluators who focus exclusively on delivery - this role focuses exclusively on content.

TIP

You could say that from the article about the [Pillars of Public Speaking](#), this evaluator role is focused on evaluating the Logos part of speeches.

As the Critical Thinking Evaluator of the meeting, you verify and provide feedback on how consistent, convincing, and logical the speakers' arguments were.

Here are some of your tasks:

- Were there any arguments based on implicit premises that might be questionable?
- Were there any arguments based on oversweeping generalizations? This is a surprisingly frequent mistake sometimes made even by professional speakers, especially when they're trying to gain the audience's sympathy, and usually based on their stereotypes.

For example, a speaker in Austin, Texas, thought that it was a good idea to start with

“I know all of you guys like a good rifle”.

and then quickly found out how wrong he was with that particular audience.

- Were there any logical fallacies?

Especially for the fallacies part, you should familiarize yourself with the Critical Thinking Path and the catalog of the most common fallacies people use. Here are some resources that you can use

- Our own Fallacy Catalog.
- North Carolina University [List of Fallacies](#).
- The funny “[List of Logical Fallacies](#)” handout
- The “[illustrated book of bad arguments](#).”
- “[The Upturned Microscope](#)” humorous collection of logical fallacies.
- The extensive Wikipedia [list of fallacies](#).



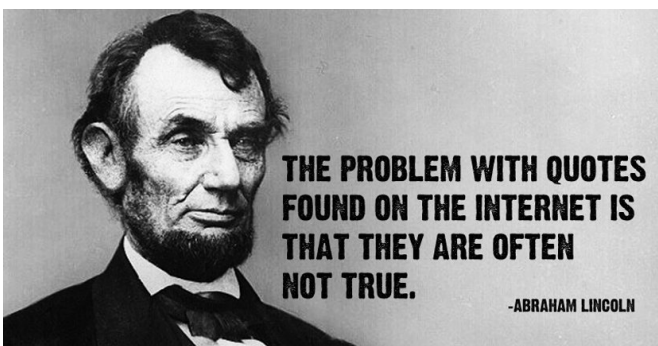
(c) John Cook (<https://twitter.com/johnfocook>)

- Was there enough data or other kind of evidence presented to support the arguments that the speaker was making? Was it convincing? Was it clearly visible?

Were there any misleading statistics?

As in the case of fallacies, it's a good idea to familiarize yourself with some of the most common manipulation techniques used with data:

- Examples of [misleading statistics](#).
- The University of California San Diego handbook on ["How to lie, cheat, manipulate and mislead with statistics and graphical displays"](#).
- The subreddit ["Data Is Ugly"](#) (which also focuses on simply bad data displays, not necessarily manipulated or twisted)
- Was the language used by the speaker free of technical slang and buzzwords so that the audience could understand it?
- Were the presented facts true and accurate? Note that the level of scrutiny you should apply depends on the level of the speaker. It's ok for someone that is just beginning if he or she doesn't get right the author of a particular quote or a specific date. However, as speakers progress along the Educational Path, and especially once they moved to the Advanced ones, these mistakes are no longer forgivable. After all, in real life, if someone on TV or radio got the date of the US Independence wrong, they would bring upon themselves a massive twitterstorm of ridicule.



TIP

You're not expected to be a walking encyclopedia to verify the facts presented by a speaker. You should, however, write down any significant facts that speakers mention and verify them online.

When you have this role, It is very common for speakers that receive remarks from you to engage in defensive explanations. You should refrain from entering a debate with them, much less on the merits of the arguments themselves. Always remember that if you found some argument unconvincing and some logical conclusion a bit too stretched, probably you're not the only one from the audience that felt the same way. If they persist in interrupting you, you should remind them of the rules for evaluations.



NOTE

It's unnecessary to say something about every speaker (and usually, you won't have time anyway). Focus exclusively on the arguments that you liked the most and the most glaring errors.

TODAY WE TRAVEL TO SPEAKER

GENERAL INFORMATION

This activity takes between 2:00 and 4:00 minutes

G 4:00	Y 5:00	R 6:00
Difficulty	 Basic Level	
Format		
Sample Video		
Index of Meeting Activities		

SKILLS TRAINED

Public Speaking	Speechwriting
Intellectual Honesty	Tolerance
Creativity	Conflict Resolution
Empathy	Confidence
Positivity	Curiosity
Social Knowledge	Research

STRUCTURE OF THE ACTIVITY

Main roles for this activity		G	Y	R
1. Today We Travel To Speaker (Required)	Explains the objectives of the project	4:00	5:30	6:00
Other roles related to this activity				
Timer (Required), Grammarian (Required), Filler Word Counter (Required), General Evaluator for Speeches (Required), Body Language Evaluator (Optional), Critical Thinking Evaluator (Optional), Photographer (Optional), Videographer (Optional)				

The Today We Travel To speaker has a role that might look deceptively simple, but in fact, it's quite advanced because it will force you to examine your own prejudices.



Above all, be aware that this is not a speech about a tourist destination or a nice trip. **This is a speech about an internal journey that you and the club have to make.**

This is also a role that **cannot be improvised** - it requires research and preparation. If someone asks you to fill in for a "Today we travel to" speaker that didn't show up, it's best to decline politely.

On the other hand, this is one of the most gratifying roles because it will help you train your skills as an empathic, open-minded, and tolerant leader who can reach out across chasms and build bridges.

When you have this role, it's imperative that you read completely the [Today We Travel To](#) activity description.

After that, you should:

1. Pick a demonized or discriminated collective you want to explore. Ideally, you should pick one from your own internal demons. If you've spent all your life thinking that gypsies are thieves, maybe you should pick that collective. If you've spent all your life thinking that Russians are enemies bent on the destruction of the Free World, maybe that's your collective. If you've spent your life thinking about the brutal and dumb American Imperialist Aggressors, maybe that's your collective. No one is free from prejudices; we all have our internal demons. Be brave, and confront them head-on.

2. Once you've selected a collective, select an area that interests you in general (independent of that collective). Maybe you're interested in art? in science? In literature? in theatre? In music? in history? In philanthropy? medicine?

3. Now, you have both a demonized collective and a subject you're passionate about. Explore that particular subject for that collective, and make a list of all the facts that you've found interesting, remarkable, or surprising. Pick between one or two of them that are positive. Don't try to do more, as probably you won't have time, and remember that the need of any speech is to be razor-sharp in its message.

4. Finally, prepare **an informative speech** about them. It's critical that you **don't try to persuade** people to change their minds about the collective, nor make them pity it. Your speech **should NOT have a call to action.**



TIP

An informative speech is not a synonym of a dry speech that's basically a dump of facts. You can add suspense, emotion, tension even to an informative speech. See the correct example below for a way to build a whole story from a single fact that you wish to share.

Here are some incorrect examples and a correct approach.



Many people believe that the gypsies are thieves. I myself used to be one of those people. Well, I couldn't have been more wrong...

This approach is wrong because it identifies the collective explicitly and tries to persuade people to change their minds.



Throughout history, the nomadic lifestyle and traditions of the Romani people have caused them to be ostracized and unjustly vilified...

This approach is wrong because it identifies the collective and tries to elicit pity or sympathy towards them.



In 1977, one of the geniuses of Cinema and a world reference that put movies on the map as a whole new entertainment category was lying in his bed, about to embark on the ultimate journey. When the massive stroke took Charles Chaplin's life in his sleep, he left behind one of the greatest mysteries of cinema - the one about his own birth and early childhood. The fact that he had struggled with poverty and had entered a workshop at a very early age was widely known. Still, no one could pinpoint any details about the specifics of his birthplace. It took 15 years for the mystery to be solved. When Victoria Chaplin - his daughter - inherited her father's desk, one of the drawers was locked for good, and there was no key to be found. After enlisting the help of a locksmith, she finally managed to open the locked drawer, and therein lay a letter that provided an answer to the eternal questions. In that letter, a gentleman named Jack Hill was writing to Chaplin to inform him that he had been born in the Black Patch in Smethwick, in a gypsy caravan that belonged to a gypsy Queen. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, Charles Chaplin was a member of the Roma people. ...

This approach is correct. It focuses on a surprising and definitely positive fact - that one of the greatest world talents of Cinema was, in fact, of Romani origin. It doesn't identify the collective explicitly, it doesn't try to elicit pity or to make people change their minds. It simply presents an amazing and positive fact and leaves everyone on their own to reconcile their prejudices about the gypsies with the fact that such a bright and loved person was, in fact, a member of them.

Evaluation Card

Travel to Speaker Evaluation

Member	Evaluator	Allotted Time (min) <input type="radio"/> Green <input type="radio"/> Yellow <input type="radio"/> Red	Actual Time
Club name (or location/venue if not in a club setting)	Do you believe the goals were met? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly No <input type="checkbox"/> No		Date

Was the collective described clear? Did it correspond to a traditionally demonized collective?

Was the speaker convincing about the things he liked?

Was the nature of the speech mainly informative and not persuasive?

What were the main points that you liked from the speech?

What was the effect of the speech on the public? How did they react (if at all)?

Was the subject researched with enough depth? Were you left with a desire to know more?

What could have the speaker done to be more effective?

Please write on the back if you need more space



PHOTOGRAPHER

The role of the photographer is, as the name implies, taking pictures of the club meetings, with the dual purposes of documenting it and creating possible marketing materials.

NOTE

As with all other roles, the photographer role is a role for learning. Nobody should demand from you professional-level photographs. It's ok if some of the photographs are bad (or all of them!). Next time, you'll do better.

Note - most of the pictures in this article are clickable, so you can expand them and see them in their original resolution.

Basics of Meeting Photography

This short article is not intended to be a photography course (there are much better free resources on the Internet for that), but we do want to provide you with some tips and guidelines to help you get started. The article assumes

Be as invisible and as unobtrusive as possible.

You should be able to perform your task without getting in the speaker's way and without distracting the audience. Ideally, you can do most of your work from the back.

Disable camera sounds and use MLU mode.

As a continuation of the above, you should try to avoid making any noises when taking pictures. Explicitly disable all camera sounds and - if using a DSLR camera - try to use it in mirror lock-up (MLU) mode. Photographers usually use this mode to minimize the amount of vibration and blur in long-exposure photos. Still, it has the additional benefit of removing the noise that the mirror makes on each picture when it's pushed out of the way to route the light to the camera sensor and then pushed back in position.

Never get between the speaker and the audience while the speech is going on.

This doesn't mean that your camera may not be positioned in the middle of the audience, pointing towards the stage. It's ok if that is the setup.

Adjust the equipment before the meeting

Needless to say, take some pictures of the environment before the meeting has started. This will help you:

- Make sure that the equipment works.
- Determine the right parameters of the camera given the level of lighting
- Having the equipment ready when you need it, rather than risk missing an interesting moment because the camera was not properly configured.

Avoid Flash

The naive way of using flashes (where the flash is uncovered, unmetered, and directly pointed towards the subject) most of the time result in pictures that have a lot of unnatural coloring. However, during a meeting, there's one more element to take into account, and it is that flashes are very distracting and can blind the speaker or the audience. Additionally, some flashes produce noises while charging or when fired, which can add to the overall inconvenience.



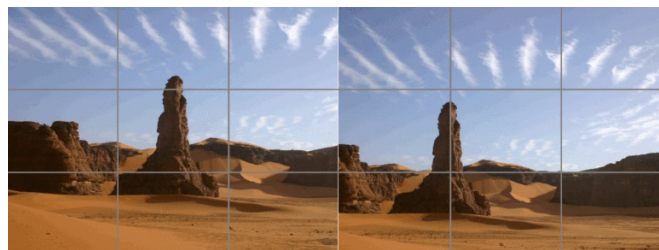
Although whether to allow the use of flash during a meeting is up to each club, flashes are not allowed during conventions and contests.

In general, try to avoid flash altogether.

Rule of thirds

If there's one tip that will instantly improve the quality of your pictures, that is the famous "Rule of Thirds", which states contrary to what intuition says, the central elements of a photograph should not be centered but instead placed 1/3rd away from the borders, Some cameras even offer a 3x3 grid to help with the composition:

The following example from Wikipedia shows the difference between having the main element centered and having it slightly displaced:



NOTE

For close-up shots, always remember that the most important elements of the face are always the eyes. Our brain has evolved to quickly look at the eyes of others to evaluate their intentions. Therefore, try to place the eyes on the rule of third guidelines.

Long and close-up shots

Try to have a mixture of both long (even wide-angle), middle and close-up shots.

A long shot captures a large portion of the meeting area or a numerous group of people.



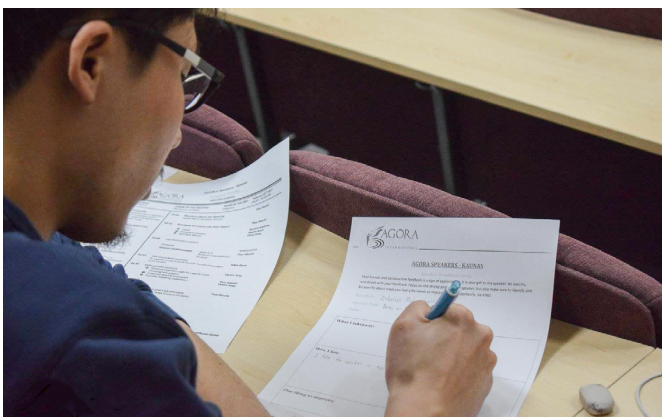
 TIP

Long shots usually work best when you want to convey meetings pack-full of attendees. Don't use long shots if half of the seating places are empty.

A middle shot usually captures only one or two people, and only from their waist up.



A close-up shot captures only someone's face or some object detail.



Avoid poses

Just like nobody likes a phony speech, posed photos also present a problem. Try to reflect naturalness in your pictures. This may sometimes be difficult because when people see a camera pointing at them, they feel either the urge to run away or look at the camera and pose. If you see this happening and it's an informal moment of the meeting (i.e., not during a speech or activity), you can politely ask the person not to pose and continue behaving naturally.

There's one kind of picture that's unavoidable, and it's the club "group pose" - photographing all the attendees. Even for those pictures, try to add some dynamism and nonstandard framing. Here's an example that achieves that, from the clubs in Tokyo, Lviv, and Madagascar.



Check out the following websites that have very visual examples on how to make the most out of a posed picture:

- <https://www.insider.com/how-to-be-more-photogenic-photographer-tips-2020-7>

Avoid gimmicks

Try to avoid using gimmicks in the picture:

- Exaggerate filters
- Distracting Annotations, texts, links, or similar
- Unrelated graphic elements (adding the club logo or a watermark is fine, but anything else such as emojis, hearts, arrows, cat ears, or similar things is probably out of the question)
- Comments

Mind the environment

Always have a good look at what's entering the picture frame, apart from your main subject of interest. Especially obnoxious turn out to be furniture elements, people's accessories (bags, clothing, etc.), or distracting signage.

For example, the following picture would have been great if it was not for the chair that got in the way. In this particular case, the object can be removed, but you should strive to save yourself post-processing time by framing the picture correctly from the beginning.



As a photographer, your main tool besides your eyes are your legs.

Ansel Adams, another great US photographer, used to say that “A good photograph is knowing where to stand.”

Experiment

You're not taking headshot pictures for a passport, so feel free to experiment and break the rules:

- Try contrast photos



- Experiment with weird angles, as in this picture from Kathmandu in Nepal:



- Experiment with different hues or even black & white pictures:



- Experiment with nonstandard viewpoints



NOTE

Photography is a type of speech. In the same way, you should find and develop your own unique public speaking style; you should do the same for photography. Don't take the pictures that others do. Use them as an inspiration, but forge your own personality.

No need to have the best equipment

Creating great pictures does not necessarily require the best possible equipment.

Eve Arnold - the first woman to join the prestigious Magnum Agency in the US used to say that

It's the photographer, not the camera, that is the instrument
Eve Arnold.

What to photograph

There are some specific moments that you should strive to capture:

The Audience Shot

The "audience shot" is a photograph that captures both the speaker and the audience, usually from a position either at the same level as the speaker or from behind him (but remember - never position yourself on the stage or behind the speaker while he's speaking. The best moment to do this shot is once he has finished, during the

applause). The audience shot is also a potent marketing tool both for the speaker and for the club.



The Reaction Shot

The "reaction" shot is a photograph that highlights the reaction of the audience as a whole (or of a particular member) to something that the speaker is saying.



The Stage Shot

The "stage" shot is the moment when a speaker hops onto the stage and is greeted by the host or meeting leader.

The Activity Shot

Activity shots highlight the most interesting moments of activity.





Handshakes

Handshakes form part of the welcoming and sending off protocol for speakers, and it's a great moment to capture. Try to capture it, though, when the protagonists are natural and not looking at the camera.



Awards

There are many situations in which members are given awards. This is one of the few pictures in which posing is almost necessary, and everyone likes to have and share those pictures proudly.

For capturing these shots, make sure that both the award, the person

receiving it, and the person giving it are clearly visible.



Informal Moments Shots

These shots convey the dynamism of the meetings and capture what goes on between the formal activities. They should never be posed, and most of the time, they capture people chatting informally, attacking the food buffet, playing with the club equipment, etc.

Here're two such examples from the club in Kaunas, Lithuania, and Gorzow, Poland:



Group Shot

This is one of the almost canonical pictures that need to be taken and almost always going to be posed - a picture of everyone attending the meeting. As discussed previously, try to avoid the typical flat-front group posed picture and explore interesting angles, perspectives, and compositions instead.

Curiosity Shots

These shots usually represent close-ups of interesting gadgets, gimmicks, equipment, stage or meeting venue details, etc.

Here you can see some of them



NOTE

To help your club's (and Agora's) marketing and outreach efforts, try always to capture part or all of the club's signage (banners, posters, etc.). Here's an example of capturing the Agora logo during an act at the Lisbon Convention. The presence of the Agora logo makes the picture much more marketable.



■ **A warning on photographing minors**

The European Union, as well as other countries, have very strict rules in terms of allowing photography and publications of pictures that include minors. Before doing so, make sure to check your local laws and regulations regarding the matter. In case of doubt, it's better to err on the side of caution - unless you have the written permission of their parents or legal tutors, do not include minors in any pictures or videos.



TIP

An indirect way to get such consent is to give the pictures, including the minor, to their parents, and if they choose to make it public (for example, by posting it on their social network), then you may do so as well. In those cases, always capture a screenshot of where the picture was posted as proof of that fact.

■ **Specifics for Online Meetings**

Yes, online meetings may also be “photographed”. In this case, your options are very limited in terms of available shots and quality. The act of “photographing” something is basically taking a screenshot.

Still, a useful tip is to connect from more than one computer or device and take shots of different things occurring at the same time (for example, a full-size picture of the speaker and simultaneously, a screenshot of the audience, or a close-up on an individual member of it)

VIDEOGRAPHER

The role of the Videographer shares many traits with that of the [Photographer](#), and you should read that section for some of the basic techniques (such as the rule of thirds, long and close-up shots, and others) that apply equally well to video footage.

Just like the Photographer, video material serves a dual purpose:

- It allows members to analyze their performance, see how they were seen (and heard) by the audience, check what worked and what didn't, and especially align the internal image they have about their performance with the way it's externally seen.
- It serves as excellent marketing material. There's nothing more effective in advertising right now than video.

In this article we'll be talking about "Cameras", but please note that most phones nowadays produce good enough footage so that you can use them instead of cameras. For top-quality, though, nothing beats the optics of a real camcorder. Keep in mind that it's not only about the quality of the optics but also the size of the lens, which is directly related to the amount of light it can capture.

■ What to Record

Apart from the obvious - recording the meeting itself - there are several more very useful recordings that you can make at the meetings:

- Gathering **video testimonies** of members. Video testimonies are beneficial for advertising and represent short clips where members answer the same question. You will always want to have open-ended questions about the club and Agora, such as:
 - **What has changed for you since you joined the club?**
 - **How has Agora helped you in your personal/professional life?**
 - **Tell us about a time when you applied something you learned in the club.**

This last technique - "Tell us about a time when" is especially useful for producing personal, impacting stories, rather than the generic answers that the typical question of "How does Agora help you?". In fact, these types of questions are becoming exceptionally common in job interviews.
- **Recording interviews** of members and guests. These require a bit more preparation, especially in terms of the questions you might want to ask.
 - **How did you learn about the club/Agora?**
 - **What did you think about our meeting?**
 - **Did it meet your expectations?**
 - **What did you like? What are the things you didn't like?**
 - **What feedback can you give us to improve?**
 - **What can you tell us about your background?**
 - **..etc..**

💡 TIP

Learn to stay silent during and for a short time after the guest has finished answering the question (1-2 seconds). Having a clear end will make video editing the interview much easier. If you start speaking as soon as the person interviewed has finished, it will be challenging to cut parts of the interview.

- Creating before-and-after sequences. These sequences show the progress of a member from the very first speech till the very last. They are extremely useful for members to see their actual progress and for the VP of Marketing and VP of Membership to showcase how efficient the system is.

💡 TIP

Never delete the original raw video, even after you have edited it into a polished video roll. You may never know when the need will arise to use the material differently.

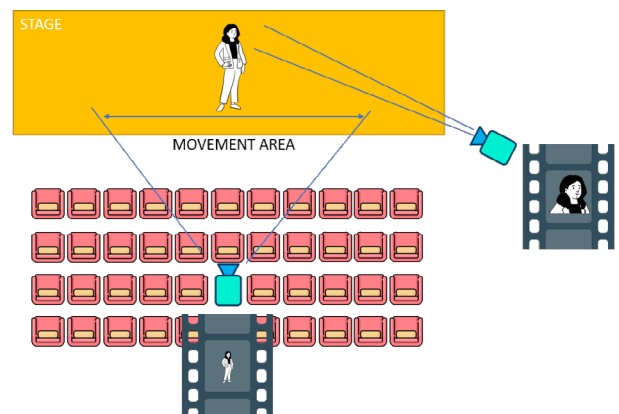
■ Camera Placement

If you have only one camera, there's no much choice about where the camera should be placed: close enough to get a clear shot of the speaker but not so close as to lose the speaker when he walks around the stage.

💡 TIP

The camera should be on a tripod and pointed towards the stage with a wide/tele adjustment that should remain constant during the meeting. Ideally, you shouldn't need to touch the camera at all, much less move around with it.

If you can have more than one camera, things get much interesting. The usual setup is to place the second camera laterally and control it manually to get a permanent close-up shot of the speaker:



This will allow you to have two video streams of the same event, and you can switch between the shots during the video editing.

💡 TIP

It's usually a good idea to mark on the stage area, on the ground, the limits of the camera frame. This will allow the speaker to know how far they can move during the meeting without leaving the frame. Of course, the marks should be inconspicuous.

The same approach applies to interviews: ideally, you should have one front and one side cameras, with slightly different wide/tele adjustments:

There's a virtually [unlimited list of videos](#) on Youtube on how to do proper interviewing with dual cameras. Check them out.

■ Recording the Audience

If you have two cameras, it's an excellent idea to occasionally pan and record the audience, not only when they clap but also how they react when something unexpected happens. Of course, you can't predict when that will happen, so you'll need one more camera placed all the time facing the audience. If you can't afford that setup, then use the secondary camera.

■ Audio Recording

Audio Recording is an extremely complex subject where the available budget will dictate the solution you can apply.

The camera's (or the telephone's) own microphone will give the lowest possible quality.



The next step would be using a **directional or "shotgun" microphone**. These can be attached either to cameras or phones and provide much better sound quality.

NOTE

Good directional microphones are not cheap. Don't waste money on cheap rod-looking microphones. Instead, if you have the budget, use reputable brands like Røde, Sennheiser, Sony, or similar.

The final step is using a **lavalier or lapel microphone**.



They have excellent sound pick up from the speaker and give the clearest possible audio, and the microphones themselves are not very expensive. They have several issues, though:

- Probably you'll need at least 2 or 3 during the meeting since at any given time, up to 3 people may be on stage participating (think of the Hot Questions Section)
- Unless you really want to break the bank with a wireless transmission system, you'll probably need a cheap recording device for each microphone. Usually, a budget mobile phone with a 3.5mm input jack works great. You'll need as many of them as you have microphones.
- The audio track will be split from the video, and you'll have to use video editing software to put them back together and align them.
- These microphones will not pick any surrounding sound at all. You might say that this is the goal in the first place, but if you want to record audience reactions, clippings, things happening on the stage (such as sounds made by props), etc. - you'll need other microphones.

OTHER MEETING ROLES

In addition to the standard meeting roles, Clubs are free to define their own special roles and meeting sections.

IDEA

Some clubs, for example, have a "Joke Master" that tells or asks people to tell jokes to break the ice and practice one of the most difficult but useful tools of public speaking - humor.

Some clubs have language games for helping members improve their control of the language, and they have a role called "Game Master" which is the person in charge of organizing the language game session for that particular meeting.

If you have nonstandard roles, please make sure that either the Meeting Leader or the people in charge of these roles explain their purpose at the beginning of the meeting, for the benefit both of guests and new members that might not know what these roles are about.

If you're the [Vice President of Education](#) of a club and you want to try out a new section, you don't need to ask permission from anyone to have a special role in your club meetings - just go ahead, test the waters, and see how it works. If, on the other hand, you're a club member or other officer, speak to your VPE and work together to implement it within the educational plan.

Whatever roles you want to define, never lose sight that the main goal of Agora Speakers is mainly educational, more than social. As such, all activities must be geared towards the education of members.

Also, be careful about not overloading the meeting with too many things. Meetings longer than two hours tend to become boring very quickly. If your meeting is too long, you may start seeing people (especially guests) leaving in the middle of the meeting, which can be very damaging for the overall enjoyment and morale, not to mention very distracting.

■ Requirements for Custom Sections

As outlined above, all Custom Sections must:

- Have an educational purpose that is compatible with the bylaws of Agora Speakers International. Here are some examples of things that would not be compatible. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list.
 - Sections that go against the [Core Principles](#) of the foundation
 - Sections that educate on a specific religion, or on religion in general (this violates the Neutrality principle. Even if the subject is Religion in general and not one particular religion, it still violates the Neutrality principle)
 - Sections that promote or revolve around a political party, ideology, or set of moral principles.
 - Sections that promote any kind of discrimination,

intolerance, hate, violence, etc., or go against the [Speech Content](#) guidelines

- Sections that go against our [official goals](#). For example, sections advocating or educating against technological progress or science, or against the involvement of the youth (of any age) in them, or against cultural exchange and openness, etc. are not allowed.
- Sections that promote or educate about [pseudosciences](#).

- Have a specific amount of time allotted to them, known in advance, and controlled by the Timer of the meeting.
- Have a clearly defined development that is known in advance.

If you want to implement a new section in your meetings but are unsure if it matches these requirements, please send us a note at info@agoraspeakers.org.

■ Does it work? Share! It doesn't? Keep experimenting!

If you try out a new role or activity and you discover that it works, then drop us a note and share your experience so that we, in turn, can promote it worldwide to all clubs - we are always increasing the number and variety of activities and roles in meeting to better serve our members. Sections like [Crossfire](#), [Colloquium](#), and others were added as a result of member contributions.

If, on the other hand, the section doesn't go as well as planned - no worries. Maybe the idea needs some work. Apply the "Continuous Improvement" cycle and try again. Gather feedback, tweak the idea a bit, and see if, with those new changes, things can work better.

■ Meeting Role / Section Template

To document a new meeting role or meeting section, please use the following structure. We use this structure both throughout the wiki and also in our online systems.

- **Name of the section** - For example, "Joke corner."
- **Recommended duration and signals** - How much time does this section usually last? At what times should the Green and Yellow signals be turned on?
- **Difficulty** - How difficult would it be for a club to organize the section? We have three levels:
 - **Easy** - Any club can organize it, even if it just recently chartered
 - **Intermediate** - The section is better suited for clubs that have been mastered the basic meeting agenda.
 - **Difficult** - The section requires stable clubs with regular attendance and good organizational capabilities (for example, a [Debate](#) section would be here, since it requires quite a lot of organization and participating people to carry out successfully)
- **Online or physical-only?**

- **Core focus.** Which of the four core pillars (Leadership, Communication, Critical Thinking, Debating) does the activity focus on?
- **In club or external?** Does this activity happen within a club meeting, or outside of it? For example, an activity might require going to a science fair and doing interviews of people. This would be an external activity, even if afterward you need to present a report to the club.
- **Detailed Description** - Explain what happens in the section. Which roles do what, in what order, and for how long. Make sure to provide examples of interactions.
- **Names of the roles participating.** For example, "Joke master". Some sections may require more than one role. Also, for each of the roles, indicate:
 - **Preparation and Participation time.** How much time does the person with that role need to prepare for it (before the meeting), and how much "stage time" they get during the meeting.
 - **Difficulty** - Is it an easy role that even a recently joined member can do, or is it a difficult role only for seasoned members?
 - **Explanation** - How does the person having this role prepare for it? How do they carry it out during the meetings? Also, it's useful to provide tips, caveats, and especially examples.
 - **Suggested evaluation criteria.** Each of the roles should have between 4 and 10 questions to guide the evaluators when providing feedback.
- **Who evaluates the section?** - Does it have a special evaluator (like the [Hot Questions Evaluator](#) for the Hot Questions section), or is it performed by one of the general evaluating roles such as the [Meeting Evaluator](#), [General Evaluator for Speeches](#), etc.? Remember that one of the basic principles in a club meeting is that almost everything (every role and every section) needs to get feedback in order to improve.
- **Skills trained** - Please indicate which skills do you believe this activity trains from our [skills matrix](#).

CHAPTER 6

EFFECTIVE EVALUATIONS

THE ROLE OF THE EVALUATOR

■ Effective Evaluations

Alexander Hristov

As you've probably seen, many roles are related to evaluating others. It's important to note that "to evaluate" means "to provide constructive feedback" so that the person being evaluated can improve in specific ways. Evaluation is by no means judging or criticizing other people. The role of the Speech Evaluator is one of the most important in Agora. You'll be providing your fellow member with the necessary insight to help him advance along his educational path.

■ Anyone is qualified to be a Speech Evaluator

One question that usually Speech Evaluators ask is, "Am I experienced enough to be a Speech Evaluator?" or "I've only done a few projects, am I qualified to be a Speech Evaluator for an advanced project?"



Maria Beira, evaluating a speech at an Agora Speakers Barreiro meeting

Usually, the implication is that, since you haven't done enough speeches, you somehow lack the knowledge or the experience to be a judge of anyone else's speech.

This, however, is a fallacy. Consider, for example, the last time you went to a movie with a friend. Did you have an opinion on the film or the acting after you left the venue? I can bet that the first things you told your friend after the movie was over were something like,

Bosco Montero providing feedback to a speaker in Agora Speakers Madrid, Spain

"Wow, this was a great movie. I loved when " or "Gee, what a terrible movie. The acting was soo bad". And yet, you are neither a professional filmmaker nor scriptwriter, nor actor.

The same applies to many other facets of our lives - we go to a restaurant, and we do have an opinion on the food even if we're not able to cook even a simple fried egg without leaving a mess in the kitchen. We go to a theatre play, and we do have an opinion on the story and the acting, even if we have not finished drama school. We go to a football match, and we do have an opinion on how each player performed even we never do any sports.

The reason for all this is that we're not evaluating from a professional viewpoint.

The goal of a Speech Evaluation is not to evaluate the speaker from the viewpoint of some academic or professional criteria.

The goal of a Speech Evaluation is to give your opinion on the speaker and the speech from the viewpoint of an audience member.

As a member of the audience, you know what you saw, know what you heard, and know-how the speech made you feel. And you have a whole lifetime of experience listening to speeches in all possible contexts.

Remember also that, as an Evaluator, you're merely expressing your own opinion.

■ Your Goals as an Evaluator

You have three primary goals as a Speech Evaluator:

- To **Motivate** the speaker. All speakers are humans, and they share the same concerns and needs for acceptance as anyone else. Even if a speaker is very advanced and transpires confidence, he will still have the same inner doubts and fears - "Did I do it right?", "Was I convincing?", "What do these people think of me?", "Did they realize I made this and that mistake?". The only difference between an advanced speaker and a novice when it comes to these fears is how they control and deal with them. So all speakers will value being recognized and encouraged by pointing out the positive things they did.
- To **Educate** the speaker and the audience. As an Evaluator,

you need to point out what could be improved and why these things are important. Don't just say, "*I would use a bit more vocal variety*". Explain why vocal variety is important in general and for that particular project. The explanation is for the speaker, but also for educating the audience, as one of the main ways we learn is by observing what others do.

- To **help** the speaker improve. All speakers want to improve, even more, advanced ones. Otherwise, they would be charging for speaking at conferences instead of attending a club! To Help a speaker improve, you need to provide him with specific and actionable advice: things that - in your opinion - he could have done better or differently to improve his speech effectiveness.

Now, I'm not suggesting that you should remember this as the "Meh!" goals, but hey, if it helps, go for it.

■ **What to do as an Evaluator - Before the Meeting**

To be effective as an Evaluator, you need to know who will deliver the speech and the project itself. Even if you have "volunteered" for Evaluator's role at the meeting itself, there's always some time before the meeting starts to try at least to do the following steps.

1. **Read about the project**

Read the project description that the speaker is going to deliver completely. Pay special attention to the learning goals and the key objectives. These are the main takeaways for the speaker from the project.

2. **Determine the Context**

All Evaluations should be tailored to the particular context in which they are happening. The context includes things like:

- The Project objectives
- The overall goals of the educational path the speaker is following
- The Level of the speaker
- The Specific interests of the speaker
- The Venue
- The Time
- The Preceding and Following Events.

An example of how context influences a good evaluation, consider the level of the speaker. When someone is beginning public speaking, the feedback on basic elements such as having good eye contact with the audience can be extensive and profusely explained. For example, "During your speech, you didn't look too much at the left side of the audience. Having good eye contact with all members is important for many reasons - it immediately draws the attention of the person you're looking at, you transmit a feeling of confidence and authority, and you create an atmosphere of a friendly one on one conversation with that person".

If the speaker was instead an experienced speaker with 20 projects behind his back, the above would be overkill and waste precious

time that could be better spent on detailing less known issues by the speaker. Note that this doesn't mean that you shouldn't mention it at all. Quite the contrary, all speakers - even very advanced ones - make basic mistakes occasionally. So be sure to say something like, "During your speech, you didn't look too much at the left side of the audience.", but don't dwell on it - an advanced speaker already knows that.

Also, experienced speakers usually like to receive more suggestions for improvement, while novice speakers need more encouragement and only a few tips for improvement at a time.

The Venue is also an important context. Good speakers need to adapt to bad venues:

- **Geometry** - Sometimes, the venue is terrible because the audience is not concentrated in a single location but distributed in various shapes. Good speakers have to make sure that they address and establish eye contact with all audience members regardless of where they're seated.
- **Acoustics** - Some venues have terrible acoustics, and a good speaker must compensate for that by projecting his voice even louder.
- **Illumination** - Sometimes, the lights are too dim, and the speaker has to put additional emphasis to avoid people falling asleep. Sometimes the lights are too bright, which will be problematic if the speaker uses visual aids or projection equipment.
- **Temperature** - If the venue does not have an appropriate temperature, humidity, or ventilation, people will be more focused on their uncomfortableness, which will require extra effort from the speaker to keep their attention. A good speaker can sometimes include an appropriate (usually humorous) reference to those factors and instantly connect with the audience and their positive predisposition virtually with no effort.

Day and Time of day are also essential factors in a speech, although, in club settings, they will be relatively constant as most clubs meet at the same time the same day of the week. However, for out of club projects and for the real world in general, a speech delivered a Monday early in the morning is not the same as a speech delivered on a Friday before the workday is almost over and people are already in mind and spirit away from the venue where the speech is given. A speech at 8:00 am should not be the same as a speech given immediately before or after lunch.

3. **Contact the Speaker**

Your work as an Evaluator begins well before the meeting. Many speakers have their own additional goals in every project. Many speakers want to make sure that they have learned and put into practice specific things from previous projects. It is beneficial to have someone point them out how successful (or not) they were in doing so. Maybe the speaker has the habit of looking too much to the left side of the audience? Maybe the speaker has the habit of moving back and forth the whole time? Maybe the speaker wants to make sure his enunciation is clear? That he is heard at the back of the room?

For those reasons, contact the speaker before the meeting and

ask him if he would like you to pay attention to anything special, in addition to the project goals.

4. Pre-write your evaluation

Although you have not yet heard the speech, you can decide on your evaluation strategy before the meeting and pre-write its general structure. For example, you may decide in advance that you will open with a positive comment on how you remember the beginnings of that particular speaker. Or you may decide to start with your personal experience with that particular project. One fellow member used to start every single of his evaluations with “Your speech reminded me of”, and then proceeded with a concise personal story.

You may also select some quotes that might be applicable for a particular project. For example, for the project of “[Speech Development](#),” where the main focus is using effective language when writing the speech, I like to include the following quote from Antoine de Saint-Exupery:

“If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up people to collect wood and don’t assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.”

This quote helps illustrate the need to use language that transmits powerful images and feelings to the audience.

Remember that an Evaluation is also a speech in itself, and it should have all the attributes of a good speech - structure, message, clarity, pacing, etc.

You can also pre-write the main items you want to focus on, and maybe pre-write some keywords that you will later merely underline or cross (some prefer to write “plus” and “minus” signs) depending on how the speaker performs. Anything you can do to save you time writing down your impressions during the speech itself is welcome, as it will allow you more time to concentrate on the speech.

■ What to do as an Evaluator - During the Meeting

Where to Sit.

You should sit in a neutral, non-privileged location. Don’t fall into the temptation of sitting in the front row to “see and hear” the speaker clearly, because that’s not how the audience, in general, will perceive it. Remember that as an Evaluator, you’re not some official judge for a performance whose opinion is more important than anyone else’s, but merely a member of the audience that has been allowed to make his views known publicly in an Evaluation mini-speech.

Listen Carefully

It goes without saying that to evaluate a Speech, you have to listen to it, and very carefully at that. Hopefully, by this time, you have pre-written the things you will be focusing on, so you will not be spending time writing. Forget about your drink, your food, your mobile, your neighbors in the audience, or the member you have a crush on... Forget about anything else.

Take notes

No matter how wonderful you think your memory is, it isn’t. Don’t deceive yourself thinking that you will remember to say this or that about a speech - write it down. In particular, write down, as they

happen:

- Any particular quotes or sentences that you find particularly good or memorable
- Any gestures or body movements that were very appropriate to support the main message (or that, on the contrary, felt awkward, exaggerated, or out of place)
- Any visual aids or props that stood out or were not used very successfully.
- In general, any element of the whole presentation was great (or the opposite).

When you take notes, make sure you write in a way that will allow you to read them back! More than one or two evaluators have suffered on stage because they couldn’t read their own handwriting.

A good recommendation also is to write in big letters. This will allow you to read easily, get rid of the notes, and not have them in your hands. You would be able to place them on the lectern or a chair on the first row and read them from a distance.

While you are taking notes, also decide on the importance of each issue you wrote down. You will not have time, during your evaluation speech, to say every single thing you want to say. So it’s a good technique to assign an important number to any observation (some people prefer to use “+”, “++”, and “+++” for example, and the same with “-” for the points for improvement), and then quickly write an outline of the things you want to say when the speech is over.

Show that you care

Even though they shouldn’t, speakers usually pay more attention to the evaluator than to the rest of the audience. Up to a point, that is natural and not very problematic. But it does place extra responsibility on you. You should show that you care about the speech with extra eye contact, small approval gestures like nodding, and being supportive when support is critical - for example, when the speaker presents a joke or a funny anecdote.

Things the evaluation is not about

While listening to the speech, it’s always good to remember not only the things that are evaluated but also those that are not:

- Choice of content is generally not evaluated, except to say how it related to achieving the project’s goals. For example, if the project is about Body Language, then you could comment on whether the choice of the subject gave lots of opportunities for this or not. Other than that, speakers are free to choose the subject they want to talk about.
- Content is generally not evaluated, except in some very specific projects. Even if you don’t agree with the content, try not to comment on it, or much less to argue with the speaker or engage in a debate over who’s right or wrong.
- The person is never evaluated. You shouldn’t comment on his clothes, or his style, or the choice of accessories, except if they affected the speech in a very specific way. For example, if the speaker is wearing a set of bracelets that make distracting noises every time he moves his hand, that should be pointed out. However, comments like “*Today you were wearing a very beautiful dress*” or “*what a nice suit you wore today*” are

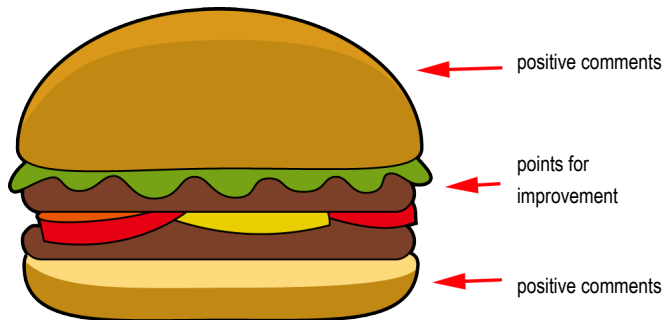
completely inappropriate.

■ What to do as an Evaluator - The Evaluation itself

Usually, the recommended approach for delivering an Evaluation Speech is called the “sandwich” approach, combining one layer of positive feedback and things that you like, then one layer of things for improvement, then one conclusion layer of things you liked. The sandwich can be several floors high if you keep repeating this structure.

How “thick” should each layer be? That depends a lot on the level and confidence of the speaker.

- For beginning speakers, something like 40% positive, 20% improvement, 40% positive is very encouraging. This would probably mean that in the evaluation, you'd only mention a couple of points for improvement, the main ones.
- However, more advanced speakers would probably prefer something like 20% 50% 30%, meaning five to six points for improvement and two to three very strong positive points.



Presenting Positive Feedback

Positive Feedback is usually the easiest part. However, it's very easy to fall into several traps:

- **Praise** - Praise is definitely positive, and everyone likes receiving praise, but it is not feedback. The difference is that praise is nonspecific, and the speaker cannot know what exactly is the thing that he did that earned him that praise, so he can repeat it or build on it. For example, “Great job on the story. Really good work!” - that's just nonspecific praise. However, if you say, “Great job on the story. I loved the little girl character and how detailed was the description of her character, and also the way you impersonated her with your voice”, then that's positive feedback. Especially run away from generic adjectives that mean nothing “nice vocal variety”, “good speech”, “fantastic presentation”, unless they're immediately followed by an explanation of why you thought they were such.
- **Trivialities** - Don't fall into the trap of giving positive feedback or - worse, even, praise - on trivial issues. This is especially important for advanced speakers. For a beginner, it's good and encouraging if you mention that he didn't use notes or that he had great eye contact and even comment on them. However, for an experienced speaker, these things should have become trivialities. Put yourself in the shoes of someone that has already delivered 20+ projects, and he hears, for the 21st time, “You didn't use notes, which was great because...”

- **Too much positive feedback.** Too much of a good thing can be bad. All members join Agora to improve and learn. If an Evaluation consists of 80% (or even worse, 100%) positive feedback, the member might think, “Ok, If I'm so great, then what am I doing here in the first place?”
- **Positive feedback as an excuse or mixed signals.** People often use positive feedback as an excuse or a dampener for what is about to follow. You can see that in constructions such as “I loved BUT”. The BUT word basically erases anything that was said before and marks it as an irrelevant introduction to the real statement that comes after that. Avoid this. Positive feedback should stand on its own.

Presenting Feedback for Improvement

Presenting this part is usually the most difficult. Reasons for this difficulty can be:

- We don't want to be critical
- We're unsure of our own experience
- We're unsure of our qualifications
- We're unsure of whether we heard or saw correctly.

To address them, remember that you're not scoring the speaker but merely expressing your own opinion and offering him advice on how to improve.

To be useful, the points for improvement must:

- **Be specific.** Again, this is what distinguishes criticism from feedback. Criticism, like praise, is nonspecific and many times personal. “Your use of body language was a bit too much” is an example of criticism. However, if you say instead, “When you jumped on the table and started acting like a gorilla, and then hung yourself on the lamp, I think that was a bit too much when it comes to body language.”
- **Provide guidance.** This means that you not only point specifically what parts of the presentation could be improved, but you also advise how they can be improved. Continuing with the previous example, you could add, “I think just placing your hands and curving your body the way gorillas do and walking a few steps like this would have been enough to make the point”.
- **Actionable.** This means that the person can really do something about the thing that you didn't like. For example, if the person has a husky or raspy voice, then that's the voice he has. It's not really constructive feedback to tell him, “I would suggest when you read romantic poetry to use a different voice, softer and more melodic.”

When it comes to presenting the points for improvement:

- **Don't repeat recommendations.** It's enough if you point them out once, no need to dwell on them repetitively.
- **Don't use imperative language.** You're not the speaker's boss. Try to avoid “You should”, “You need” (or, God Forbid, the dreaded “you must”), or in general, the “finger-pointing” language. Instead, a recommended way is to say “I would do this and this instead”, “I recommend that you do it in this way”,

"I suggest that you..", "I would offer", etc.

- **Don't talk in absolutes.** Remember that you're merely stating your opinion, not some universal truth. *"The voice variety was lacking"*. Instead, state that *"I didn't notice too much vocal variety - I only remember three instances, when you impersonated the little girl, the wolf and the granny."*
- **Don't speak in the name of others.** Again, this is related to the previous point. You don't need to prove anything to the speaker or the audience. For example: "I think we can all agree that the body language can be improved".
- Finally, **state what you observed instead of making assumptions** about the underlying reasons. For example, don't say, *"I felt the speech was not well prepared,"* since you have no basis whatsoever for that assumption. Instead, you could state what you actually felt: *"I felt that at moments you were hesitant or unsure about what to say next."*

The Evaluation Conclusion

The conclusion of the Evaluation should summarize again the positive points, the points for improvement, and end up on a motivating and encouraging high note.

Try to avoid using cliches, in particular, the abused "I look forward to your next Speech". Try to be creative. Plan for the conclusion before even the speech.

■ What to do as an Evaluator - After the Meeting

After the meeting, talk to the person you evaluated to see if he has any doubts or questions.

Also, remember to fill in his evaluation card for that project.

■ Becoming a great Evaluator

As always, perfection comes through practice. But you don't need to be an evaluator to gain practice. For example, you can do all the steps that an evaluation requires without delivering it in public. And it's always instructive to compare your evaluation to the one delivered by the appointed Evaluator at the meeting.

■ When you are the one being evaluated

When you're the one being evaluated, accept the evaluation with humility and as a gift. The Evaluator is there to help you improve. Don't take anything personally.

Don't argue with the Evaluator, much less during the evaluation itself - he's just stating his opinion and transmitting you the way he saw and felt your presentation.

If you want to make any comments or discuss something with him, do it after the meeting.

■ When NOT to be an Evaluator

Once you become an active and appreciated Evaluator in your club, you will be tempted to apply your skills elsewhere. Do that with caution, if at all. Speakers in a Club come with the purpose of being evaluated and being provided with feedback; they expect it, and they value it. This is not the case for the general population or much fewer speakers at other events.

Imagine attending an award ceremony, then approaching the winner after the ceremony and saying something like, "I liked your acceptance speech. I loved how you projected your voice to the back of the room so that everyone could hear you. May I suggest that you have more sustained eye contact with your audience? I noticed that you tended to look too much to the right wing of the room, and ...

As ridiculous as this might seem, it does happen.

There's a difference between being a teacher when you're asked to step in and provide feedback and lecturing the world-at-large.

CHAPTER 7 CLUB OFFICERS

Agora Speakers Manila in the Philippines, with founders Celia Alamo Jacob (first right) and Fabio Aromatici (fifth left)



Paulina Lapi ska and Wanda Łopusza ska, from Gorzow Speakers Poland

■ What are club officers?

Management and leadership are usually an invisible kind of oil that everyone takes for granted when things are running smoothly but that when absent, causes things to break apart.

Running a successful club requires a lot of time and dedication and carefully planned teamwork to ensure that meetings happen on time and regularly, that they have an educational purpose, that they are concise and not a waste of time, that members grow and develop, that the club benefits from the wider Agora community, etc. This is a lot of work that needs to be shared among a set of “officer roles” with different responsibilities.

Club officers are both leaders and managers. It’s important to note that these are two very different concepts. Leadership requires vision - having a clear idea of where you want to take things, strategy, seeing the big picture, sharing your vision with the members, and inspiring and challenging them to accomplish it. On the other hand, management is being able to convert that vision into a specific plan of action and execute it within a timeframe.

Club Officers are in charge of running the club to ensure a smooth experience for everyone. All Officer roles are voluntary positions, and in fact, they are an excellent opportunity for practicing leadership of a small community.

Unlike businesses and corporations, in a nonprofit organization such as Agora Speakers, members can never be pressured into doing something. Everything is voluntary, and the most an officer can do is ask politely and explain. In fact, leading a nonprofit community is much more challenging than leading a business, as officers have to put into practice a lot more people-related and motivational skills than in any business.

■ Basic Characteristics of Officer Roles

There are a set of required officer roles in every club (usually for legal reasons) and some optional but recommended ones.

i NOTE

Note that we’re talking about “roles” and not “people”. The same person can have more than one role (for example, in very small clubs, the Treasurer and Secretary could be the same person).

The opposite is also true: a role - except that of the President - may be shared among several people when the workload is high. For a very big club, there might be two Vice-presidents in charge of Education. In this case, it is recommended that there’s a clear distribution of responsibilities for each person sharing a role.

In addition to the specified officer roles, a club can define additional officer roles such as “Event Organizer” (for special events or parties), “Blogger”, etc.

- All officer roles are voluntary. No member may be forced to become an officer. No club may impose restrictions for participating in any of the educational activities that require serving time as an officer or performing any of the officer’s duties.
- Officer roles have a limited duration of either 6 months or 1 year.
- All officers must also be active members of the club during the whole time of their term. Please note the keyword “active”, which means officers still need to participate in the regular club meetings as any other member.
- All officer roles are pro-bono roles. No officer positions may receive any compensation from the club or the hosting organization. However, they may have the expenses that arise

from their activity in connection with their position reimbursed, as long as the type of expense has been previously designated as reimbursable by the Foundation.

- Officer roles are personal. The person performing the role may not “outsource” or “delegate” it completely to a different person (much less to an external entity). Please note that delegating specific tasks is completely acceptable.
- Finally, all roles are elective - if there is more than one candidate for the same role, elections must be held.

NOTE

Each club freely decides on its own whether they want 6-month or 12-month officer terms, and that may change from year to year. However, please note that all officer positions must have the same term duration. A club may not have a 1-year term for President and a 6-month term for VP of Education.

candidate with volunteering experience

- 85% of the hiring managers were willing to overlook resume flaws if volunteer experience is indicated in it.

At Deloitte, we have experienced the importance of volunteering and understand that it helps build skill sets that are critical to developing well-rounded leaders across our organization. it

*Doug Marshall
Director, Corporate Citizenship
Deloitte Services LP*

A similar [study performed by CareerBuilder](#) found that 60% of the hiring managers considered candidates with volunteering experience much more marketable. A study by the CNCS quoted by [Forbes](#) showed that jobless people who volunteered had a 27% higher chance of landing a job.

The benefits of volunteering extend to many other areas - even into the realm of health. A study by the Ghent University in Belgium found that “volunteers have a health score which is statistically significantly higher than those who do not volunteer. This total association turned out to be substantial: it corresponded in size to, e.g., the health gains of a five years younger age.”

Club Officers are Not Professionals

Members should always keep in mind that Club Officers are not expected to be professional leaders or managers. Just as all speech projects are learning projects, and no one should expect a TED-level talk in a club, in the same way, all officer positions are learning opportunities. Everyone should try to help and encourage officers rather than approach their roles with demands.



Club Officers are only expected to perform in a “best-effort” way (Meaning: they do what they can to the best of their time, knowledge, and ability).

They are under no obligation to meet anyone’s individual expectations, much less obliged to provide any specific level of service.

Eligibility

Any regularly attending member with at least 6 months Agora club experience is elective for becoming a club officer (except in newly founded clubs, where this requirement is dropped). The Agora experience does not need to have happened in the club where the member wants to become an officer.

Only members able to serve at least 6 months are eligible to become club officers. Of course, all sorts of unexpected can happen even with the best intentions, but at least the visible horizon should be clear for the immediate future. For example, if a member has already scheduled to move to a different city in two months, it’s pointless to serve that time as an officer.

■ Becoming a Club Officer

Why become an officer?

In many companies, progressing up to a managerial position requires lots of time (sometimes year) and dedication. Any mistakes that you make in that role may turn out to be fatal for your career.

You probably already know that Agora clubs provide a safe environment where to learn public speaking, with the freedom to experiment, make mistakes and learn from them in preparation for your professional usage of what you learned. Similarly, the officer roles in clubs provide an environment where you can learn leadership and managerial skills safely and where mistakes are not critical for your career.

NOTE

All officer roles teach different skills. For example, as a Vice President of Marketing, you’ll learn marketing programs, PR, relationships with the media, outreach campaigns, etc. As a Vice President of Education, however, the things you’ll learn are different. And as a President - even more different. Hence, the more officer roles you perform in your club, the better.

There are many qualitative benefits of becoming a club officer:

- Learning new skills - from budgeting to risk management, to planning, to marketing.
- Helping your club thrive
- Increasing your self-confidence
- Increasing your employability and the attractiveness of your resume to hiring managers
- Directly participating in the governance of the club and Agora.

There’s ample research that volunteering (and even more specifically - leadership volunteering) has a huge impact on your professional career development. For example, a study in [2016 by Deloitte](#) found not only that volunteering greatly impacted the acquisition of leadership skills, but also that it had a very direct impact on job seekers:

- 82% of the hiring managers were more willing to choose a

NOTE

A person who is a member of more than one Agora club may, if he or she has the time and commitment, hold up to two officer positions simultaneously - as long as they are in different clubs.

Holding three or more officer positions simultaneously is not allowed, as this will severely impact the quality of the services provided to the club.

Elections and Terms

Agora's Educational Year begins on Jan 1st and ends on Dec 31st. Depending on the club's decision on the duration of officer terms, the term and election dates are as follows:

ELECTIONS AND TERMS

TERM DURATION	ELECTIONS	TERM DATE
1-year term	BETWEEN NOV 1 ST AND DEC 15 TH	JAN 1ST - DEC 31 ST
6-month term	Between Nov 30 th and Dec 15 th	Jan 1st - Jun 30 th
	BETWEEN JUN 1 ST AND JUN 15 TH	Jul 1 st - Dec 31 st

LIST OF STANDARD CLUB OFFICERS

This is a listing of all the standard Club Officers roles:

 REQUIRED OFFICERS
President
Vice President, Community Leadership
Vice President, Education
Vice President, Membership
Vice President, Marketing

OPTIONAL OFFICERS
Community Manager
Meeting Facilitator (Officer)
Secretary
Treasurer

■ **Club Executive Committee**

The people having an Officer role in a club form the Club's executive committee. Since there are roles that may be shared among more than one person, the number of members in the club's executive committee may vary.

The Club Executive Committee only exists if all the mandatory roles have been filled and only if at least three people have officer roles.

For example, a club that has just started and where the Founder is performing all of the roles is not considered to have an Executive Committee. Similarly, if a club has existed for some time but at one point in time it only has a President, 2 VPs of Education, and 1 VP of Membership, it does not have the necessary set of officers to constitute an Executive Committee.

Clubs that do not have an Executive Committee may not proceed with any actions that require approval by the Executive Committee (for example, [Disciplinary Processes](#))

NOTE

The above rule is to prevent autocratic abuse during the period of time where the club is still young, and all the officer roles are concentrated in one or two Club Founders.

Executive Committee Meetings

The Club's executive committee must meet at least once every two months to discuss general club matters. Additionally, any club Officer may request a meeting of the Executive Committee to discuss a matter of interest. Such requests must be sent to the [Secretary](#) or the President of the club and should include a detailed explanation of the issue to be discussed. Upon receiving them, the Secretary must schedule the meeting on a date between 7 and 20 days from the day the request was made.

Whatever the reason for a meeting of the Committee, the Secretary must send to all officers the prospective agenda of the meeting, together with the exact meeting place, date and time, at least one full week in advance of the event. All club officers may add items to that agenda as necessary.

PRESIDENT

The Club President is the coordinator of all the different club officers, the architect of the overall club strategy, and the club's representative at external events.

■ Leadership roles in clubs

In Agora, we view officer positions as leadership positions rather than purely managerial or execution ones. There are many differences in

- Roles that are merely executing roles just execute someone else's strategy. For example, the Headquarters of an organization could decide everything that needs to be done and merely delegate the execution to an officer, who provides reports as to how execution is going back to the central.
- Roles that are merely managerial have a bit more freedom, but their leadership is purely operational. They may design rules, regulations, operating procedures, etc. They may create measurable goals, track progress, etc.
- Finally, Leadership roles are focused on the larger picture, provide a vision and inspire their team to execute that vision. While good leaders definitely benefit if they're also good managers, it's not really a requirement if they delegate that task.

Servant Leadership

There are [multiple leadership styles](#) in existence today - from Authoritarian (the leader makes all the decisions) to Transactional (leadership focused on performance and outcomes) to Laissez-Faire (letting people figure things out on their own). We will cover them more in detail in the Leadership Path, where we will also see that they are not equally effective.

For Agora Clubs, our view of leadership is that the best leadership is done through service to others - what modern leadership theory calls "Servant Leadership" (although Robert K. Greenleaf really coined the term in the 1970s):

Servant leadership is demonstrated by empowering and developing people, by expressing humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, and stewardship; and by providing direction. A high-quality dyadic relationship, trust, and fairness are expected to be the most important mediating processes to encourage self-actualization, positive job attitudes, performance, and a stronger organizational focus on sustainability and corporate social responsibility.

Dirk van Dierendonck, Erasmus University - Journal of Management Vol. 37 No. 4, July 2011 1228-1261

Servant Leadership is not only a good moral idea: there's a lot of research correlating this increased team effectiveness and development. See, for example, [here](#) and [here](#).

What do good leaders do under this viewpoint? In 2008, Robert Linden and his collaborators identified [a set of 9 dimensions](#) that expresses in detail the core of this leadership style:

LEADERSHIP DIMENSION	CONTENT
Emotional healing	The act of showing sensitivity to others' personal concerns.
Creating value for the community	A conscious, genuine concern for helping the community
Conceptual skills	Possessing the knowledge of the organization and tasks at hand to be in a position to effectively support and assist others, especially immediate followers
Empowering	Encouraging and facilitating others, especially immediate followers, in identifying and solving problems, as well as determining when and how to complete work tasks
Growth	Helping subordinates grow and succeed—demonstrating genuine concern for others' career growth and development by providing support and mentoring
Putting subordinates first	Using actions and words to make it clear to others (especially immediate followers) that satisfying their work needs is a priority (Supervisors who practice this principle will often break from their own work to assist subordinates with problems they are facing with their assigned duties.)
Behaving ethically	Interacting openly, fairly, and honestly with others
Creating value for the community	A conscious, genuine concern for helping the community
Relationships	The act of making a genuine effort to know, understand and support others in the organization, with an emphasis on building long-term relationships with immediate followers
Servanthood	A way of being marked by one's self-categorization and desire to be characterized by others as someone who serves others first, even when self-sacrifice is required

(From "Servant leadership: Development of a multidimensional measure and multi-level assessment", Linden et al., The Leadership Quarterly Volume 19, Issue 2, April 2008):

Club Vision and Club Strategy

As the club President, you should have a vision of where you want to take the club and its members, how you see them at the end of your 1-year term, and what strategy you will use to achieve that. In this regard, Servant Leadership is especially relevant because the strategy should be all about your club and your members: how to help them grow and become stronger. You communicate that vision in a vision statement that summarizes where the club is now and what you want to achieve.

The vision statement should be:

- Succinct
- Clear
- Inspiring
- Challenging
- Meaningful to all members

It could be something as simple as:

We're the friendliest and warmest learning environment in our city.

When you create your vision statement, don't think only about your club in the context of other Agora clubs (as in "we want to be the club with the highest number of advanced public speakers" or "we want to win the most awards in Agora competitions"), but also think of your club within the community it is in.

Remember that a good leader inspires - the club should "buy" your vision statement.

NOTE

The vision statement and club strategy must be aligned with Agora's goals and by laws. Also, they cannot contradict any of the Core Principles.

There's no "one size fits all" strategy universally applicable to all clubs. Each club is different, and the needs of its members are different.

■ Officer Team Coordinator

As the Coordinator of the Club Officers, you need to mediate to resolve any conflicts that may arise and appoint temporary replacements if an officer will not be able to perform his or her duties during a prolonged period of time.

NOTE

If an officer is going to be unavailable for less than 2 months throughout his term, it's ok to appoint a replacement or to share his responsibilities among the rest of the officers. However, if the total unavailability time is more than that, elections should be held for a replacement.

■ Club liaison

As the President, it's your responsibility to act as a bridge between the Agora Speakers International Foundation and the club.

In particular, you need to keep up to date with updates on rules, announcements, program enhancements, changes, etc. Usually, these are communicated via the official group and Emailed to all registered club officers. The Foundation is very dynamic, and we're constantly adding new activities, roles and expanding the online management system. If you don't get any E-mails from us for more than a month, please check your spam folder and verify that the E-mail you submitted to the Agora Headquarters is correct.

You should also act as a bridge between the club and other Agora management bodies within the country, especially the Ambassadors

■ Club Representative

The Club President also performs a representative role, speaking on behalf of the club at events, in front of third-party organizations, and for the media.



Please note that when you represent a collective, you have to defend the ideas and positions of the collective, regardless of whether you agree with them or not. When you speak as a club representative, you're assuming a different role than when you speak on your own behalf.

■ Club Budget

If the club manages funds of any kind (regardless of whether they come from fees or other sources), members need to be presented with a club budget at the beginning of the term and with a final balance at the end.

The club budget indicates how club funds will be spent and what sources of income the club will have. The President is responsible for configuring the budget, which should reflect his vision and strategy for the club, and must consider the needs of the rest of the officer team and their input. The budget must be approved in voting by the club members, as explained in the [Internal Club Democracy](#) section.

■ Other Responsibilities

Last but not least, Club Presidents have some additional attributions:

- Calling Elections for renewing the Club Officers' team
- Calling voting sessions for issues that matter to the club.
- Authorizing (together with the club Treasurer) the usage of club funds.
- Managing the Club's data in the Online Club Management Systems

VICE PRESIDENT - EDUCATION



The Vice-president, Education (VPE) is in charge of the club's educational activities and is tasked with many different and responsibilities that have a direct impact on the club meetings.

For large clubs, it's usually convenient to have more than one VP of Education.

■ Plan the Educational Year

There are many, many [educational activities](#) that are defined in the Agora Educational Program, and the list keeps growing. It's impossible to have all of them in a single meeting. It's also easy to get used to a standard set of activities and never venture to try new ones that could be even more educational and exciting. This results in meetings that are repetitive, boring, and not very enticing to veteran members.

In your role as VPE, you are in charge of planning the Educational Year - deciding which activities you want to have and how many of them. To do that, you need to have a solid grasp of all the activities, how much time each activity takes, and how much preparation it requires.

Remember also that you're not limited to the activities described in the official program. In fact, we encourage you to research, design, and experiment with new roles and activities, as long as they serve an educational purpose and are aligned with the overall mission and goals of Agora Speakers International. You can read more about defining custom roles [here](#).

TIP

Please remember that certain minimums need to be met, and some roles that have to be present in every meeting to guarantee some consistency of the Agora experience to all members worldwide. Those are detailed on the [Operational Requirements](#) page.

Start with a general overview of how many of the larger, more time-consuming activities you want to have throughout the year (those that basically take more than 20 minutes to execute and usually dominate the whole meeting). For example:

- 5 Debates
- 10 Crossfires
- 10 Colloquiums
- 5 Workshops

Distribute those activities throughout the yearly meetings, then fill in the remaining time and meetings with the smaller activities.

Your year-plan should have some flexibility to accommodate for unexpected circumstances that prevent the club from meeting and should also be relatively coarse - it's impossible to predict, 5 months in advance, that in meeting 21, you will have 4 prepared speeches and 4 crossfire participants.

This is how your plan could look like:

EDUCATIONAL PLAN					
Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3	Meeting 4	Meeting 5	Meeting 6
Speeches Hot Questions Language Games	Speeches Today we Travel To Language Games Hot Questions	Debate	Speeches Colloquium Hot Questions	Speeches Crossfire Today we Travel To Hot Questions	Workshop Language Games

TIP

Although it's great to be able to compose a yearly plan, always listen to your members as well: Maybe you had planned for 10 Crossfires and 6 Colloquiums during the year, after the first quarter you see that members like Colloquiums much more, so it's a good idea to adapt.



TIP

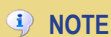
If your club has an online presence, it's very convenient to have the educational plan posted online, with links to the wiki descriptions of the educational activities.

■ Define Meeting Agendas

As the VPE, you're also in charge of establishing the meeting agenda for each meeting. This means - deciding which sections the meeting is going to have, how they're going to be organized within the meeting, and how many of them. For example:

WEDNESDAY 23 MEETING

Roles Available
Prepared Speech #1
Prepared Speech #1 Evaluator
Prepared Speech #2
Prepared Speech #2 Evaluator
Prepared Speech #3
Hot Questions Master
Hot Questions Evaluator
Today we travel to speaker #1
Today we travel to speaker #2
Timer
Grammarian
Body Language Evaluator
Critical Thinking Evaluator
Listening Evaluator
Meeting Evaluator



NOTE

It's not your task as a VPE to fill in the agenda (find people that will volunteer for the roles) - that's the responsibility of the Meeting Leader of that meeting. Of course, you can help him or her if you wish, but that should be primarily their task, as organizing a specific meeting is part of the learning experience for a Meeting Leader.

This means, however, that you need to make sure that a Meeting Leader is always appointed well in advance of the meeting (ideally, at the end of the previous meeting) so that they can promote the agenda, receive requests from people that want to participate, and actively search for volunteers for the other roles.



TIP

If meeting leaders constantly face problems to fill in some of the helper roles - usually Timer, Grammarian, Facilitator, etc. - you can talk with the rest of the officers to introduce participation requirements for the more popular roles. For example, "Giving a prepared speech requires that you have been in a helper role since your last prepared one"

■ Encourage New Members

The VPE also has the responsibility - together with the Vice President of Membership - to make new members feel comfortable and encourage them to start participating as soon as possible.

Be aware, though, that each person progresses at their own pace. You can push, but you should never force anyone to a role they don't want.

Some of the things you might do are:

- Actively reach out to shy members and introduce them to other members that went through the same path.
- Share "before" and "after" videos of experienced members so that newcomers can see the transformation.
- Depending on their circumstances, suggest taking specific easy roles such as Timer or Grammarian.

■ Oversee the Educational Progress of Members

Although meetings have a large social component, as a VPE, you should always keep in mind that Agora is an Educational Foundation and that our Educational Program sits at the core. Many times members became stuck in auxiliary or evaluating roles for different reasons, such as:

- They may lack enough time to invest in a prepared speech and prefer roles that don't involve out-of-meeting work (Hot Questions, Colloquium, etc.)
- They're afraid of being evaluated.
- They lack the knowledge on using the technology or elements that are required for a project (for example, for the "Using Presentation Software" project)
- They've run out of ideas for speeches.
- They're confused as to what's next in their educational progress or have doubts about it.

If you see someone stalled in their progress, try to reach out and learn what's happening. Gently encourage them to continue, point to the documentation on speech ideas, on managing anxiety, organize workshops on using technology, arrange for the member to have practice time somewhere with the equipment, etc. These actions are not entirely on your shoulders: once you've identified the problem, reach out to your fellow officers for help and suggestions.



Although you may challenge or tease people, tongue-in-cheek with “look, Martha is 2 projects ahead of you”, don’t turn Educational progress into a race. There’s no need to rush through it. It’s much better for members to proceed slowly but steadily and have their knowledge solidly grounded on experience.

Rushing to achieve points/certificates/whatever at the end of the day won’t mean anything in the professional world, where the only things that matter are the actual skills you have that you can put into practice.

■ Ensure Feedback Quality

A crucial aspect of the Agora Educational System is peer feedback. For this to be effective, the feedback needs to meet all the recommendations given in the [Effective Feedback](#) chapter.

- Encourage members to read the documentation on feedback
- Supervise the overall feedback quality so that it doesn’t become irrelevant (“everything was perfect”) or hostile (“you didn’t make any sense”) or off-topic (“I totally disagree with you”).
- Hold workshops on Evaluation.
- Research and share videos, books, and articles on how to provide effective and constructive feedback.
- Provide private advice to evaluators

■ Overseeing the Mentorship Program

All clubs should have a [Mentoring program](#) in place that pairs new members with more experienced ones that can help them through the initial projects, as well as help them become better integrated with the club and its culture.



TIP

If your club has been just chartered and all the members are new, with no one that can act as a “more experienced member”, feel free to reach out to the wider Agora community through our social networks and ask for other members to act as mentors of your most committed members, so that once they become more experienced, they can in turn act as mentors to others.

When our online management system becomes available, you will be able to do that directly from the VPE dashboard.



■ Organize workshops

Workshops are an activity that is always very highly valued by members. You can organize internal workshops - where an Agora member delivers a comprehensive lecture on a topic, or you can invite external speakers to speak to your club. You may even use the club funds if that is required, and those speakers require payment. Depending on the new member influx, you may want to repeat some workshops periodically:

- Club Procedures
- Getting the most out of Agora Speakers
- Effective Evaluations
- Managing Anxiety
- Answering Hot Questions
- Working with the Online Platform

A word of warning

Agora Speakers prides itself on being solidly grounded in Science, and in fact, it's part of our bylaws. Every recommendation and educational activity we put forward has solid, peer-reviewed, repeatable research that backs its effectiveness. We train members to use approaches and techniques proven to work in the real world, reliably and repeatably.

Unfortunately, this is not the case in general. The public speaking and leadership fields are rife with untested, dubious, and sometimes outright wrong advice. There's a whole industry out there that even produces books on demand with you as the author by recycling and repacking this kind of generalistic content and cookie-sized meaningless advice.

You often hear, for example, that you should strive to have zero filler words when research actually [tells](#) not quite the same story - having no filler words whatsoever may hurt your credibility. You also may often hear about Monroe's Motivational Sequence pattern as the perfect structure for persuasive speeches, and this advice is repeated from book to book, from course to course, from speech to speech. In fact, research has also [shown](#) that there's nothing special about Monroe's sequence - it's no more nor less persuasive than other organizational speech patterns as long as you have the necessary content.

While members are free to present prepared speeches on whatever subject they want, no matter how crazy it may seem (as long as it's [acceptable speech content](#)), workshops are asymmetric activities in which one person is elevated to the category of someone that conveys knowledge presumed to be true to others.

NOTE

Workshops that are based on pseudo- or non-scientific ideas about the fields we train in are not allowed.

We recommend using [TEDx Content Guidelines](#) (especially the "Bad Science" section) for vetting external speakers and the content of their workshops. We also recommend this [community letter from TEDx](#) about detecting bad science.

■ Answer members' questions related to the Educational Program.

The VPE is the to-go person for any questions related to the Educational Program.

All good leaders understand that "leading is serving", so try to make yourself available and encourage people to ask any questions they have. This doesn't mean that you should know the answer to every question they may come up with. It's perfectly ok to admit that you don't know it but that you will check and get back to them. If you're faced with any questions about Agora that you don't know the answer to, feel free to drop us a note.

VICE PRESIDENT - MEMBERSHIP

As the Vice President of Membership, you have two core directions of work:

- Ensuring that the club's members are taken care of
- Ensuring the growth of the club.

Here are your main responsibilities.

■ Increasing the membership

This is a task that is jointly accomplished with the [Vice President of Marketing](#) and the [Community Manager](#) (if there's one).

Although you will be relying a lot upon their actions, there are a few things that you can do on your own:

- "Bring a friend" - Plan "bring a friend" sessions where you ask each attendee to bring along one friend that might be interested in the club.
- Membership building contests among the club members and present awards to the people that bring in the most guests and visitors.
- Plan "open doors" meetings for the general public and other membership-building campaigns.
- Participate in other community events related to public speaking and leadership, and speak about Agora and your club - explore events at sites such as [Meetup.com](#), [Internations](#), [Airbnb](#), [Couchsurfing](#), etc.
- Advertise and hold public debates on hot current topics (together with the [VP of Education](#))

if the club doesn't have a VP of Marketing, then that role's responsibilities fall on your shoulders.

■ Organize Shared Activities

While all Agora meetings need to follow a specific educational purpose and general organization, this doesn't mean that these are the only things that you can organize.

Here are some additional ideas for strengthening the community aspect of the club:

- Trips and excursions
- Parties celebrating different holidays
- "Public Speaking" retreats, possibly with special guest speakers attending
- Thematic nights
- Flash community projects



Since these activities are organized in your role as VPM and using the club's membership roster, they may not engage in activities contrary to the Core Principles or the Bylaws of the Foundation.

For example, organizing a retreat for the members to explore Tantric Healing (a pseudo-scientific discipline) or a thematic retreat for advocacy speeches for Human Rights would not be allowed.

When you organize those events, make sure to take the Club Banner to help the VP of Marketing create abundant material:



■ Ensure Guests are well-received and treated

As a VPM, it's one of your core tasks to ensure that guests and visitors to Agora meetings feel welcomed, supported, and want to join. This is so important that we have a separate article just devoted to [treating guests properly](#).

If you can't tend to guests personally, make sure you delegate explicitly to someone that will be able to do that in your absence.

Always invite guests to sign up to the club, or at least to the club's mailing list.



Never be excessively pushy - everyone needs to walk along their own mental path to the decision. If you keep pushing, it may backfire. Make sure to tell them that they're free to come as many times as they wish, but that to enjoy the full benefits (such as being able to access the full educational materials or present full speeches), they would need to join.

At every meeting, make sure you have enough guest welcome packs ready. Also, be prepared to answer any questions they might have after the meeting, and offer help if they're confused with any part of the signing process.



TIP

Usually, it works better to focus on the benefits of belonging to a club, and all the skills the people will learn, and the contacts they will make rather than insisting that the club is free or has very low fees.

Too many people associate “free” with “bad quality”. Also, way too often, people can’t believe that something is really free or low cost and think there’s a trap or evil intention somewhere - the usual “if you’re not paying for the product, then you are the product.”

If you meet this objection or feel that it can be an issue, you have some excellent examples to make a strong counter-argument:

- **Wikipedia** is the best encyclopedia on Earth, and it’s free.
- **Mozilla Firefox** is one of the best browsers, and it’s free.
- **Linux** is the most powerful operating system, and it’s free.
- **The top world universities** - MIT, Stanford, etc. publish many of their courses for free ([MIT Open Courseware](#), Stanford Free Courses, etc.).
- Top free educational sites, such as [Coursera](#) or the [Khan Academy](#).
- **The Apache Software Foundation** has produced dozens upon dozens of extremely high-quality open source products that are free and power some of the most sophisticated companies in the world.
- And there are countless other open-source, totally free programs - from video editing to games.

The main idea here is that there are things that are free because they’re a work of passion and love created by many people, not necessarily driven by some machinating evil genius.

and possibly where they learned about the club. Every additional piece of information you ask for will increase the resistance to provide anything.

Once you have the guest’s information, be sure to notify them of new meetings. Don’t just push them to join the club - maintain a light and open communications channel with them by sending them meeting invites, occasional interesting articles, etc.

■ Taking care of members

It’s all too frequent for a VPM to focus excessively on getting new members and forgetting to take care of the existing ones. This never ends well.

- Talk regularly with the VPE to make sure that members are progressing along the educational path. If someone is not doing that, they might have some issues that need addressing.
- Try to talk periodically in private to all members to ask them how they feel, whether the club is serving their needs, whether they are growing personally and professionally, and whether there are any issues they’d like to address.
- Plan workshops on internal club and Agora topics, explaining how Agora works, the different roles, how members can get the most out of the club, etc.

Have a Guestbook and always follow-up

One of the biggest missed opportunities is not getting the guests’ contact info, and after that, not following up.

Not everyone is ready to sign up instantly after the first meeting. Some people need gentle reminders and some amount of gentle pushing.



TIP

Ask guests for their name and EMail at the beginning of the meeting, rather than waiting at the end. Otherwise, you might miss those that leave early or in a hurry.

Also, try not to ask for more information than just a name and EMail,

VICE PRESIDENT - COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

■ Motivation

The VP of CL is a new officer role in Agora clubs.

Ever since Agora Speakers International was started, one of the goals was not merely creating a friendly club environment where members could learn and practice public speaking and leadership skills but also providing them with speaking and leadership opportunities outside of the club environment. Furthermore, one of the goals of Agora was letting members have an impact in their community during the learning process itself through the leadership of local projects that make a difference to people.

We must also distinguish “Leadership” from “Management”. While management can be learned to a degree by managing small teams, a club, or a higher-level Agora event, Leadership requires much greater and different skills. It can never be learned within the constraints of a structured organization.

While we will strive to reach global – either country or worldwide - deals with different entities (commercial, governmental, educational, etc.) and increase the projection of our organization, there’s only so much that can be done at a global level. In fact, probably most opportunities will be local events - fairs, conferences, exhibitions, interest-group meetings, etc.

- In terms of leadership, we face the same challenge – most opportunities to help will be local, on a small scale, tackling specific problems.

■ The role of the Vice President of Community Leadership

The Vice President of Community Leadership (VPCL) is a required officer role in all clubs and is in charge of centralizing all community leadership work and projects.

As the VPCL, you:

- Act as a single point of contact between the club and any external organizations interested in cooperating, including local authorities.
- Are responsible for finding both speaking, leadership, and volunteering opportunities for members.
- Are in charge, together with the [VP of Education](#), of determining which eligible club members are suitable for the different speaking opportunities, depending on experience and progress through the Educational Program and their time commitment and involvement with the club.
- Are in charge of coordinating the activities of the club with other Agora clubs in an area.
- Are in charge of approving proposals for leadership projects by members, including judging whether the project’s scope is appropriate (neither too big nor too small) considering the leadership experience of the specific member.

- Suggest and approve individual member participation in existing leadership projects.

As with all officer roles, except for the Club President, more than one person can have the role of VPCL if the effort and time so requires, and they can enlist the help of other members for a particular task. Also, a person can simultaneously have both a VPCL and other officer roles simultaneously for small clubs.

The VPCL should also coordinate with the VPCLs of other clubs in the area of interest to avoid duplication of efforts. VPCLs of all clubs in an area should act cooperatively and never in a competition of “who gets this or that project or speaking opportunity”. Information about available options should be shared, and the rest of the VPCLs should help VPCLs who have problems finding community leadership or speaking opportunities in the area. In fact, the end goal will be creating a worldwide database of opportunities created by VPCLs from which the members can choose.

■ External Public Speaking Opportunities

Members that have completed the first two blocks of the [Basic Educational Program](#) (“The First Three Projects” and “Basics of Speaking”) are eligible for external public speaking opportunities.

Guidelines and suggestions on how to find and/or create external public speaking opportunities will be published once all the feedback and suggestions for this role have been received. In general, these will include:

- Lectures and workshops in schools, universities, and social action groups
- Club-organized open events
- Other public speaking organizations
- Conferences, Fairs, and exhibitions
- Club / Agora YouTube channels and podcasts
- Business networking groups and events
- Social events (weddings, parties, etc.)



■ Participation Requirements

When there are opportunities for external participation, extra care must be taken that they are aligned with the ideals and values of the Foundation. In particular, the following must be observed:

- External participation must be offered to all club members in

a non-discriminatory way. For example, Agora Clubs may not be involved in organizations or events that ask for speakers matching a discriminatory profile (“We’re looking for white males for a speaking event”, “We’re looking for a Christian to speak at a church event”).

- Any such participation is voluntary for all club members.
- Any such participation is done on an individual basis (and never as a representation of the club, or much less of Agora Speakers International).
- These participations do not constitute any permanent partnership or association between the club and a third-party entity.

Sometimes, these participations will happen regularly and require symmetry (e.g., Agora club members speak at place X, and in exchange, members of X speak in an Agora club). In those cases, please note that:

- This regular external participation in Agora club meetings must be approved by a majority of the club members, with the approval lasting for one year. This approval may be revoked at any time by a majority of the club members.
- There may not be any discrimination between guests (a guest being a non-Agora member attending in any way - physically or virtually - an Agora club meeting).
- All guests must be able to perform the same roles regardless of where they come from and their background, and these roles must match the club registration information.
- All external participations are subject to the Agora educational guidelines. In particular, all participations are timed, monitored by a grammarian, must have a clear set of goals known in advance, and are evaluated according to the Agora evaluation guidelines.
- External participation may not require any changes to regular meeting business operations, meeting structure, or specific assignment of roles. For example, an external participant may not require that he’s the first to speak or that someone, in particular, evaluates him.
- The leader of a meeting activity and her evaluator may not be external to the club. In other words, and specifically for prepared speeches - either the speaker or the evaluator must always be a club member.
- This external participation may not violate any of the [Core Principles](#). In particular, there may not be any regular external participation from organizations that promote any particular political, ideological, or moral worldviews, and these participations may not promote any third-party organizations, services, or products. Participation from organizations that promote pseudo-scientific worldviews is not allowed.
- The number of these external participations per year must be limited to the number specified in the Operational Club Requirements checklist (depending on the club type).

NOTE

You should treat external speaking openings as a gift and an opportunity for members. Unless you’re clearly aware that there’s a budget allocated for the speakers, you should not demand or attempt to negotiate fees on behalf of the club or the member.

■ External Leadership Opportunities

The VPCL is also in charge of finding leadership opportunities for members. This part will be fully developed at a later stage, together with the Leadership Path publication and the guidelines for Community Projects.

VICE PRESIDENT - MARKETING

As the Vice President, Marketing, you're in charge of developing and implementing the marketing and media policy of the club to increase the strength of the club, its membership, and the speaking and leadership opportunities of the club's members outside the club.

■ Develop a marketing budget and marketing plan

You can do many things to project your club, but as always, time is limited, funds are even more limited (or even nonexistent), and you need to decide what to focus on.

Of course, "what to focus on" will depend a lot on what you want to achieve and how aligned or appropriate are each of the activities towards those goals. It's also essential that you don't keep changing the goals. If you keep changing all the time the direction in which you're going, you'll just be doing a lot of apparent movement, but in circles, and in the end, will remain exactly where you started.

Here's some practical guidance on how to create a marketing plan:

1. Read this article and all the ideas in it thoroughly.
2. Write down where the club is right now and what are the issues it's struggling with. For example:
3. Set a clear set of metric-driven goals (check the specific article on "[SMART](#)" goals"). These could be two such goals, for example:



We only get one or two visitors every couple of weeks - this hurts the club's growth and decreases the richness of the meetings.

Make sure each goal has a specific priority or importance. If you had to choose between achieving goal (1) and goal (2) above, which one would it be?



1. I'd like to increase the flow by the end of the term to 6 new guests each weekly meeting.
2. I'd like to increase our community's awareness about our club so that at least 2 in 30 people asked randomly on the street know about us.

4. Brainstorm with your fellow Officers and club members any other marketing ideas they might have on how the above set of goals might be achieved.

NOTE

Your marketing activities won't be happening in a vacuum. You'll be fighting for the attention of people against other commercial and non-profit organizations or against simply other activities. "Why should I go to your club instead of watching a movie at home, or instead of going to the theatre or this class about yoga"?

One of the fundamental activities that you need to do at this point is **benchmarking** the competition. This means:

Please also have in mind that the effectiveness of some ideas and actions is very location-dependent. For example, having meetup.com groups works very well in Madrid, but terribly in some other countries. Facebook ads work very well in Asia and Africa, not so much in Europe, and terribly in Russia, where the vk.com social network or Instagram are more dominant.

NOTE

- Determining, for each of your goals, who you are competing against.
- Determine how that competition is getting the attention of your target public and what arguments they're using
- What advertising actions they're using
- How effective they are in achieving that goal

5. Estimate how aligned each of those ideas is with your goals or how much you think they can help for each goal. Unless the club has a well-kept history of previous marketing plans and activities, it will be difficult to put specific numbers for each activity and goal - just use some symbols like "0", "+", "++", to indicate how much that particular activity can help with the goal. If you're lucky enough to have access to previous marketing activities and their results, by all means, use that information as a starting point instead.

For example, in the following matrix, the VPM estimated that events on meetup.com would help a lot with bringing in visitors, but not really in making the club more visible in the community.

MARKETING MATRIX

Marketing Activity	Increase visitors to 6/meeting (Importance: 4)	Increase awareness to 2 in 30 (Importance: 1)
1. Participate in Agora Marathons	0	0
2. Ad in the local newspaper	++	++
3. Event ads on meetup.com	++	0
4. Events on Facebook	+	+
5. Put the club on Google Maps	0	+
6. Hold meetings in public places	+	+

6. For each activity, indicate how much effort and funds it will require.

MARKETING MATRIX

Marketing Activity	Effort (h) / \$ (year)	Increase visitors to 6/meeting (Importance: 4)	Increase awareness to 2 in 30 (Importance: 1)
1. Participate in Agora Marathons	1/0	0	0
2. Ad in the local newspaper	5 / \$600	++	++
3. Event ads on meetup.com	2 / \$150	++	0
4. Events on Facebook	1 / \$100	+	+
5. Put the club on Google Maps	2 / \$0	0	+
6. Hold meetings in public places	0 / 0	+	+

7. Next, prioritize the activities from those that bring “the most bang for the buck” to those that bring the least.
8. Finally, decide which activities you’re going to do, and distribute them throughout time.

■ Measure your results

Whatever actions you take - from sending a PR to holding an open-doors event, always have a specific set of goals beforehand and track and measure the outcomes of the activity. Don't simply convince yourself that “it went great”, and keep repeating something that clearly has no effect.

Apply the [“SMART Goals”](#) and Continuous Improvement approaches.

- How much did the activity cost? (not only in terms of money, but also in terms of time, effort, and number of people involved)
- What were the specific goals of the activity?
 - Increasing visitors to the club? - How many more did you get?
 - Raising funds? - How much money was raised?
 - Increasing page views? - What was the change?
 - Etc.
- What were the lessons learned? What was the feedback?
- How can the effectiveness of the activity be increased if repeated (if it makes sense at all repeating it)

If you repeat a campaign or action, try to make a few controlled adjustments. If you change ten things and the efficiency improves 10%, you wouldn't be able to tell which of the ten things caused the improvement.

■ Core Marketing Tools

In this section, we'll share some core tools and ideas that you might want to apply in your club:

Get a club EMail address

One of your first tasks as VP of Marketing should be ensuring that the club has its own EMail address, different from anyone's personal EMail. The credentials to access that EMail address should be available to all Club Officers.

It's totally up to you where that address is located - it might be @gmail.com, @outlook.com, etc. Make sure the name of the EMail contains the club name. For example, if your club name is “The Silent Hills Speakers”, some good options should be thesilenthillspeakers@gmail.com, thesilenthillsclub@gmail.com, etc.

The received EMail is critical and should be read daily. If possible - and with the help of the other officers - try to answer all Email requests on the same day, the moment you read them.

Depending on whether you can count on a Community Manager's help, it's a good idea to also create accounts on various social networks such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, etc.

i NOTE

It's better not to have a presence in a particular social network than having a stale or abandoned account. Do not try to cover more ground than you can service afterward. Ideally, start with the single most popular social network for your country and target members, then once it is consistently and steadily updated with content, you may open other accounts.

Publish that EMail address on all of the club's online sites and social networks so that anyone can get in touch with the club.



Please remember that you may only use your club logo as an avatar/profile picture on those social network accounts, not the Agora Speakers International logo. Please check with the [Branding Guidelines](#) for details on proper logo usage.

Create a club banner

Having a banner is not a requirement for Agora Clubs. However, it does pay to have one:

- All your club materials (photos and videos) will look much different and more marketable with the banner present.
- You will be able to take the club banner to contests and conventions
- For external visitors and companies, a club with a banner looks much more permanent and professional.

i NOTE

The club banner needs to be printed using the standard design, on durable material (such as vinyl or cloth), and with a precise size (76 cm x 122 cm or 2.5' x 4'). You can download the template from our Brand Portal. You can also use our Asset Creator to have it generated for you without using any software.

Usually, the cost of printing a banner should not exceed \$30.



Creating Advertising Materials

Another task of the VP of Marketing is creating all necessary advertising materials for the club. This includes guiding and helping the [videographer](#) and [photographer](#) with meeting roles and gathering, classifying, and using all of the multimedia materials.



It's imperative that you follow all branding rules when creating advertising materials.

- Creates advertising materials.
- Designs and executes advertising and outreach campaigns for club activities (either regular meetings, "open door" meetings, or contests).
- With the assistance of the Vice-president, Education plans "open doors" meetings for the general public and other membership-building campaigns.

Build the club multimedia asset library

The club's multimedia assets library is a fundamental tool for promoting the club and offering proof that the system works. Here's what your club asset library should include:

- Recordings and photographs of meetings
- Specially prepared "Before" and "After" videos, showing the beginnings and current progress of some members.
- Screenshots or recordings of Testimonies
- Screenshots or photographs or video recordings of media participations.

Build a mailing list with tags (labels)

A mailing list is a great tool for promoting your club and for helping the VP of Community Leadership find external speaking and leadership opportunities for your members.

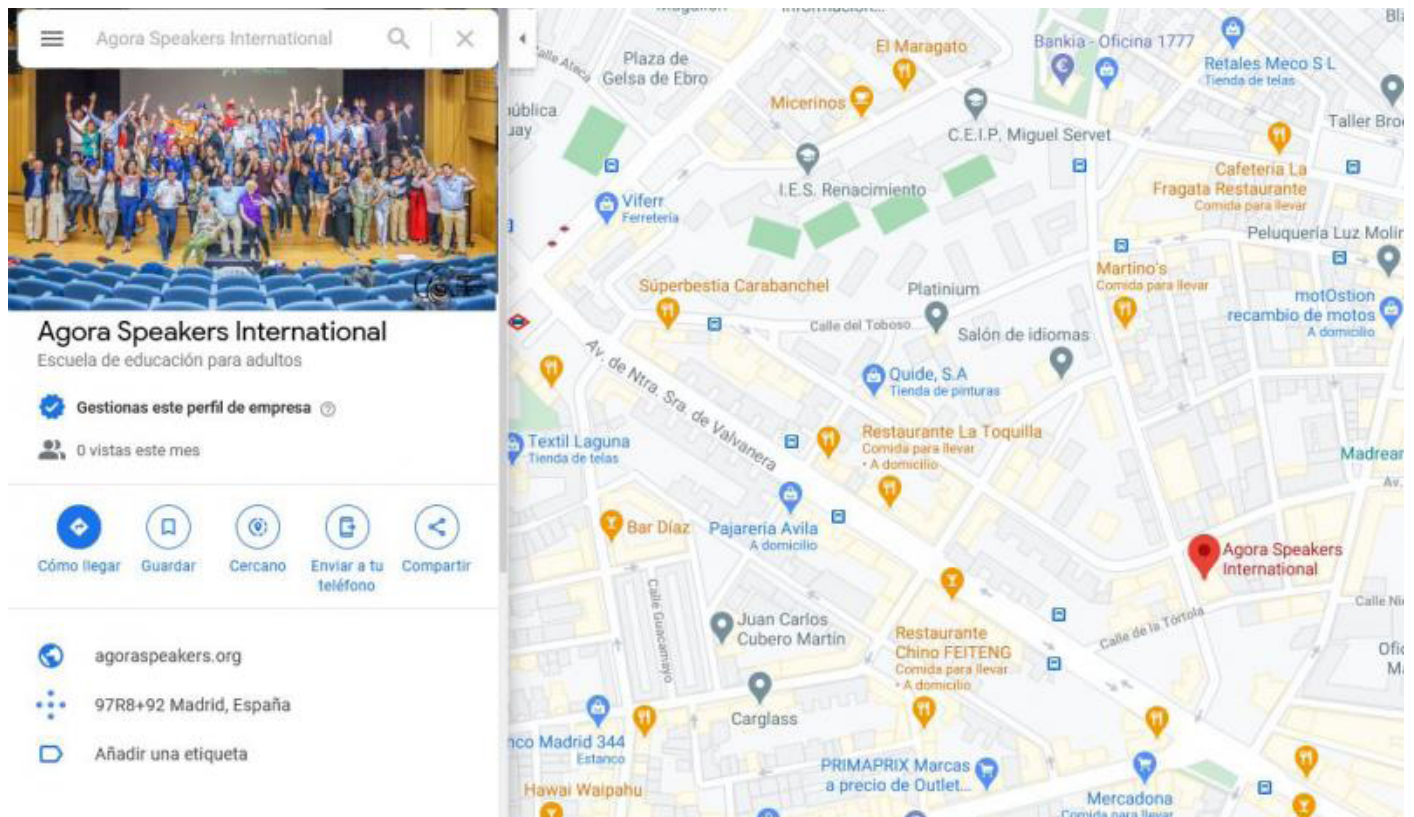
Usually, your Internet provider can add mailing list support for free or for a minimal fee. If not, you can use online providers such as [emailDodo](#) that have a free option for small lists and nonprofits (although you will need to explain the reason for wanting to operate a list, explain where you get the E-mails from, and wait for approval)

A note about privacy

All clubs, regardless of their location, must have a privacy policy in place that complies with the [EU GDPR](#). This means that you need to get explicit consent to add someone to the mailing list, and you must clearly indicate who is the entity making the collection (that would be the club), how you intend to use the collected information, and give all people included in it the ability to request corrections to be made to their entry and to be removed from it altogether.

■ Low-budget marketing activities

Here are some ideas that you can use to promote your club:



Open Doors events - Together with the VP of Education, plan for open-door events that are promoted among the community.

Workshops - Create special workshops on speech and leadership subjects. It's great if you place that workshop as part of an event that includes a club meeting after the workshop to invite attendees to stay and experience the system.

Create a free Google MyBusiness account - This will allow you to place your club on the map. Even if you're currently meeting virtually, Create a free Google MyBusiness account - This will allow you to place your club on the map. Even if you're currently meeting virtually, it's a great avenue for visibility.

Agora Marathons - Participate in inter-club events such as Marathon and friendly competitions

Cross-linking- Look for other organizations related to similar areas of activity (public speaking, leadership, debating, critical thinking) and suggest cross-linking



Make sure that it's clear that you're not endorsing the linked organization, as that would violate the Neutrality principle.

Tag or @mention interesting people in your club's social media posts - (This activity should be coordinated with the Community Manager). Tagging people that might be interested (media, local leaders, celebrities, prospective members, etc.) in interesting posts

is a good way to draw their attention, as long as it is done carefully. **Produce wearable merchandise** - It's usually relatively cheap to have T-shirts, polos, or masks press-printed. There are even kits that allow you to do that at home, using a regular printer.

Give club-level awards and certificates - Members and guests usually love posting their achievements on their own social profiles.

Announce club meetings as events in online meeting platforms- **There are many such platforms** - Airbnb, Meetup, CouchSurfing, Internations, etc. Announce the club's meetings there and actively encourage people to join. Needless to do so, you should also be doing the same on the regular social networks (e.g.:Facebook events)

Create a Google Calendar with the schedule of your club's meetings and share it publicly - This will allow people to easily see when and where your club meets and add those events to their own calendar with ease.

Leave leaflets in schools, universities, libraries, bookstores, cultural and community centers - As Agora is an educational non-profit foundation, many institutions are very welcoming to working with us and helping local clubs.

Reach out to local enterprises- Actively reach out, together with the [VP of Community Leadership](#), to companies in your area. Commercial public speaking and leadership programs usually cost thousands upon thousands of dollars, and you will be offering them a proven method for pennies. This might not only result in new members to your club but possibly in a whole new corporate club

within the company, as well as many new opportunities for your members: from speaking slots in a professional environment to networking opportunities to career openings. You'd usually want to talk to the HR or Training departments in the companies.

Create pins and encourage members to wear them at non-club events.

Create merchandising materials - stickers, mugs, shirts. Etc.



Rajendra Singh - Agora Ambassador to Ethiopia - showing how to take advantage of the current environment for marketing purposes.

If your club doesn't have a [Community Manager](#), you may want to do some of their tasks.

You can also apply all of the ideas expressed in the "[Starting a new club - Creating the Team](#)" chapter.



You might be tempted to advertise on assets (groups, forums, etc.) of other organizations similar to Agora. This usually doesn't work very well, so proceed with caution. Many of these organizations are very sectarian, and in the best case, you will have wasted time and money, while in the worst, you may be slapped with legal threats.

If you come up with ideas that work, do share them with us so that we can add them here and allow all clubs to benefit from them.

Ensure Compliance

As the VP of Marketing, it's your responsibility to ensure the club's compliance with the Agora Branding and Communication Guidelines. This includes not only being careful about your own communications, but also those of the Club's Community Manager (if there's one) and those of members when they're engaged in out-of-club Agora-related activities such as presenting speeches or workshops externally visiting other organizations, or leading community projects.

Media Outreach

Reaching out to local media is fundamental for increasing your club's visibility and the organization as a whole. Additionally, this activity greatly helps the work of the VP of Community Leadership and the VP of Membership:

- It's much easier for the VPCL to pitch to external organizations the services of club members if the club has been (repeatedly) mentioned in the media.
- It's also much easier for the VP of Membership to attract new members



TIP

Nowadays, media is much more than "traditional media". Media includes individual freelance journalists, blogging/vlogging celebrities, influencers, etc.

How to reach out

Reaching out to local media is fundamental for increasing your club's visibility and the organization as a whole. Additionally, this activity greatly helps the work of the VP of Community Leadership and the VP of Membership:

- Build a list of media contacts, have a clear view of their interests, what kind of audience and engagement they have, etc.
- Cultivate relationships with media professionals before you need them.
- Provide value. Don't think only about what you need from those professionals, but also how you can help them by providing things their audiences might be interested in.
- All the principles of [Ethos](#), [Pathos](#), [Logos](#) apply to communications with the media, but in this case, the one that has to prove their credibility, authenticity, etc., is the club itself.
- As a corollary of the above, make sure you proofread anything that you send. There are so many free online tools that do a great job at spell and grammar checking that nowadays, it's an inexcusable sloppiness to send something with any of those types of mistakes.
- Don't spam everyone with the same PR or message. Tailor your message to the needs of each outlet.
- Be persistent but not obnoxious. Don't give up if you don't get any result from your first attempt.

COMMUNITY MANAGER

The Community Manager is in charge of the Internet and Social Media presence of the club.

■ Building a strong online presence

A strong club online presence is like a magnet for new members, guests, and media interest.

OTHER WAYS TO SAY...				
like	good	bad	sad	happy
enjoyable	excellent	awful	depressed	cheerful
pleasurable	amazing	odious	gloomy	delighted
thoughtful	wonderful	naughty	miserable	pleased
courteous	pleasant	mean	cherless	glad
lovely	marvelous	dreadful	unhappy	joyful
likeable	exceptional	nasty	dejected	ecstatic
pleasing	fantastic	wicked	forlorn	content
gracious	super	loousy	sorrowful	joyful
congenial	outstanding	terrible	upset	amused
cordial	terrific	unpleasant	downcast	amazed
admirable	splendid	disagreeable	tearful	thrilled
considerate	stupendous	wretched	zomber	elated
laughed	love	hate	big	little
giggled	admire	commented	huge	small
chuckled	approve	replied	giant	tiny
roared	adore	remarked	gigantic	paltry
treasure	treasure	declared	enormous	miniature
whooped	fancy	stated	large	teeny
sickered	marvel	exclaimed	massive	flabby
guffawed	appreciate	shouted	colossal	miniscule
shrilled	respected	whispered	immense	mini
grinned	cherish	announced	bulky	minute
cackled	favor	responded	hefty	microscopic
believed	desire	boasted	tremendous	skinny
chortled	enjoy	explained	jumbo	wee
ran	walked	pretty	looked	scared
boiled	stroled	beautiful	gazed	afraid
sped	sauntered	gorgeous	examined	lightened
hurried	tiptoed	appealing	viewed	spooked
sprinted	trotted	cute	observed	horrified
jagged	marshaled	lovely	peeked	startled
rushed	glided	exquisite	peered	fearful
galloped	strutted	attractive	glared	petrified
hustled	strutted	elegant	watched	anxious
skipped	crept	handsome	inspected	aghast
raced	hugged	stunning	spied	alarmed
dashed	hiked	fair	studied	terrified
fled	paraded	dazzling	noticed	shaken

TIP

Plan to devote a specific number of hours per week to developing the club's online presence. Decide on that number in advance and stick to it.

Persistence and regularity are some of the secrets of successful community managers. Try to post at least once a week.

Things to post about

Here are some ideas about what to post:

- Of course ... meeting and other event announcements
- Welcoming new members
- Sharing posts from other clubs or Agora Speakers International.
- Recognizing members' achievements - both within Agora's educational program and outside of it. For the latter, those achievements need to be somewhat related to the club's mission. If a member publishes a book or gives a keynote speech at a convention - those would be good examples.

TIP

There's nothing more powerful than seeing one's own name published and encourages others to seek the same recognition.

- Meeting recordings
- Share examples of speeches that you've liked
- Language improvement charts, tips, and puns are almost always well received, especially for enriching members' vocabulary.

- Summaries of meetings for those members that missed them. You don't need to figure out everything yourself - Do encourage members to suggest ideas and topics.

!

Remember that as a Community Manager, when you post content, you're not doing a personal post on your behalf but a post on behalf of the club. As such, you need to adhere to the principle of [Neutrality](#).

TIP

You don't need to be constantly publishing new content across all platforms. That article shared on Facebook six months ago can be repurposed as this week's tweet.

■ Useful Posting Tips

Here are some useful tips that you might want to consider:

- Use hashtags. Apply a mix of Agora hashtags (#AgoraSpeakers, #SpeakLeadMakeHistory, etc.), with your own local club tags, with post-appropriate tags.
- Tag or @mention interesting people in your club's social media posts - (This activity should be coordinated with the Vice President of Marketing). Tagging people that might be interested (media, local leaders, celebrities, prospective members, etc.) in interesting posts is a good way to draw their attention, as long as it is done carefully.
- Monitor groups where you can provide meaningful replies. There are many groups where people ask all sorts of questions that you might be able to answer - meetup groups, public Facebook groups, Quora, Reddit, etc. Usually, you should be monitoring a set of subjects such as:
 - Public Speaking
 - Debating
 - Critical Thinking
 - Stage Fright
 - Professional Speaking
 - Sales Presentations

- Leadership
- Career Development
- Self-Improvement
- Self-Confidence
- ... in general, any of the skills that we train in

Once you see an interesting comment or post where you can chime in, write a reply. Usually, if the reply is not merely spam but provides some insight and content, you will be allowed to have a few promotional hashtags, maybe even a link to your club.

Content Moderation and Group Rules

As a Community Manager, you're also responsible for the atmosphere, civility, and focus of the groups where members and visitors can post comments. Some general Agora principles need to be enforced in all groups:

- [Hate speech](#) of any kind is not allowed.
- Promotion of topics contrary to the bylaws (including pseudo-science) is not allowed.

Apart from those, you're free to define the general parameters of the club's online presence:

- Will you allow guests and visitors to post?
- Will you allow commercial postings? Which ones?
- What topics are considered valid?

■ Addressing Feedback

As a Community Manager, part of your responsibilities includes handling general feedback and questions from different sources.

- Always start by thanking the person that wrote, even to the harshest criticism.
- Try to reply to all requests in one day at most.
- Even if providing the information or dealing with the specific request will take time, do write a short answer that you'll get back to that person and try to provide an estimate. For example, "I think we're around 200 clubs worldwide already, but let me get the exact number, and I'll get back to you."
- If the question is about Agora and the way we work, if you don't know the answer, do reach out to your fellow club officers and us (info@agoraspeakers.org) so that we can help.
- No matter how negative a piece of feedback is, try to use it as a learning opportunity.
- Never start an argument with someone. You'll be not only fanning the flames, but you will make the poster gain followers. [Here](#) you can see some examples of handling very negative feedback efficiently.

NOTE

Please note that Feedback and questions may come not only directly (as messages or E-mails to the club) but also in many other ways, such as posts in a group, comments, club @ mentions on someone else's personal account, etc. Try to monitor all these channels to ensure that no question or feedback goes unanswered.

A note about privacy

Privacy is fundamental in today's world, and you must be especially vigilant to avoid inadvertently violating other people's right to control their own information. Failing to do so may not only create a lot of ill-will, but you also risk losing a member, getting scathing negative feedback about the club posted, and even legal troubles in jurisdictions like the EU.

- Never use group communication systems that make the participants' private information visible. For example, creating a WhatsApp group automatically shows everyone's phone number to everyone else.
- When asked about contact information, always ask the relevant party for permission, or reverse the information flow.
- For example, imagine you get the following request:
"Hi. We're Organization SpeakersOfTomorrow. I want to get in touch with Club President John Doe, as we're looking for keynote speakers for our conference and would like to discuss the specifics with him. On what phone number can I reach him?"

instead of immediately providing someone else's phone number, you should

1. Check with the president first, and then provide the information if he or she agrees
2. Invert the flow of information: *“Thank you so much for this request. I’ll ask John to call you as soon as possible. How can he reach you, and which hours would be most suitable?”*.

SECRETARY

The club secretary is in charge of maintaining all club files and creating the minutes for the Club's Executive Committee meetings.

■ Meetings of the Club's Executive Committee

As a Secretary, you're responsible for preparing the agenda of the Club's Executive Committee's meetings, as well as organizing the meeting itself and notifying all officers of the details in advance. For details and timings, please see the [Club Officers](#) chapter.

■ Meeting Minutes

One of the main tasks of the Secretary is keeping accurate Meeting Minutes.

Meeting Minutes are a fundamental book in the club's life that records all the important meetings of the Executive Committee, decisions made, voting outcomes, considerations, and discussions, etc.

Meeting Minutes may be kept physically or electronically, depending on the club's capabilities. The decision of where to keep those is left up to each club's Executive Committee.

Good Meeting Minutes should include the following, for every meeting:

- Meeting venue name, place, and time
- Initial Agenda of the meeting
- List of participants
- For each item discussed during the meeting (whether it was originally on the agenda or not):
 - The initial summarized viewpoint of the member putting forward the item or the context of the discussion.
 - A summary of other participant's viewpoints (only those who intervened in the discussion).
 - Decisions made, alternatives considered, and the rationale for the decision. For example, don't just say, "it was decided to change the meeting venue to the new location X. ". Instead, you could say something like "Due to the closure of our current meeting place in one month, we need to change the meeting venue of the club. We considered options X, Y, and Z. Option Y was discarded as the price requested from the owner of \$25/hour was too steep, and option Z had some serious quality issues such as bad chairing and terrible acoustics. Hence, by a

vote of 6-0, option X was selected"

- Voting tally.

- The meeting venue, name, place, and time of the next meeting
- Any annexes or documents entered into the session for supporting the discussed items

■ Other Club Files

Another task of the Secretary is to keep all club files and make sure they're properly preserved and have an appropriate backup to prevent their loss.

Club files include:

- Club charter and bylaws.
- Guest books.
- Lists of cooperating organizations, events, or venues where members have speaking or leadership opportunities.
- Membership rosters.
- Officer Meeting Agendas and Minutes.
- Member or guest complaints and their resolution.
- Disciplinary procedures.
- Club contracts or agreements with other entities (media, other clubs, or other public speaking organizations).
- Any other files

NOTE

We recommend using the Online Club Management System for all the housekeeping of the above documents.

Restricted Files

Although most of the club's documents should be accessible to all members, there are some sensitive files that the club needs to keep private and provide only for audit purposes or to the affected people. These are the following:

■ Club Audits

For ensuring the proper and consistent functioning of all Agora clubs worldwide, officers and members of the Board of the Agora Speakers International Foundation ("Agora Auditors") may request that a club provides a copy of any club files.

Requests for such copies will be made electronically to the club's contact addresses and/or the registered EMail addresses of the Secretary or other Club Officers. All the requested club documents need to be sent back electronically within two weeks (14 calendar days) from the day of the request.

PRIVATE CLUB DOCUMENTS

DOCUMENT	ACCESS RESTRICTED TO
Disciplinary Procedures	Affected member, Executive Committee, Agora Auditors, Agora Ambassadors if the decision was appealed
Member of guests' complaints and their resolutions	Executive Committee, Agora Auditors, Agora Ambassadors
Club Contracts	Executive Committee, Agora Auditors
Other documents	All club members, Agora Auditors, Agora Ambassadors

TREASURER

Except for Corporate Clubs, which follow the hosting organization accounting and procurement rules, all other club types that manage any funds (regardless of whether they come through fees or other sources) have to have a treasurer in charge of the basic bookkeeping.

The Treasurer should be fully acquainted with the [Rules for Club Finances](#) and has the following tasks:

■ Gatekeeper of club funds

As a treasurer, you're the gatekeeper to the club funds. Spending cannot take place without the combined approval of the President and the Treasurer. Effectively, you hold veto power over spendings that you honestly believe infringes on what the members have voted in terms of overall budget or the rules for club finances.

NOTE

If the Treasurer and the President disagree on whether particular spending meets the approved budget, they may take the spending in front of the club membership for a vote.

On the other hand, if the disagreement is on whether the use of funds complies with the general rules for club finances, they may elevate a question to the country's Ambassador or the Foundation's headquarters.

■ Financial Bookkeeping and Reporting

A second responsibility of the treasurer is keeping proper bookkeeping of all fund movements. There are two things you need to comply with:

- The local laws.
- The Foundation's bookkeeping reporting requirements.
- Usually, this second part will be the easiest, as the reporting requirements are relatively simple and do not require any special tooling. Additionally, you can use the online tools we provide for that reporting.

Ideally, all bookkeeping should be done when a payment is received or made so that all interested members can see the status of the club's finances. However, if that proves not to be possible for some reason, you need to make sure to upload both the itemized and the aggregate information at least once every six months.

■ Other Responsibilities

Finally, as a Treasurer, you need also to:

- Answer the financial questions of members and guests. Of course, members are entitled to much more detailed information than guests.
- Collect the Club fees and other sources of funds into a single account.
- Reimburses officers' authorized expenses
- Interacts with the treasurers of other clubs to ensure compliance with the Financial Rules when shared events such as conventions or contests need to be financed.
- Controls and executes the payments authorized by the President for the purchase of goods and services.

SMART GOALS



SMART is a commonly used acronym for describing how good goals should look like. The letters correspond to:

■ S - Specific

A goal needs to be specific to clearly determine whether you met or didn't meet it.

For example, if your goal for this year is simply "be a better person", how would you know at the end of the year whether you achieved that goal?

To help with creating specific goals, try to answer all the "W" questions:

- What exactly do you want to achieve?
- Where will you achieve it?
- Who will be doing what? (Usually, for personal goals, this is always you)
- Why does this need to be done?

■ M - Measurable

A Measurable goal not only provides a clear objective criterion on whether the goal was met or not but also provides you with guidance during the period on how you're progressing and whether you need to make adjustments to your actions to reach the goal.

For example, if your goal is "Spend less than last year", it is a Specific goal, but not very measurable - in the middle of the year, unless you already failed by spending more than last year, you wouldn't know how well you're progressing. Instead, reformulate the goal as "Spend less than \$2500 this year". This would mean that you cannot spend more than \$210 per month, so if in March, for example, you've already spent \$700 - that's already \$630 above your goal.



TIP

Usually, a goal fits this criterion if you're able to objectively say, "I'm 30% done with the goal", or "I'm halfway through the objectives".

■ A - Achievable

The goal should be realistically achievable given the amount of time and effort you're willing to invest, not a pie-in-the-sky wish such as "peace in the world", or "learning Spanish to C2 level in a year by studying 5 minutes a day."

■ R - Relevant

Relevant verifies that the goal is aligned with your broader interests, values, and desired future path. For example, a goal such as "I will learn Spanish to B2 level in a year by studying 20 words and practicing 1 hour every day" might be very well formulated. Still, if your broader life goal is living in Paris, you'd probably be better off studying French instead.

■ T - Time-Bound

Finally, when you plan your goals, you should have a clear time frame in which they need to be achieved. It's not useful to have a goal of "Learning 5000 words in Spanish" if there's no time limit attached to that goal.

CHAPTER 8 CLUB TYPES

Mr. Rajendra Singh (center, first row), Agora Ambassador to Ethiopia, presiding a meeting of the Addis Agora Speakers Club

CLUB TYPES



Club President and Agora Ambassador Santiago Becerra and the members of the Agora Speakers Madrid club in Spain.

There are five types of clubs in Agora Speakers, depending basically on the number of restrictions they place on their membership and how closely they adhere to the Agora Educational Program.

- [Public Clubs](#) are the most popular and least restrictive type of club and the type we strongly encourage club founders to consider. Additionally, Public Clubs do not pay any fees to Agora Speakers International.
 - [Reference Clubs](#) are a special kind of public club that is recognized to work exceptionally well and strongly adheres to the Agora Educational Model. They are clubs to be used as a model for imitation, as a reference of how a good club should work.
 - [Youth Clubs](#) are another special type of public club that is specially geared towards children. They follow a simplified set of roles, officers, and an adapted educational program. Usually, they have an age limitation ranging from 6 to 14 years, although that's up to each club.
 - [External Affiliate Clubs](#) are clubs that belong to another organization (usually a nonprofit) and act as public Agora clubs.

- [Restricted Clubs](#) are clubs that have special requirements for membership, usually professional or in terms of experience.
- [Public Interest Clubs \(PIC\)](#) are clubs that have restrictions in terms of membership but serve the public interest and, as such, are exempt from any fees. The Foundation grants the Public Interest Club status on a case-by-case basis.
- [Corporate Clubs](#) are clubs that are embedded within an organization and are restricted to employees of that organization only.

All clubs in Agora Speakers are equally important, and all club members enjoy the same rights regardless of the type of club in which they participate.

PUBLIC CLUBS

Public Clubs are the most widely used club type and the one the Foundation encourages everyone to create. In fact, we have a program in place that waives fees for Corporate or Restricted clubs for some years if they also create and mentor a Public club.

■ Membership

A Public club is open to everyone in general. There are no general requirements for joining other than the availability of space. Note that “availability of space” may refer to two things.

- If the club meets physically in a venue, there must be enough room to accommodate all the members.
- If the club meets online, then “space” also refers to the capability of managing the number of members. For example, although online meetings can have an unlimited number of participants, managing a club of 150 virtual members is probably too much. As such, the club may impose a space limitation even for online meetings that is completely unrelated to technology limitations.

NOTE

Clubs that meet completely or occasionally online may additionally impose a requirement that prospective members are geographically close to the club’s registered location. This is important to allow the club to transition to physical meetings at any point in time without losing half of the membership due to their impossibility to attend.

While there may not be general requirements for membership, clubs are and remain private entities separate from Agora Speakers International. As such, membership is by-invitation-only and subject to acceptance by members: If members of a club believe that a particular person, due to their own specifics, character traits, or attributes, will hinder or disrupt the work of the club, they are free not to accept him or her as a member.



The above right should not be abused to create an effective general discriminatory policy. If you feel that you’re being denied membership due to a de-facto general discriminatory policy, please send a complaint to Agora Speakers International, and we will examine the situation.

Age Limitations

Agora allows Public Clubs to be created as “Youth Clubs”, in which attendance is limited to people of non-adult age (where the specific age number depends on the local legal definition) and their parents or tutors.

Please note, however, that this is the only age limitation allowed. If the country’s age for adulthood is set at 18, a club that limits attendance to “Only children 6-18 and their parents” is valid, but ones that limit attendance to “children 14-20”, “people under 30”, or “only elders above 60”, etc. are not.

■ Meeting Venue

Public Clubs must meet in venues accessible to all the members to avoid creating an indirect restriction in membership. For example, a Public Club may not meet in a building that, due to its security, is accessible only to employees of the company because that in effect will preclude anyone that’s not an employee from being a member. The same applies if the requirements or efforts that some members have to fulfill to access the venue are drastically higher than some other members. In the above example, if non-employees could access the building only after an extensive background check and many security checkpoints that require them to be scanned, leave their stuff outside, etc., then the meeting venue would still not be valid for the Public Club despite the theoretical possibility of everyone attending.

NOTE

Public Clubs in companies

A club that meets at the premises of a commercial company but allows anyone to become a member (including non-employees) and doesn’t limit the content of the speeches is still considered an Open Public Club.

■ Guests And Visitors

Public clubs must accept guests and visitors from other clubs. If multiple non-members are willing to attend and there’s not enough physical space (or virtual seats if using an online platform) to accommodate them all, the following priority order is used:

- Officers of the Agora Speakers International Foundation and members of the Agora Speakers International Board of Directors (for auditing, compliance, and mentorship purposes)
- Agora Ambassadors
- Agora members from other clubs
- non-Agora Guests

NOTE

The right of the above collectives to visit a Public Club does not imply that they are allowed to do whatever roles they want. It’s up to the club to define what roles the visitors can perform at a club meeting.

Our recommendation for the allowed roles is the following:

- Agora Ambassadors: Evaluations, Section leadership roles (e.g., Debate moderator, Hot questions leader, etc.), and Workshops
- Agora members from other clubs: All roles
- non-Agora Guests: All roles except Speech Evaluations and Prepared Speeches



The right to visit a Public Club should not be abused to the point where the visitor is acting as a club member without the full responsibilities of membership in the club. Except for the first collective (Officers and Members of the Board), the club is free to decline attendance to non-members if they start using that right as a pseudo-membership in the club. While it's difficult to provide a specific guideline, a good rule of thumb is that anyone visiting the club more often than 1 in 4 meetings should be invited to become a member.

Unless there's an objective per-person and per-meeting cost to be covered (for example, if dinner is served to all attendees), all of the above visitor collectives should be able to attend the meeting free of charge. Note that visitors may only be charged if they have a direct and measurable impact on that meeting's overall costs. For example, if the club rents a venue for a flat monthly or per-meeting rate, the rental price will not change due to the visitor, and therefore in this scenario, guests may not be charged.

■ Financial Requirements

Public clubs may choose to collect fees from their members for supporting their operation. If that is the case, they need to follow all the specific rules for club finances.

Public clubs do not pay any fees to Agora Speakers International - there are no set-up (chartering), periodic or per-member fees of any kind.

Finally, Public clubs are required to use the online Agora Accounting System for keeping track of their finances and for reporting purposes.

■ Listing Requirements

The information about Public clubs is... well, Public. The following are part of the information that is shared with everyone and that must be kept up to date by the club officials:

CLUB INFORMATION SHARED	
Information Type	Shared with
Club name, number, and chartering date	Public
Meeting schedule	Public
Meeting venue	Public
Club officers and their contact information	Agora members
Fee structure	Public
Club finances	Agora members
Visiting restrictions	Public
Speech content restrictions	Public
Club contact information	Public
Awards and badges	Public
Club languages	Public

■ Adherence to the Agora Educational Model

Agora Clubs are required to adhere to the Agora Educational Model and the Agora Educational Program.

This, in particular, means that every meeting should have at least:

- A [Meeting Leader](#).
- A [Grammarian](#).
- A [Timer](#).
- A [Meeting Evaluator](#).

The following requirements must also be met:

- All speeches, roles, and meeting sections must be evaluated according to criteria known in advance.
- All meeting sections must be timed. No participant is allowed to speak without a time limit.
- The majority of the prepared speeches must be from the [Agora Educational Paths](#).
- The majority of the activities must be from the [Agora Meeting Activities](#).
- The majority of the roles must be from the [Agora Meeting Roles](#).



TIP

It's perfectly ok if members give custom speeches or speeches from other educational programs that they own, as long as they are known in advance and evaluated. It's also perfectly ok if the club has activities other than the ones listed in our program. The "majority" rule only aims to preserve that clubs don't do something completely different from what Agora clubs do in general, as then it would be pointless to belong to Agora in the first place.

A special limitation of Public clubs is that they may not be used to systematically promote or advertise any third-party products, services, or organizations, not limit the speech content to that purpose.



Chartering of Agora Speakers Alicante, with Club President and Agora Ambassador to Spain Clara Manzo (first right).

REFERENCE CLUBS

A **Reference Club** is an honor award granted to any [Public Club](#) that performs exceptionally well in all areas of the Agora Educational Model and closely adheres to all educational and operational guidelines. It's a club that others can use as a reference or model to follow, an example of a well-run club.

Agora Speakers International will explicitly promote Reference Clubs to interested people, organizations, and media contacts.

■ Requirements

To be awarded the Reference Club award, a Public club needs to meet the following requirements:

Membership and Organizational Requirements

- Must have existed continuously for at least 6 months
- Has a relatively stable membership base, without large oscillations
- Has the full set of [Club officers](#)
- Has no additionally defined custom officers.
- Has no [speech content limitations](#) (other than the general, Agora-wide ones)

Educational Adherence

- The club has a year-long general [Strategy Plan](#) and set of goals created by the President.
- The club has a year-long [Educational Plan](#) created by the VPE.
- The club follows the recommendations in the [Operational Guidelines](#) in terms of the number of activities per educational Year.
- All meeting roles are performed and evaluated as per the role guidelines.

Meeting Requirements

- Meets physically at least bi-weekly (twice a month, every month except the country's usual holiday months)
- Have an attendance of at least 12 members per meeting, averaged for the last 6 months. The attending members may not necessarily always be the same. Note, however, that guests and visitors do not count towards that number.
- If a meeting has only one speech, it must be a project from the Agora Educational Paths. If a meeting has more than one speech, at most, one may be from non-Agora programs.
- Guests are properly taken care of and receive a welcome pack.

Communications

- The club has a year-long [marketing and outreach plan](#) designed by the VP of Marketing.
- Has an active presence on social networks as per the [Community Manager](#) guidelines.
- Follows all the [Brand Guidelines](#) in all communications.
- Actively promotes itself and Agora Speakers International.

■ Obtaining a Reference Status

The Reference Club status is granted as follows:

- The President or VP of Education of the club sends a note either through the online club management system or by sending a message to info@agoraspeakers.org.
- The request is examined, and the eligibility of the club is checked based on its track record.
- We may attend one or two meetings to verify how the club matters are handled.
- If everything is correct, the Reference Status will be officially granted. If there are any issues, we will provide guidance in addressing them, and the club can reapply once they are resolved.

NOTE

The Reference status is valid for one year, after which it must be explicitly renewed.

AFFILIATING AN EXTERNAL CLUB

If you already run an NGO, community service, or existing activity club that is compatible with the [core principles](#) of Agora Speakers International, you can easily provide your members with the additional benefits of joining the Agora Community.

■ Benefits of Affiliation

By affiliating with Agora, you provide your members with full Agora membership and access to the worldwide Agora community - including all educational materials, international contests, our online platform, communication, and management tools, networking and mentoring opportunities, etc. They would be able to attend meetings in any Agora club worldwide, participate in all Agora events, etc.

If your NGO, community service, or existing club meets regularly, the easiest way is to replace some of these meetings with Agora-style meetings. For example, if your club meets weekly, you may decide to one of the meetings every month, an “Agora meeting”. In a way, it’s like having **“a club within a club”**.

Another option is merely extending the activities you have with an “Agora meeting extension”. So, for example, if you meet regularly to do fundraising, once that activity is finished, you can have an Agora meeting.

The affiliation is made publicly - both Agora Speakers International and your organization will announce the affiliation with a joint press release using a standard format.

■ Requirements

Regardless of the circumstances, the Agora portion of your activities must function as a full [Public Agora club](#). This means:

- It needs to comply with all Agora guidelines for clubs, including having a compliant name, a club number, and a set of elected club officers.
- Members would still have to register on the online platform. We can import your members in bulk from a CSV listing, or they can sign up manually.
- All club extensions would be listed as hosted Agora Clubs on our platform. You can provide a short profile of your organization, and it will be included in the club description. However, only the meeting schedules that conform to the Agora model will be advertised.
- All Agora-type meetings should operate as Open Public Clubs: They should accept guests, other Agora members, and new potential members that want to sign up.
- New members should be able to sign up only for the Agora-type meetings. In other words, attendance to the Agora-type sessions should not require membership in any other organization (although in the Agora-type meetings, the clubs can advertise and promote the other portion as well, of course).
- Attendance to the Agora portion cannot require any other actions in the main organization.
- People that are willing to join only the Agora portion of your activities should be electable as officers.

RESTRICTED CLUBS

■ Membership

As their name implies, Restricted clubs are clubs where only people that meet certain requirements can become members. These requirements are usually of two types:

- Professional - the club is restricted to members of a professional association.
- Educational - the club is restricted to members who have achieved a certain educational or professional accomplishment level.

These requirements must be public and may not go against the [core principles](#) or bylaws of the Foundation.

NOTE

In general, a limitation is considered valid if any person, regardless of their circumstances, is able to fulfill it through their own effort and willpower.

For example, requiring membership in a specific organization or movement is allowed only if such an organization is non-discriminatory: as far as Agora is concerned, there's no difference between a club that is only for men and a club that requires members to belong to an organization that only admits men. Both are considered discriminatory and are not allowed.

Here are some examples of valid and invalid limitations. For the non-valid limitations, the reason is indicated.

- ✔ Limited to doctors
- ✔ Limited to lawyers
- ✔ Limited to Boy Scout members (despite the name, Boy Scouts of America does admit girls as well since 2018)
- ✔ Limited to Mensa members
- ✘ Limited to Men (discriminatory based on gender)
- ✘ Limited to Women (discriminatory based on gender)
- ✘ Limited to Spanish Nationals (discriminatory based on nationality)
- ✘ Limited to Christians (discriminatory based on religion)
- ✔ Limited to PMP-certified project managers
- ✔ Limited to members of the IEEE
- ✔ Limited to physicists
- ✔ Limited to members that have completed the Basic Educational Path
- ✔ Limited to professional speakers
- ✘ Limited to members of the Socialist Party (discriminatory based on ideology)
- ✘ Professional astrologers (against the bylaws -

popularization of science and critical thinking)

- ✘ Limited to straight people (discriminatory based on sexual orientation)
- ✘ Mothers-only club (discriminatory based on gender)

NOTE

Note that the validity or not of a limitation may be country-specific.

For example, if a country allows both men and women to become lawyers, a lawyers-only club is valid. However, if only men can become lawyers in that country, a lawyers-only club would not be allowed.

Age Limitations

As in the case of Public Clubs, a Restricted Club may have an age limitation under the same limitations explained for the Public Youth Clubs.

■ Meeting Venue

Restricted clubs are free to pick whatever venue they want for the meetings, as long as it doesn't act as an additional layer of discrimination for members.

■ Guests And Visitors

Restricted clubs must accept visits at least from the following collectives:

- Officers of the Agora Speakers International Foundation and members of the Agora Speakers International Board of Directors (for auditing, compliance, and mentorship purposes)
- Agora Ambassadors

NOTE

The right of the above collectives to visit a Restricted Club does not imply that they are allowed to do whatever roles they want. It's up to the club to define what roles the visitors can perform at a club meeting.

Our recommendation is the following:

- Agora Ambassadors: Evaluations, Section leadership roles (e.g., Debate moderator, Hot questions leader, etc.), and Workshops

Unlike Public Clubs, Restricted clubs are not required (but may do so if they want) to accept guests from other clubs or the general public,

regardless of whether they would meet the membership criteria.

■ Financial Requirements

In terms of finances, Restricted clubs need to follow the same rules as [Public Clubs](#).

However, unlike Public Clubs, Restricted clubs pay a fee to Agora Speakers International of \$40 (USD) per member per year. The fee is paid at the joining date of the member and is valid for one year.

■ Listing Requirements

The following information is shared about Restricted clubs, and it must be kept up to date by club officers.

CLUB INFORMATION SHARED	
Information type	Shared with
Club name, number, and chartering date	Public
Meeting schedule	Agora ambassadors and agora foundation officials
Meeting venue	Public
Club officers and their contact information	Agora ambassadors and agora foundation officials
Fee structure	Public
Club finances	Agora members
Visiting restrictions	Public
Speech content restrictions	Public
Club contact information	Public
Awards and badges	Public
Club languages	Public

■ Adherence to the Agora Educational Model

In terms of adherence to the Agora Educational Model, Restricted clubs need to follow the same rules as Public Clubs, with the following exceptions:

- In addition to the general speech content restrictions that Public Clubs may enact, Restricted clubs may additionally limit the speech content to topics of interest to the membership as long as these limitations are clearly related to the membership limitations.
- It's acceptable to promote the hosting professional association or organization that acts as a membership requirement. For example, if a club restricts membership to only IT professionals belonging to the ACM, it's ok to promote the ACM within the club.

PUBLIC INTEREST CLUBS

■ Public Interest Clubs

On a case-by-case basis, Agora Speakers International may designate a club with restrictions on membership, but that serves the general interest as a Public Interest Club (PIC). This may happen even if these restrictions would otherwise not be allowed.

Public Interest Clubs do not pay any fees to Agora Speakers International but can restrict both membership and attendance due to their particular nature.

Some examples of Public Interest Clubs are:

- Clubs in governmental bodies that restrict attendance to government employees.
- Clubs in schools and universities that restrict attendance to students, teachers, and/or parents.
- Clubs in hospitals, child-care centers, hospices, orphanages, elderly residences, etc.
- Clubs in penitentiaries.

In general, a PIC must meet on the hosting institution's territory, as it is assumed that it's in the institution's interest to have such a club. Therefore the institution is willing to provide infrastructure support. For example, a club only for Columbia University students that meets in a pub in NY cannot have PIC status.

Except in the cases where the club members need to be protected or are restricted from contacting the outside world (for example, for health or security reasons), all PICs must meet physically regularly (occasional online meetings are allowed, though). Continuing with the above example, an online club for Columbia University students cannot have PIC status.

Please note that, in general, we require the organization hosting the club to be non-discriminatory and in alignment with Agora's bylaws (although there may be exceptions, such as a club in a single-sex penitentiary or a support group for survivors of domestic violence)

■ Registration Procedure

To request a PIC status, please register the club first as a Restricted club, indicating that you want to apply for PIC status.

Depending on the type of organization that will be hosting the club, you will also need to send us electronically the following documents:

- For PICs that are based in officially recognized educational organizations:
 - The full name, full physical address, and of the institution hosting the club.
 - The club's meeting venue (including specific building and room) must be on the institution's territory.
- For PICs that are based in governmental bodies, health organizations, child-care centers, hospices, orphanages,

elderly residences, and penitentiaries:

- The full name, full physical address, and of the institution hosting the club.
 - The website of the organization.
 - A letter of authorization signed by a responsible person in the institution allowing the creation of the club. The letter must have the full name and direct contact information (both institutional EMail and Telephone) of the responsible person. Please note that we need a direct EMail and Telephone, not the institution's generic EMail. The EMail must match the domain of the institution. If the language of the letter of authorization is not English or Spanish, we will need a notarized translation of it to one of those languages.
- For PICs that are in other organizations:
 - All the documents indicated above, plus:
 - A letter from the club founder explaining why he or she believes the club is performing a public service.
 - The current bylaws or charter of the institution where the club meets, both in the original language and translated into English.

If the PIC status is not granted...

If you applied for PIC status and it wasn't granted, you have several options:

- Address the issues mentioned in the decision letter and apply again.
- Keep the club simply as Restricted, paying the corresponding fees.
- Switch the club to a Public club, removing the membership restrictions

If the PIC status is granted...

Congratulations! The club may now enjoy for free all the benefits that Agora offers.

Either the "PIC" or the "Public Interest Club" suffix will be appended to the club name in all official Agora documents. (For example, "Impromptu Speakers PIC" or "Agora Speakers Madrid PIC"). Since the C in PIC already stands for "Club", if the original name included the word "Club", the name will be adapted accordingly ("Best Speakers Club" will be changed to either "Best Speakers PIC" or "Best Speakers Public Interest Club", at your choice).

In general, the PIC status does not expire, so you don't need to go through any renewal procedures. However, if any of the information used when applying for the PIC status ceases to be valid, you need to resubmit a new version. For example, if the person that authorized the creation of the club no longer works in the hosting organization, we will need a new letter of authorization signed by a new official.

NOTE

To ensure that the PIC system is not abused, Agora Speakers International may occasionally conduct a review or audit of a club's PIC status and may request additional documentation. If any non-conformities are found, the club will be given a specific amount of time to address them. If they are not addressed, the PIC status will be revoked.

Meeting Venue

Public Interest Clubs are free to pick whatever venue they want for the meetings, as long as it doesn't act as an additional layer of discrimination for members.

Guests And Visitors

PIC clubs are required to accept visits from the Officers of the Agora Speakers International Foundation and members of the Agora Speakers International Board of Directors for auditing, compliance, and mentorship purpose, subject to the necessary security measures in the venue.

At their own discretion, PIC clubs may choose to accept visitors from other collectives, such as Agora Ambassadors, other Agora club members, etc.

Financial Requirements

Public Interest Clubs are not allowed to charge fees to their members, as the assumption is that the hosting organization takes care of all expenses.

Since there are no fees, there are no reporting requirements, either.

Listing Requirements

The following information is shared about Public Interest Clubs, and it must be kept up to date by club officers.

CLUB INFORMATION SHARED

Information Type	Shared with
Club name, number, and chartering date	Public
Meeting schedule	Agora Ambassadors and Agora Foundation officials
Meeting venue	Public
Club Officers and their contact information	Agora Ambassadors and Agora Foundation officials
Fee structure	Not Applicable
Club finances	Private (not subject to Agora Supervision)
Visiting Restrictions	Public
Speech Content Restrictions	Public
Club Contact Information	Public
Awards and Badges	Public
Club Languages	Public

Adherence to the Agora Educational Model

In terms of adherence to the Agora Educational Model, Public Interest Clubs follow the same rules as [Public Clubs](#), with the following exceptions:

- In addition to the general speech content restrictions that Public Clubs may enact, PIC clubs may additionally limit the speech content to topics of interest to the membership as long as these limitations are clearly related to the membership limitations.
- It's acceptable to promote the hosting professional association or organization that acts as a membership requirement. For example, if a club restricts membership to only IT professionals belonging to the ACM, it's ok to promote the ACM within the club.

CORPORATE CLUBS



José Manuel Ropero Tagua, founder of the first Agora Corporate club at RSI, speaking at the 2019 International Convention about the experience.

■ Membership

Clubs that are embedded within another organization (commercial or non-commercial) are restricted only to employees or organization members.

The hosting organization may not be involved in activities against the core principles or bylaws of the Foundation.

Corporate Clubs may not have an age restriction. In other words, having a “Youth club for children of the employees of company X” is not an allowed type of club. The club should be constituted as a Public Youth club instead.

■ Meeting Venue

Corporate clubs must meet on the premises of the hosting organization or in a venue provided by it.

■ Guests And Visitors

Corporate clubs are required to accept visits from the Officers of the Agora Speakers International Foundation and members of the Agora Speakers International Board of Directors for auditing, compliance, and mentorship purpose, subject to the necessary security measures in the venue.

■ Financial Requirements

Corporate Clubs do not report their finances to Agora Speakers International and handle the matter internally as they see fit.

Unlike Public Clubs, however, Corporate clubs do pay a fee to Agora Speakers International, as follows:

- A \$100 set-up fee.
- A yearly per-member fee of \$50, with a minimum of \$600 / year if the club has 12 or fewer members.

■ Listing Requirements

The following information is shared about Corporate clubs, and it must be kept up to date by club officers.

CLUB INFORMATION SHARED	
Information Type	Shared with
Club name, number, and chartering date	Public
Meeting schedule	Agora Ambassadors and Agora Foundation officials
Meeting venue	Public
Club Officers and their contact information	Agora Ambassadors and Agora Foundation officials
Fee structure	Private, not supervised by Agora Speakers International
Club finances	Private, not supervised by Agora Speakers International
Visiting Restrictions	Public
Speech Content Restrictions	Public
Club Contact Information	Public
Awards and Badges	Public
Club Languages	Public

■ Adherence to the Agora Educational Model

Corporate Clubs do not report their finances to Agora Speakers International and handle the matter internally as they see fit.

Corporate clubs enjoy a lot of freedom in tailoring our program to their specific needs. If requested, we can provide an adapted Educational Program that includes topics of specific interest to them and manuals that combine our training topics with topics that the organization requires.

Meetings in Corporate Clubs may feature sections that are neither timed nor evaluated (although we do not recommend it).

In terms of speeches, Corporate Clubs are allowed to impose more speech content restrictions to align better with the hosting organization's business goals. They have no requirements in terms of the activities, speeches, or role must come from the standard catalog.

Additionally, Corporate Clubs are free to organize their Educational Year as they see fit - without the need to meet the minimum yearly numbers for the different activities (for example, a Corporate Club might not have any debates or colloquia throughout the year if they don't consider that kind of activity necessary).

Finally, Corporate Clubs are not required to have all their officers elected by the members - some of the officers may be appointed by the hosting organization. Some officers also become optional:

- The Vice President of Community Leadership
- The Treasurer
- The Community Manager



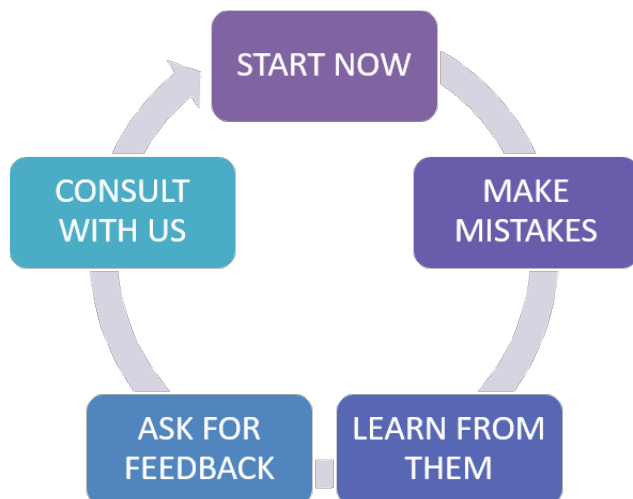
CHAPTER 9 STARTING A NEW CLUB

Danupol Siamwalla (first left), Jomaine Seow (fifth left) and the Founders' team preparing the launch of the first Agora club in Thailand

Starting an Agora Speakers club is very easy; there are very few requirements, and there are no fees or formalities involved (no chartering fees nor any sort of mandatory purchases).

■ One Rule For Success: Don't Strive for Perfection

The main factor that distinguishes successful clubs from those that never make it is that successful clubs don't look for perfection. When you start planning for the first meeting, your thought process occasionally will go like "We can't meet next Thursday because it will be raining. The one after that has the Champion League match, and then we have the country elections". The problem with this kind of reasoning is that no matter which day you pick, there will **always** be something happening on that day.



💡 TIP

There will never be an ideal moment for launching. A successful club does things NOW, makes mistakes, and learns quickly from them.

They don't wait for the perfect moment to launch. They don't wait to find the perfect venue. They don't want the perfect set of members to schedule. Research has shown that people that start now, fail quickly, learn from their mistakes, and repeat are much more successful and deliver much higher quality results than people that analyze everything down to the last detail, and only then do they start.

💡 TIP

Always remember: If your next action is scheduled more than two weeks ahead, it's no longer an action - it's just a wishful dream.

CLUB CREATION - WHY START A CLUB



Why start a club?

Starting a club is an exceptionally gratifying endeavor:

- It will teach you a lot about leadership. There's nothing more challenging than leading a community of volunteers, where you must constantly negotiate, persuade and delegate.
- You will be creating a lasting and positive impact on the lives of many people. We encourage a lot of out-of-club work and getting involved in the leadership of real projects in the community unrelated to Agora. We want the public speakers that we train to actually go out in the wild and speak and the leaders that we train to actually have a real and positive impact on the world around them. And by creating a club, you will be the starting point of all these ramifications of goodwill.
- You will be part of a vibrant and very passionate community. Some of the people you will meet and lead might turn into professional contacts, some into close friends.
- As Agora Speakers is relatively new, you will probably be creating history in your city or country and will be recognized as the one that started it there. You might end up even being interviewed on radio or TV, as has already happened to some of our Ambassadors.
- It can also be an excellent proof of your abilities, should you pursue professional positions or jobs involving leadership, management, or communications.



Agora Speakers Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia

If you're starting the first club in your country or state, you might even want to apply to become an Agora Ambassador.

To start a club, you only need:

- A bit of time and energy.
- At least 8 more people are interested in meeting regularly. (This is usually easily achievable as there's a lot of demand for this kind of learning)
- A meeting venue (unless you plan to have a purely online club)
- If you don't have experience with any other public speaking clubs or organizations, a bit of online training which we will provide



Starting a club can bring a lot of good to your community. In the picture, the first Agora Club in Chisepo (Malawi), founded by Gosten Chikasowa



Starting a club doesn't require neither a lot of resources nor a spectacular venue. In the picture, Ajinawo Pacesetter Speakers Club in Ibadan Nigeria, with club founder Abiodun Ajinawo (fourth right)

CLUB CREATION - HOW WE CAN HELP



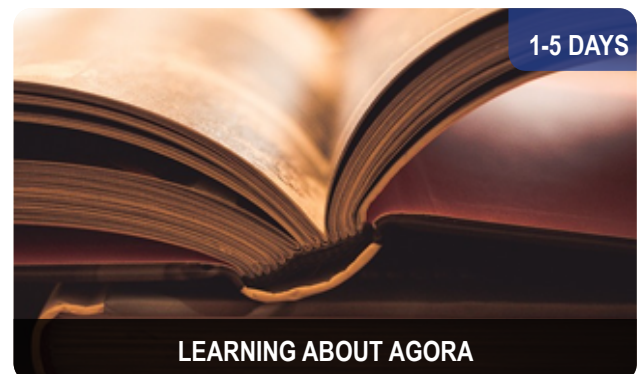
The Agora Speakers community and Agora Speakers International can help you in starting a club in a variety of ways:

- Advice and tips from people that have gone down this path, including meeting venue suggestions.
- Educational materials.
- Online training to members
- Q&A sessions
- Website hosting
- Templates, logos, banners, and stationery designs.
- You can produce all the materials locally. No need to buy stuff from a central location.
- Formal backing - we can send official letters of support to authorities designated by you to prove that your activity is educational, nonprofit, and affiliated with a worldwide Foundation.
- Targeted promotion of your club or event, if it is the first club in your city.

However, please note that Clubs are local, independent entities organized and led by local volunteers to benefit local members. As such, Agora Speakers International cannot help with:

- Funds
- Free physical goods of any kind.
- Compliance with the local regulations.
- Insurance, if required.
- Finding a meeting venue or negotiations with local venue owner

CLUB CREATION - LEARNING ABOUT AGORA



This step is critical, especially if you're leading the first club of your city and don't have models to base it on. We recommend you follow this simple series of steps:

1. [Sign up](#) on the Agora Online Platform. This is a Single Sign-On system that will allow you access to an ever-growing set of services and systems. (After you sign up, you'll be returned to this page).
2. Examine this [short introductory presentation. 15 min](#)
3. Listen to the following [recorded training session.2h](#)
4. Read the latest [Agora Guide 1-2 days](#). Familiarize yourself with the Wiki, especially the following sections that change frequently and whose description could be outdated in the guide.
 - The projects form the [Basic Educational Path](#), which is the path that all new members should start following.
 - The different [meeting sections and roles](#).
 - The [brand guidelines](#), if you have the intention of creating materials using Agora's digital assets.
 - The [operational requirements](#) for clubs.
5. Watch a sample [recorded meeting](#) (2h). This is a raw, unedited video that shows most of the guide's elements. It's recorded on purpose in a non-professional way, to show what a real meeting looks like (with all its highs and lows), instead of trying to show some idealized meeting shot using professional actors.
6. Watch the tutorial videos on our [Youtube channel](#) that explain and give tips on the different roles. On the channel, you can also watch videos of recorded meetings of clubs worldwide - both physical and online.

If you have any doubts, please do not hesitate to contact us at info@agoraspeakers.org or in any of our social network channels (for example, our official Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/agoraspeakers/>).

CLUB CREATION - DEFINING THE CLUB



Let's get started!

Decide on a club name.

You can name your club in any way you want, as long as it complies with the [official naming rules and limitations](#).

There's no need to include "Agora" in your club's name. Your club could just be "Advanced Speakers of Paris", for example.

Club Logo

Due to the way many materials (such as badges, certificates, evaluation forms, etc.) are generated, and also to prevent confusion between the materials that clubs create and the official materials of the Foundation, all clubs are required to have a custom logo. Plus, having a club logo helps improve the camaraderie between the members and makes it much funnier when participating in external events.

There are two options:



[brand guidelines](#).

- We can automatically generate a logo for you when you register the club, based on a standard design that includes the Agora square logo and club name.
- For example, if your club is called "Amman Speakers", the logos we will provide to you will look like these (except that we provide them in very high resolution).

You can start with the logo that we generate automatically, then change it once the club is up and running.

Decide your club's characteristics

Next, you need to "configure" the club by deciding some of its core attributes. Almost all of them can be changed once the club is up and running, so don't become blocked at this stage.

Type of club

Agora has different [types of clubs](#), each of them with different characteristics, requirements, and fees. The most frequent type of club is the Public club, which basically allows anyone to become a member, and it's the one we recommend. Public clubs are completely free to create and pay no fees of any kind to Agora Speakers International.

Online or Physical meetings?

The club can meet physically, only online, or a combination of both.

In this case, our recommendation is to have a physical club that occasionally meets online. Online meetings allow members around the world to participate and are a wonderful opportunity for meeting new people, having some fresh external feedback, and be exposed to different cultures, ideas, and language accents. Additionally, having an occasional online meeting simplifies recruiting new members since it makes it easier for curious people "on the fence" to visit the club without much effort or commitment.



The full educational experience can only be obtained in a club that meets physically, so we encourage this option. Also, please note that some educational projects may not be completed online or have additional requirements in that case.

Needless to say, physical clubs can move to online meetings in case of exceptional circumstances such as the 2020 pandemic.

- You may design your own club logo as long as it meets the



TIP

It's challenging to push a truck and to get it to move. However, once it's moving, it's relatively easy to keep it that way.

A club is similar and also has a lot of inertia - it takes a lot of effort to get to a healthy and regularly meeting club. If you have a club that's meeting physically and regularly, and some exceptional circumstances arise, it's better and much easier to switch to online meetings and keep the regularity than to stop meetings altogether and then try to resume them.

The official location of the club.

Even if the club is purely online, it has to be registered for organizational purposes as belonging to a particular town or locality -the one in which the majority of the founding members live.



Note that this is one of the very few things that cannot be changed once the club is registered. A club that was registered as belonging to Paris, France, cannot later be changed to Rio de Janeiro, Brasil.

The Meeting Schedule

Which days of the week are you going to meet? Agora Speakers clubs must meet at least once a month, except for the summer holidays. Of course, you can meet more frequently - once every two weeks, or even weekly. Some clubs even meet more frequently - twice a week no less!. Whatever the case, it's best if your club has a well-defined meeting schedule.



TIP

Although usually, clubs opt for a schedule that is twice a month (something like "every first and third Wednesday"), if your club is Public, we recommend that it meets weekly. This will make things more difficult initially because it's complicated for people to have such a commitment. Unless you start with 20 or 30 founding members, there will be meetings where you will have only 4 or 5 members attending. That's ok - as a club leader, you also need to deal with these kinds of situations.

However, in the long run, a club that meets weekly grows faster because the schedule is much clearer to potential guests. If the club meets every Wednesday, then everybody knows that if it's Wednesday, there's a meeting. However, if the club meets "every first and third Wednesday", one has to look up in the calendar which Wednesday is the next one going to be, then what happens on the fifth Wednesday of the month, then what if the first Wednesday was a holiday and is the meeting lost or moved to the second Wednesday, etc.

If you decide that the club will meet on a weekly schedule, it's a good idea to remind guests that it's ok if they can't attend every single week.

The Meeting Venue

If the club meets physically, you'll need to find a suitable meeting venue. We'll talk about the meeting venue a bit later.

Languages that will be used in the club.

As mentioned before, we encourage Agora Speakers clubs to use not only English but also local languages. You can have a club that only uses one local language or clubs that alternate languages in meetings, or clubs that allow a selection of languages to be used in the same meeting.

When choosing the club's language, consider whether Agora's Educational Materials are available in that language. We're open to adding languages to the wiki, and translations are mostly volunteer-based, so if you want your club to use an unsupported language, please consider helping with translating the materials first.



TIP

Unless you expect all members to know all the languages used, we recommend that each club focuses on just one language (not necessarily English). If a club mixes two languages in the same session (let's say Spanish and English), some of the members might not understand half of the content and will feel alienated. Additionally, it is also stressful for a speaker to see that part of the public is not paying attention because they don't understand the language he's using.

If a club alternates meetings between two languages, then what usually happens is that members just go to the session in the language they're more comfortable with - which effectively splits the club.

Club fees will be charged to members.

Although Agora does not charge any fees to open public clubs, your club can charge members to sustain its operation. Please note that if you charge fees, you need to comply with all the [rules for club finances](#).

Participation of non-members

There are three types of non-members that may visit your club, and you need to decide what roles you will allow them to have at the meeting.

A **non-resident member** is a member of any other Agora Speakers club. You can decide that you will allow these special "guests" to take any role except prepared speeches.



TIP

We encourage that clubs allow that any Agora member is allowed to have any meeting role in any Agora club. This helps build confidence, as members can practice public speaking in front of many different audiences and not merely in front of the members of their home club.

Guests, on the other hand, are people from the general public that are not members of any club, and most of the time, don't even know what this is about and are just curious about the organization. We encourage you to allow them to perform simple roles like the thought of the day or participant in hot questions to give them a feeling of speaking in public.

Foundation representatives. Foundation representatives are members of the governing bodies of the Foundation, as well as Agora Ambassadors. For participation, they are subject to the same participation rules as any non-resident member. In other words, the title alone doesn't give them any special participation rights.

NOTE







Public clubs are required to accept guests and non-resident members in their meetings, subject only to space availability if the meeting takes place physically in a venue.

Additionally, all clubs are required to accept visits from Foundation Representatives and Agora Ambassadors for guidance and ensuring that all clubs follow the Agora mechanics.

Club contact information

Clubs must publish two alternative forms of contacting the club, at least one of which must be an EMail or a telephone number. That information will be made public.

Here are some examples of valid and invalid combinations

-  Email and Facebook
-  Phone and Website
-  Phone and EMail
-  Website and Facebook
-  Instagram and Facebook
-  Instagram and Phone

You also need to designate a specific person to act as the contact person for the club. This contact person for a club can be any member (not necessarily a club officer) who will be in charge of replying to information requests by interested people.

Recordings of Meetings

One important decision you need to make is whether the meetings will be recorded and photographed and whether individual members will have the right to request being excluded from the procedure.

NOTE

We recommend that all meetings are recorded and photographed and the proceedings publicly posted. This provides a fantastic progression track of how members improve and helps attract new members to the club.

Whatever the decision, make sure it's clearly documented on all of the club's sites, advertising materials, and event posts.

If a club decides to adhere to the above recommendation, then it's fundamental that either the [Meeting Facilitator](#), or the [Meeting Leader](#), or the [Videographer](#), or any [Club Officer](#) clearly states at the beginning of the meeting (of **every** meeting) - **before** the recording is turned on - that a full recording will take place. This is important because the meeting may have some guests or visitors unaware of the fact (although ideally, guests should have been informed in advance to avoid wasting their time if they don't consent). Agora Speakers requires all clubs to comply with the European GDPR privacy framework (regardless of the jurisdiction where the club is located), which means that the notification must state:

- That the meeting will be recorded
- The purpose of the recording
- Where the information will be posted
- Whether there's an ability to opt-out (or not) and how to exercise it.

For example, this could be a sample statement:

"Hello everyone, As in all meetings, I need to warn you that the meeting will be photographed and videotaped. We do this so that all members can view their progress and so that we can showcase our clubs to others. Videos are uploaded to the youtube channel of the club and are visible to the Internet at large. We also send some of our best videos and speeches to Agora Speakers International. Please note that once uploaded, there's nothing we can do to stop the propagation of the video.

Unfortunately, video edits are a very time-consuming process, so we must ask that anyone who doesn't want their speech to be recorded to state that clearly at the beginning of the speech will stop the recording. If you change your mind after the fact, your only option is to do the video edits yourself with your own tools and provide us with the final video within one week after the meeting.

Also, please note that this only applies if you take an active role. If you're simply part of the audience, we cannot remove you from the video, so your only option, if you don't want to be present in our recording, is to leave the meeting now. Anyone staying is granting their consent for their presence to be recorded and shared publicly."

NOTE

There's no shame to have a "no-opt-out policy". After all, both Agora and the club are providing an invaluable service to anyone that wants to join, virtually for free (or totally for free, if the club doesn't have any fees). Professional courses for the same set of skills start at over several thousand dollars.

Rules of Order used in the club

Apart from the regular educational meetings, your club will occasionally need to hold meetings for different kinds of issues:

- Use of club funds

- Election of club officers
- Disciplinary procedures
- Changing any of the parameters of the club from this section
- ...other topics of interest

Although some aspects of how business should be conducted during these meetings are codified in the Agora Club Constitution (such as how votes are counted and how majorities are calculated), the club needs to decide on a set of rules to apply to guarantee orderly meetings.

Here are some options to choose from:

- The always-popular [Robert's Rules of Order](#).
- The [Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure](#).
- [Riddick's Rules of Procedure](#).
- [Demeter's Manual of Parliamentary Law and Procedure](#).
- [Bourinot's Rules of Order](#).
- [Francis & Francis' Democratic Rules of Order](#)
- ...any other that your club finds convenient.

If your club chooses to pick a different set of rules than the ones suggested here, please note that the selected set of rules MUST:

- Give all club members equal importance
- Give all members an equal opportunity for presenting, supporting, opposing, and withdrawing motions.
- Give all members an equal opportunity and time for participating in orderly meetings without intimidation or fear of disagreement.

Types of Speech Content

One last thing you may want to set is the type of speech content allowed in the club. There are many scenarios in which you might want to set that explicitly. For example, you might want to have a club dedicated to History where only speeches about historical subjects are allowed. Alternatively, you may want to have a club exclusively for practicing sales pitches. If you want to limit the types of speech content allowed, make sure you read the specific article [about the rules governing this](#).

Legal Registration

A final decision is whether you want to proceed with legally registering the club with the state's non-profit register. This is usually a cumbersome process that should not be taken lightly and may derail the whole club creation procedure. Unfortunately, we cannot provide specific information on whether that is necessary for your club and how it's done - you'll need to consult an expert in your local jurisdiction. In the general case, we do offer three suggestions (not to be taken as legal advice):

- If the law allows, try to get the club up and running and stabilized before attempting the legal registration process.

- We view clubs as the equivalent of "private study groups" - a private set of people that meet periodically to study and practice together some skills, not much different from the way students in a class would meet to study the subject and to practice before an exam. Some of these meetings might have costs (such as renting the study room) that need to be shared. Check if your local jurisdiction requires such a group to have legal registration.
- Clubs are legally independent of the Agora Speakers International Foundation. As such, any registration should be made as a local independent entity and not as any "branch", "representative", or "part" of a foreign Foundation.



Public Clubs, PICs, and Restricted Clubs may not register as for-profit entities. If they wish to pursue legal registration, it must be strictly as a not-for-profit entity.

Please also note that most of the time, legal registration will imply purchasing some civil liability insurance. Again, this is one of the areas where we can neither provide information nor help in any way - consult a local legal expert.

Missing a decision?

Use [this handy form](#) from our Asset Creator to record all the decisions made and make sure that you haven't missed anything.

CLUB NAME REQUIREMENTS

In general, you can name your club in any way you want, with the following exceptions:

- The name must be written using the [Latin-1 \(ISO 8859-1\)](#) character set.
- The name must be unique within your state. If the name refers to a geographical area (such as a city), it must be unique within the country. Only clubs that meet physically within a certain city may include its name as part of the club name. For example, if your club meets in Paris, you may not have “Madrid Speakers” as your club name.
- The name of Public Interest and Corporate clubs must include or reference the organization in which they are embedded.
 - ✔ Advanced Speakers of IBM Paris
 - ✔ 114 School Agora Speakers
 - ✘ Advanced Speakers of Paris
- The name may not contain copyrighted terms, except if it's a corporate club officially allowed by your company and the copyrighted term is a term owned by the company, and you have an explicit permission by the management to use it. For example, you may not name your club “IBM Washington Speakers” unless you have official permission from IBM.
- The name may not imply that it is somehow a representation of the whole organization or an official branch of Agora Speakers International. The following names, for example, would not be allowed:
 - ✘ Agora Speakers Central
 - ✘ Agora Speakers Headquarters
 - ✘ Agora Leadership Institute
 - ✘ Agora German Speakers
 - ✘ Agora Speakers International Paris
 - ✘ Official Agora Club Paris
- For the same reason, the name may not include names of geographical areas bigger than a city (e.g., “France”, or “Europe”, or “International”). You may, however, use the name of the city the club is in as long as there's no other club in your city with the same name.
 - ✘ Agora Speakers France
 - ✘ Agora Speakers Europe
 - ✘ Students Agora Speakers International
 - ✘ Advanced Speakers International
 - ✘ Advanced Speakers France
 - ✘ Globetrotters International
 - ✔ Agora Speakers Paris
- The name may not contain any kind of aggressive or hate speech directed at other groups of people.

- The name may not contain offensive terms and must comply with the local legislation on the naming of associations and companies
- The name may not mislead as to the kind of activities that occur in the club or their accreditation or recognition. In particular, it may not claim that it is a school, a university, or a similar educational institution. Note, however, that if the club belongs to such an institution, including its name is valid.
 - ✘ School of Leadership
 - ✘ Paris Academy of Public Speaking
 - ✘ Agora Debate University.
 - ✔ Harvard University Agora Club
- The name may not contain a statement of a political, religious, or ideological worldview (as this would imply that the club only accepts that kind of member, which in turn violates the neutrality principle). For example, the following club names are not allowed:
 - ✘ Believe in God club
 - ✘ Workers' rights Agora Club
 - ✘ Climate Change Deniers Club
 - ✘ Republican Speakers
 - ✘ Left-Wing Speakers
- There is no requirement to have “Agora” in your club name. The following are all valid names:
 - ✔ Advanced Speakers of Paris
 - ✔ Paris Globetrotters
 - ✔ Paris Spring Speakers
 - ✔ Seine Speakers
 - ✔ Green Hill Orators
 - ✔ Science Thinkers

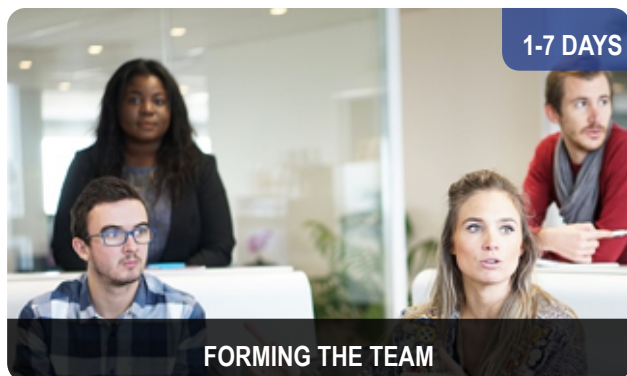
If you want to have Agora in your club name, then it must be included without variations. You may not pluralize or in any way alter the name:

- ✔ Agora Speakers Paris
- ✔ Paris Agora Speakers
- ✔ Agora Paris
- ✘ Agoras Paris
- ✘ Agoritos de Madrid
- ✘ Agoreans United

In case of doubt, drop us a note at info@agoraspeakers.org

Please note that occasionally we may reject a club name during the registration process for reasons not specified here, but that would conflict with the Foundation's overall goal and vision or would be inappropriate in ways that we could not have foreseen.

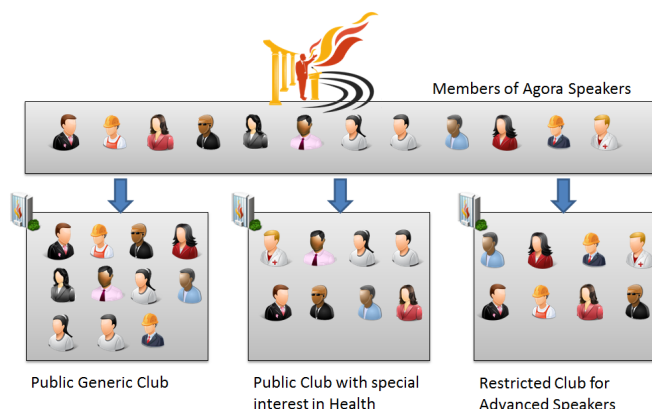
CLUB CREATION - FORM THE FOUNDING TEAM



Contact prospective members

Contact people that might be willing to become members of your club or that might help you with it.

At least 8 members are needed to create a new club, but it's better if you have between 10 and 15 to have a stable club. If you already have the prospective members, great! Jump to step 7. There's no need for chartering members to be new members of Agora. It's perfectly possible for all members of a new club to belong also to other clubs:



Some possible ideas on how to recruit people are:

- Publish on your social media accounts your intention of starting an Agora Speakers club and information about what Agora is and what the club will do.
- Email your contacts about your initiative.
- Email friends or members of other similar organizations that might be interested in the club.
- Spread the word about Agora Speakers in meetings you attend; invite attendees to the chartering meeting.
- Spread the word about Agora and your club in the social media groups you belong to. If the group is subject to strong moderation and censorship, it's recommended that you just observe the opinions of participating people, then identify those who could be responsive to your initiative and just comment publicly in the group that you sent them a private message, mentioning them by name to draw their attention. Then do the rest of the correspondence in private.

- Talk to members of other organizations that didn't renew their membership.
- Post-event notices on sites like Meet Up or Internations
- Announce your intention of starting a club in either the Facebook Group of Agora in your country or - if there is still not one created - in the Agora Speakers International Group.
- Create a Google AdWords or Facebook campaign targeting searches of "learning public speaking", "public speaking practice", "fear public speaking," or similar combinations, setting a geographical limit as precise as possible (ideally, your city)
- Leave flyers at universities, bookstores, libraries, etc.
- Google blogs, sites, forums, and groups in your area for public speaking and leadership, and post a notice there. To avoid being labeled spam, make it clear that Agora Speakers is a nonprofit, and the fees are absolutely minimal.
- Publish a free classified in the local cultural guide or newspaper.
- Write and send a press release to the local newspapers and radio stations.

To get more ideas, Google the name of clubs of other organizations in your area, and see the places where they've advertised, then use the same channels.

Explaining what Agora is

When you reach out to recruit members, you need to be able to explain what Agora is about.

It is a good idea to review all the information and presentations available about our organization so that you may include the appropriate documents in your communications and highlight the main benefits of joining an Agora Speakers club. It's beneficial to share [this](#) very brief presentation.

You can also use this [one-minute](#) explanation of Agora.

Follow up leads

Once Emails or messages from interested people start coming in, follow up with an explanation of Agora's work and how clubs work, and how members benefit from the Agora experience.

You can use the official Agora presentations, either as-is or customize them to your needs. You can find them in the branding portal under the "Presentations" area.

Member Registration

All club members need to register as users of the Agora Online Platform to access Agora's systems, including the educational materials. Point them to [this link](#) so that they can register.

CLUB CREATION - FIND A MEETING VENUE

1-14 DAYS



Find a meeting venue.

(This step applies only to clubs that meet physically)

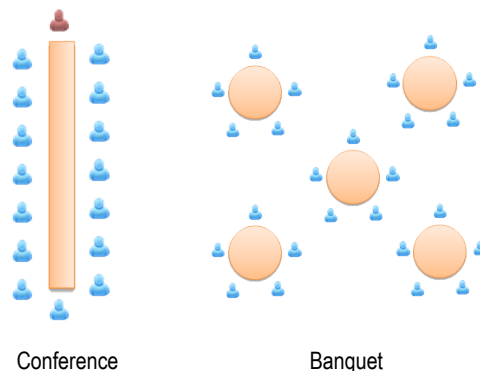
The meeting venue should have the following characteristics:

- It should be a relatively private and quiet place
- It should be able to hold the number of people you expect, seated comfortably.
- It should have a separate area that can be used as a "stage".
- Initially, it's enough if the place has room for about 15 people unless you have a certainty that more people will be attending.

Anything else is a welcome addition:

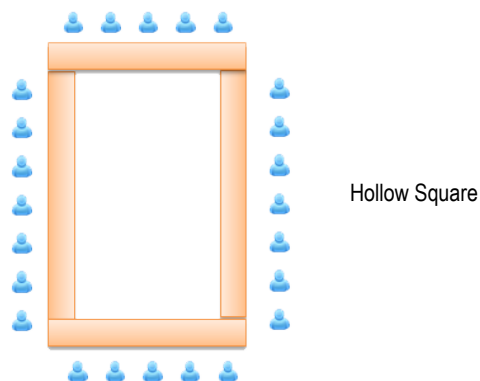
- A TV that can be connected to a computer, or (even better) a projector.
- Room set up (or that the owners allow to be set up) in a "theatre"/"auditorium", "classroom" or "u-style" setting.

- Try to avoid the "conference", "banquet", and "hollow square" style settings:



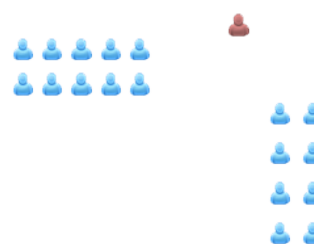
Conference

Banquet

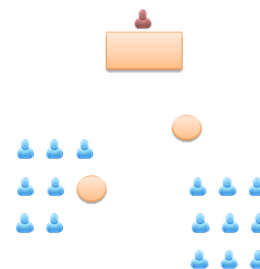


Hollow Square

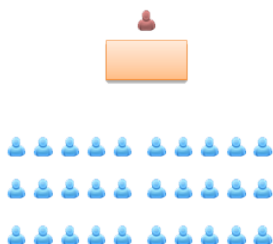
- Try also to avoid settings where the audience is distributed unevenly in two or more completely different areas or with obstacles between the audience and the location of the speaker:



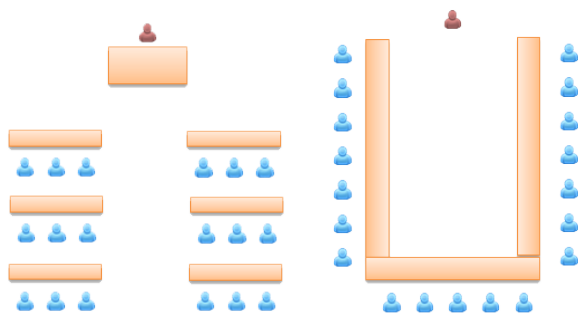
Different Audience Distributions



Obstacles



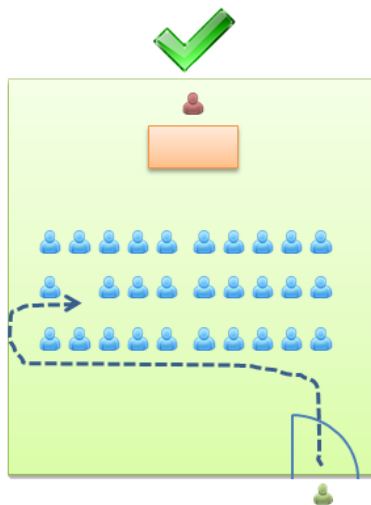
Theatre



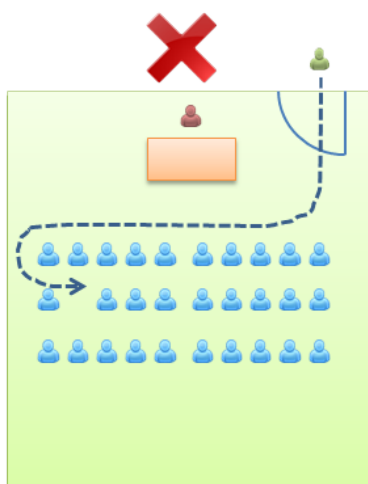
Classroom

U-Shape

- If you have the choice, try to make the entrance as far away from the speaking area as possible to avoid distractions if someone enters or leaves the room during the meeting.



Door at the back



Door in front

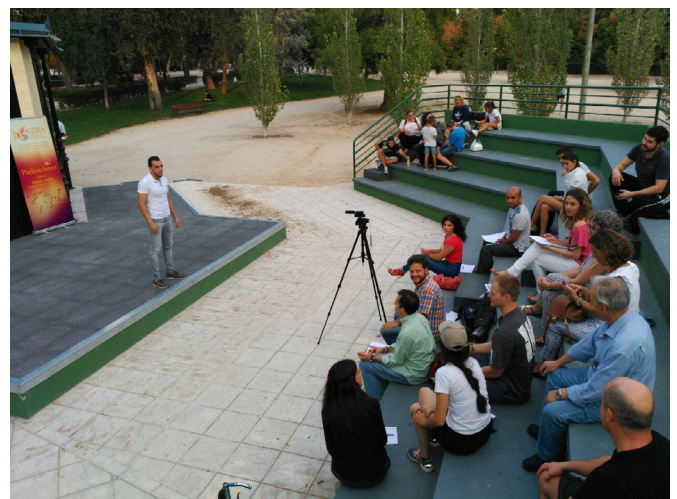
When searching for a venue, have in mind that meetings will be around 2 hours long (to keep it on the safe side).

Some ideas for meeting venues:

- Rooms in schools, universities, libraries, or other public buildings. Since we're a nonprofit, we don't charge any fees and our activity and meetings are of educational nature, these institutions may offer a meeting place for free. It's usually a win-win proposition for everyone: the club gets a meeting room it can use for free, and the school or university gets an activity (and a very requested one, at that) that they can offer to their students at zero cost and effort - they neither have to pay anything nor organize or spend effort on it.
- If you need us to write officially to some government or public institution to prove our nonprofit nature and help you secure a room, we can do that. Please drop us a note at info@agoraspeakers.org. Please provide the institution's details (full

address) and the name, EMail, and position of the person you want us to write to.

- Note that we can only provide official letters of support in English and Spanish.
- If you schedule the meeting time on an appropriate day, many restaurants or bars may be willing to let you have a room for free in exchange for people attending buying, for example, a drink, as otherwise during that day their place might be empty anyway. So again, it's a win-win: they get some customers, you get a private room for free.
- Some of the interested people might work in companies that can offer you a meeting place at their premises.
- If the club membership is small, you can even meet in someone else's home.
- If all else fails, you can rent a room for 2h and share the cost among all people that attend. Some cities offer "anti-cafes", where people pay depending on their stay and get to enjoy comfortable rooms, free tea, etc.
- If there's absolutely no other possibility and the weather allows it, you can also meet in a park. These outdoor meetings are actually sometimes done on purpose, even by clubs that do have a nice meeting venue, as it gets people out of their comfort zones and it draws lots of curious people that may later sign on.



An open-air meeting of the ParlanChines club in Madrid, in the Retiro park.

Remember that you're not alone and that you're not selling a product or service and dealing with "customers", but instead, you're creating an environment that will help other people in their lives. Involve all the interested people in the venue search. You might get ideas and suggestions that you didn't even think of.

For the initial meeting, try to keep the opening costs as low as possible.

CLUB CREATION - SCHEDULE THE CHARTERING MEETING



Plan the first meeting

Congratulations!, you're almost there. Decide on a specific date for the first meeting and create a prospective agenda. Having an agenda is fundamental for making sure that everyone knows in advance what will happen during the meeting, how long it will be, who will participate, and especially - to make sure that time is not wasted.

The first meeting can be in either of the two basic formats:

- **A Regular “reduced” meeting**, which is a scaled-down version of a regular meeting, demonstrating all the main elements. If you can get the help of people who are already members of other Agora Speakers clubs or know how we work, this is preferred.
- **An “introductory”/“presentation” type meeting**, in which you can explain the club’s purpose, the benefits for joining, how the club works, the different roles, etc., and then you hold a Q&A section. You should do this only if:
 - Your club hasn’t attended any training sessions.
 - The majority of the attendees have not been in contact with any Agora materials, groups, documentation, or learning videos (i.e., they are completely new to the organization).



Agora Ambassador Michal Papis, from Gorzów Speakers Poland, leading an introductory meeting explaining the purpose of Agora Speakers International.

First meeting agenda

Unless you have extensive experience with the way Agora clubs work, it's recommended that you follow the [Basic Agenda](#) outlined here for the first meetings.

! You will need to upload the agenda of the first meeting during the club registration process. This upload doesn't need to be in a very complicated format, in fact, it may simply be a plain text file. The reason why we do this is that we've experienced many occasions in which people were so enthusiastic about joining Agora and starting a club that they didn't take the time to actually learn and understand what we do and how we do it. They just want to start meeting, but without having a clear idea of what to do at the meetings.

Advertising the Event

It is usually useful to create both Facebook and Google Calendar events so that people can sign up and synchronize the meeting with their own agendas. Try not to plan too much in the future, as people usually sign up then forget about meetings more than two weeks in advance. Confirm with all participants the week before.



When you create the event, create it as a **public event** so that people can find it and invite others or post it on their blogs or walls.

Be sure to announce your event either in the Agora Speakers Facebook group of your country or the International one (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/agoraspeakers/>).



Alexander Hristov
26 de noviembre de 2016 · €

Picture of the building with the entrance



visitors to the meeting room.



Agora Speakers Madrid Meeting - 4th Floor, Room B

■ Create branded materials (Optional)

Use the [Brand Portal](#) or the [Asset Creator](#) to create banners, agenda templates, etc., for your club.

Please note that all digital assets must be used under the Branding Guidelines, which you can find here: <http://wiki.agoraspeakers.org/Branding+Guidelines>.

If you use the Asset creator, it will automatically take care of brand compliance.

Even if the meeting venue is very famous, even if you think everyone knows it very well, to avoid frustration, it's always a good idea to take a few pictures of the location and explain how to get to the meeting room. Some guests to your meeting might not know the place or might even be from a different country.

Also, it's convenient to post pictures of the access to the room itself.



If the venue allows it, print a couple of signs with arrows guiding the

CLUB CREATION - REGISTER THE CLUB



At this point, you're ready to register your club officially. Once you register, you will get assigned a club number that is unique worldwide. You can use that club number in your branded materials.

Please register here by submitting [this form](#).

Also, check if there's an Ambassador in your country and contact him with your intention to start a new club.

An Ambassador acts as an Agora representative who is keen on helping people start new clubs. You can check the countries for which Agora Speakers has Ambassadors [here](#). It is very recommendable that you sign up on the global Agora Speakers International Facebook Group and the local Facebook group for your country.

If there is no Ambassador in your country, then as the creator of the first club you might want to step in as one? Check the special section about [Ambassadors](#).

CLUB CREATION - CHARTER



Hold the first meeting



Agora Ambassador Lamichhane Shyam (8th from the right) and the members of the first club in Nepal - Kathmandu Speakers Club

Carry out the meeting. Make sure to print enough agendas, and especially to include in each agenda:

- Your club info and contact point.
- The date, time, and venue of the next meeting

Remember to take pictures, as you're making history, 😊 and send us the pictures so that we can publish them (confirm with the people on those pictures that they're ok with them being published).

At the end of the meeting, it is recommended that you remind people of the next meeting's date, ask people right there, and then commit to taking roles for the next meeting.

Club Officers

After the first meeting, it's time to decide about the Club Officers or Club Management Team. The required officer roles are described later in this guide.

Usually, the person that starts a club acts also as its first president. Some people stay as presidents for a full year, others prefer to start the club, make sure it's healthy and step down, and do other things.

It all depends on the amount of time you have.

For the rest of the officers, usually at the beginning, you'll be doing all the roles, maybe for about a month or two. But it's recommended that you form a team of people you're comfortable with and delegate work as soon as possible to avoid burning out.

The first officers will probably be volunteers that you, as a club founder, appoint. Once the club is "stable" (meeting regularly with the same people coming back every meeting), you can ask for the next team during a special meeting of the club.

If more than two people want to do the same role, elections must be held.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

■ **Agora's Economic Model**

Agora's Sustainability Model calls for reliance on donations, state grants, and the sale of goods and premium services rather than on membership fees. We also receive funds through a percentage of the proceeds of all inter-club Agora-related events worldwide.

We follow a pattern similar to the Open Source world: If you use our system, materials, infrastructure, and services but do that in a public club so that everyone in your community can benefit, you pay nothing. However, if you want to make use of all of the former but only for a restricted group of people, you have the choice of either paying a club operation fee or giving back by enrolling in any of the fee-waiver opportunities.

■ **Fees paid by members**

As a Member, you only pay the fees that the clubs you belong to have decided to collect. Some clubs are free; others require a payment to contribute to their operation.

It's up to each club to decide whether to charge fees or not, the amount to charge, and the periodicity. These fees - if any - are paid to and administered directly by the club and may only be used for the club's overall operation.

To ensure full transparency, accountability, and proper use of funds, clubs that charge fees must comply with all the rules specified in the Club Finances section.

NOTE

In addition to club fees, members may be required to pay a small fee for financing inter-club events such as contests and conventions. That fee may be later returned to them once the event is over, depending on its net result. Please check the Club Finances section for details.

■ **Fees paid by clubs**

The fees paid by the clubs to Agora Speakers International depend on the type of club:

CLUB FEES - 2021-2022

Club Type	One-time set-up (Chartering) fee	Per-member fee	Minimum club yearly fee
Public Club (includes Youth Clubs)	0	0	N/A
Public Interest Club	0	0	N/A
Restricted Club	0	\$42 per year	\$336 (8 members)
Corporate Club	\$100	\$54 per year	\$648 (12 members)

The Minimum Club fees are due at club registration time and are valid till the end of the educational year (Dec 31st). The fees are pro-rated monthly, rounded up. The fees for members that are above the minimum number for the club are due when the member signs up with the club and are valid till Dec 31st of the joining year. The rate is pro-rated monthly, rounded up.

For example:

- A corporate club registers on Jul 15th, 2020, with 13 members. On Aug 5th, 3 more members join, and on Oct 1st, another member joins.

The fees for the first year would be calculated as follows:

- Due Jul 15th, 2020: \$100 (Club Setup Fees) + 13 members x 6 months (Jul-Dec) x \$4,5 = \$451. (Valid for the period Jul 15th, 2020 - Dec 31st, 2020)
- Due Aug 5th, 2020: 3 members x 5 months x \$4,5 = \$67,5 (Valid for the period Aug 5th 2020 - Dec 31st, 2020)
- Due Oct 1st, 2020: 1 member x 3 months x \$4,5 = \$13,5 (Valid for the period Oct 1st 2020 - Dec 31st, 2020)

If the club continues with all of its members in the next year, the following fees would be due:

- Due Dec 31st, 2020: 17 members x \$54 = \$918. (Valid for the period Jan 1st, 2021 - Dec 31st, 2021)

NOTE

In 2021 and considering the developing pandemic situation, all fees for Restricted Clubs are waived.

NOTE

Considering that the Agora Foundation immediately provides access to all materials and services to enrolled Restricted and Corporate clubs and their individual members, we do not offer refunds should either the club or an individual member decide to terminate its membership earlier.

Educational Materials

Access to the digital (online) versions of all Educational Materials is free for all Agora Members regardless of the type of club to which they belong and regardless of whether the club charges any fees or not. Please note that the materials may not be rehosted on a different site.

Additionally, subject to the provisions of the [Copyright Policy](#), members can download and print any of the materials for use within the club meetings and other Agora events (such as contests, conventions, etc.).

Members that want a more professionally-looking bound-book version of the materials may order these from Amazon at a cost.



Please note that all of Agora's Educational Materials in all their variants and languages are Copyrighted by the Agora Speakers International Foundation.

Fee reduction for members of multiple Restricted Clubs

If you're a member of more than one Restricted club, the clubs need only pay your fee to Agora Speakers International once.

This does not apply to multiple memberships in Corporate clubs or combined membership in Restricted as Corporate clubs since Agora provides Corporate Clubs with a set of services with a per-member cost to the Foundation.

Fee waiver for Corporate and Restricted Clubs

New Corporate or Restricted clubs can have their fees waived for a **maximum of two years** through a mechanism of "Club Patronage", in which they create and act as patrons of a new Reference Club in their area:

- The new club must meet all the requirements of a [Reference club](#). The fee waiver only continues while the requirements are met.
- The new club must be free. Any operating expenses such as photocopies, printing evaluation forms, etc., must be taken on by the restricted club.
- The new club must be in the same city as the Corporate or Restricted club.
- The new club must charter at least a week before the Corporate or Restricted club.
- Members of the Corporate or Restricted club must step in to correct any possible problems.
- Members of the Corporate or Restricted club must ensure (with their own attendance) that every session of the open club has at least 12 people attending.

NOTE

The sponsored club must be a club that meets physically only, regardless of the sponsoring club's nature. Fees cannot be waived by club patronage on an online or partially online club.

RULES FOR CLUB FINANCES

The following section outlines the mandatory rules for all clubs that collect any kind of fees or funds - regardless of their source or collection frequency. The rules do not apply to corporate clubs, which should follow their companies' policies regarding finances.

NOTE

Note that the rules also apply if the club only relies on fundraising activities or external donations but doesn't charge members anything.

■ Definitions

"Club site" is defined as the club's online presence, which may be a website, a social media page or group, a forum, etc.

"Approval by the members" is used as per the voting procedures outlined in the [Club Democracy](#) section. All spending proposals subject to a vote must include:

- The exact purpose of the operation
- The minimum and maximum amounts allowed
- The minimum and maximum timeframe for execution from the date of approval, where the maximum timeframe cannot exceed one year.

"Operating costs" are those costs that are inevitable for the regular operation of the club and include:

- Venue rental for the duration of the meeting.
- Rental of equipment used during the meeting: computers, microphones, projectors, etc.
- Maintenance and repair costs of existing equipment.
- Setup and post-meeting costs (preparation, cleaning, etc.)
- Office supplies and consumables (paper, pens, photocopies, printer ink or toner for printing evaluation forms, etc.)
- Stationery (business cards, badges, welcome packs, pins, banners, etc.)
- Financial costs such as bank transfer fees, account maintenance fees, taxes, etc.
- Costs arising from the local legal obligations of a club (insurances, legal registration, legal bookkeeping, etc.)

Examples of non-operating costs:

- Permanent purchases of equipment
- Costs for organizing special events, parties, or workshops.
- Costs for inviting paid speakers or trainers.
- Support for sending a club contest winner to a remote contest.

"Agora-related events" are any events organized or co-sponsored by one or more Agora clubs and that are aligned with all the [Core Principles](#) (especially the Neutrality one) and that have the purpose of advancing Agora's mission or goals. Some examples of such events are:

- Public Speaking, Debating, and other similar contents
- Agora Conventions at different levels
- Open-door events for the promotion of Agora clubs
- Demo meetings for prospective clubs.
- Workshops, seminars, training sessions, etc.
- Valid Club community projects.
- Participation in fairs, shows, or other similar third-party events where the club's presence is appropriate for marketing and membership growth purposes.

For examples of the types of events where club participation wouldn't be allowed, please check the [Neutrality Principle](#).

"Official Agora events" are any universal applicability events created or defined by the Agora Speakers International Foundation. Currently, there are two such types of events:

- All contests that follow the official rulebooks.
- Agora Conventions at all geographical levels.

Financial Rules

■ Financial Freedom

FF01. Clubs may decide to charge any amount they consider appropriate, with whatever frequency they need, and can receive funds from any third parties provided that all the following rules are observed.

FF02. The amount and periodicity of the club fees collected from members must be publicly visible on all club sites. Accessing such information may not require filling in any forms or providing any personal information.

FF03. Club fees collected from members may not be discriminatory: all members must pay the same fees. The following **exceptions** are allowed:

- People belonging to special low-income or minority collectives may be offered a discount or free membership. E.g., students, pensioners, unemployed, ethnic minorities, refugees, etc. We reserve the right to examine these situations and ask them to be removed if we feel a club is abusing this definition and turning it into a discriminatory membership fee (e.g., a club that defines 'white males' as a 'minority collective')
- For clubs that operate in a language that is not an official language of the country (Eg: an English Speaking Club operating in Spain), native speakers of that language may be offered a discount or free membership.
- Any professionals in the areas of public speaking and leadership may be offered a discount or free membership if they routinely perform evaluations, workshops, or mentoring during club meetings.

FF04. Guests and other Agora members may not be charged for

visiting the club during regular sessions. During non-regular sessions, such as special events, meetings with guests, speakers, workshops, etc., a previously publicly announced one-time fee may be charged for attendance. This one-time fee must be announced at the same time as the announcement of the non-regular session.

FF05. Clubs may not accept anonymous donations or donations from third parties whose ideology or actions run against Agora Speakers International's ideals, principles, mission, and goals.

■ Valid Use of Funds

VU01. Club funds may not be used for the personal profit or benefit of any member. Usage of funds must always comply with the local legal requirements for non-profits. In case of conflict between the local legislation and these rules, the most restrictive one will apply.

VU02. All goods or services purchased by the club must be for the club's operation or for Agora-related events such as contests, conventions, etc. Clubs may not use funds for any operations whose sole purpose is increasing the funds of the club. In particular, the clubs may not engage in investment activities of any kind, including securities, commodities, foreign exchange, futures, options contracts, and real estate, regardless of whether they are publicly traded or not.

VU03. Any assets that clubs acquire must be used exclusively by club members, Agora country representatives, or meeting guests for club or other Agora-related activities aligned with the mission and purpose of Agora. Such usage of acquired assets may not be subject to additional charges.

VU04. Upon dissolution of a club, all remaining funds must be donated to a legally recognized charity approved by the members by a simple majority. If no agreement can be reached, then the funds will be donated to Agora Speakers International.

VU05. Clubs may not hire employees.

VU06. Clubs may not hold investment instruments of any kind and may not take debt.

VU07. All accounts used by the club must be opened in authorized banks that operate locally in the territory where the club is registered and must be denominated in one of the official currencies of the country.

NOTE

For example, a club registered in France may not open an account with a bank from the Cayman Islands with no local presence in France.

It also may not open an account in any denomination other than Euros, regardless of the bank used.

■ Usage Oversight

OV01. Clubs that collect funds or fees must have a [Treasurer](#) officer, different from the [President](#).

OV02. The club must keep detailed and up-to-date club finances published on all club sites and must provide a full detailed report to the Foundation once a year. This information should be available to all Agora members worldwide. These finances can be something as simple as an Excel file detailing incomes and expenses or something as complicated as a complete accounting report, but in any case, it must be completely clear how specifically the membership fees are being used. Apart from an aggregated format, club expenses must also be available in a non-aggregated, detailed format. The detailed format must include, for each transaction, at least the following:

- Date,
- The amount spent or received,
- Source (for fees or donations) or provider (for purchases of goods or services).
- Purpose or reason for the transaction. (For purchases of goods or services - the specifics of the product or service bought)

OV03. Clubs may not accumulate funds in excess of the equivalent cost of 2 years of operating costs unless authorized by a majority of the members and only for specific, budgeted purposes. This authorization must be renewed yearly.

OV04. Any usage of more than 1/3rd of the club's funds (taking as a baseline amount the funds available at the beginning of the Fiscal Year) for non-operating purposes will require approval by members, regardless of whether that 1/3 is reached by means of a single transaction or cumulatively. More specifically, any transaction whose amount, added to the amount of non-operating expenses since the beginning of the Fiscal Year exceeds 1/3rd of the club's initial funds must obtain approval by members, unless that transaction is part of a previously approved budgeted proposal, and the amount of the transaction is within the approved range.

Some examples.

- *A club starts the FY with \$1000 (1/3 = \$333). The president wants to buy a projector for \$400. \$400 > \$333, so the members must approve the purchase. After getting the approval, the president wants to buy a microphone for \$15. Since the purchases' cumulative cost is \$400+\$15 > \$333, that transaction must also be approved. In fact, the rule does mean that after spending 1/3 of all club funds, every single non-operating spending must be approved.*
- *A club starts the FY with \$1000 (1/3 = \$333). The president buys 10 microphones for \$30 each (cumulative cost: \$300). A bit later, he wants to buy a lectern for \$50. Members must approve that transaction since the lectern's cumulative cost and the previous purchases would be \$350, which exceeds the 1/3rd rule.*
- *A club starts the FY with \$1000 (1/3 = \$333). The president presents and gets approval a plan for organizing a contest with a budget of \$600. He proceeds to buy a projector for \$400 and 10 microphones for \$10 each - a total of \$500. None of these*

transactions require approval. Then he wants to buy a set of books, valued at \$50, for the club. This transaction has to be approved since the total cumulative cost is \$550 (> \$333), and this transaction is not related to the contest.

- A club starts the FY with \$1000 (1/3 = \$333). The president presents and gets approval a plan for organizing a contest with a budget of \$600. He proceeds to buy a projector for \$400 and wants to buy 10 microphones for \$25 each. Buying the microphones would result in total non-operating costs of \$650 - above the previously approved budget - so members must approve that transaction.

OV05. Any spending or financial approval that club members might give will last for at most one year. When the year is over, another vote will be necessary to extend the next year's approval.

■ Financing of Agora-related Events

One of the core pillars of Agora's system is the official set of inter-club Agora events, such as contests, conventions, etc., as well as any other joint events organized by multiple clubs (such as friendly gatherings, unofficial competitions, etc.) These activities will usually require some degree of advance financing in order to be carried out successfully.

AE01. All Agora-related events (official or not) should be primarily self-financed by means of ticket and goods sales, sponsorship, grants, and others.

AE02. 10% of the gross proceeds of all such events (official or not) will go to the Agora Speakers International Foundation

AE03. The cost of any official Agora events that require a certain amount of pre-financing will be borne by all the individual members in the affected geographical area, with the limit of the whole country for International-level events such as Conventions. All members in the corresponding region will contribute - in addition to whatever other fees they're paying - a proportional part of those expenses. This proportional part will be the result of dividing the required financing by the number of unique members in the region, and it will be the same for all members regardless of the number of clubs they belong to. Each club is free to decide whether it will take this required contribution out of its own funds, or whether it will pass it to the members, or a combination of the above.

AE04. Any profits or losses from the event will be distributed back to the clubs, in quantity proportional to the number of club members. The clubs may reimburse that money back to their members, up to the amount that they had to pay as per AE03. The decision to reimburse or not part of the profits is left to each club's Executive Committee. The portion of the funds not reimbursed back to members will become part of the club's funds.

Note that clubs may not return to members more than the amount it originally collected for them; otherwise, this would be considered a profit-sharing scheme that would not be compatible with the non-profit status.

AE05. Event organizers must report all accounting operations

that surround the organization of the event to the Agora Speakers International Headquarters, as they happen, with the level of detail indicated in **OV02**, and using the accounting tools that the headquarters will provide.

For example:

A country will host the Agora International Convention next year. There's a pre-financing need of \$1,050. There are 14 clubs in the country, with a total of 180 members (some members belong to more than one club). As per AE03, each member will have to contribute **\$5.83** to support the convention organization. One club, - "Progressive Speakers," decides that it will ask its members for \$2.00 only and will pay the remaining \$3.83 per member from its own funds.

The Convention receives **\$12,850** of funding through ticket sales, corporate sponsorship, and state grants. As per AE02, **\$1,285** goes for supporting the operations of Agora Speakers International, and the remaining **\$11,565** is used to pay for the Convention costs.

After the Convention is over, the total costs turn out to be **\$8,440**, so there's a net profit of **\$3,125**. That amount is distributed back to the 14 clubs in a manner that's proportional to each club's size. If all of the 14 clubs had an equal number of members, each would receive \$223.21. Of that amount, each club may return up to **\$5.83** back to each member - except for the "Progressive Speakers" club - which may return back no more than \$2.00, as that is the amount of originally collected money from each member.

Any member that is a member of more than one club receives back this amount of money just once.

■ Sponsorship of Convention Participants

CP01. Only participations in official Agora events strictly above the city level are eligible for sponsorship.


CP02. The clubs in a particular geographic area (up to the country level, inclusive) may choose to sponsor the following convention participants' expenses.

- Contestants.
- One non-competing club representative with voting power, approved by the club's Executive Committee.
- People directly leading workshops, training sessions, seminars at the eligible event.

Clubs may decide to sponsor one kind of participation, but not others.

CP03. The sponsorship decision must be approved with an absolute majority of the clubs' Presidents, and the vote must take place as follows:

- For contestants: before the first contest round (club level)

 **NOTE**


There are specific time limits for voting to prevent clubs from deciding to sponsor or not contestants based on criteria such as whether they belong to their club or not. The decision must be made “in principle” to either sponsor or not the winner, regardless of which club it came from.

- For other participants - no later than one month after the announcement of the date of the event.

CP04. The following constitute valid uses of the clubs’ funds unless explicitly prohibited by the local legislation:

- Economy-class round-trip travel expenses in the most suitable transport mean.
- The cost of the most complete ticket type for the event.
- Accommodation expenses for the duration of the event plus 2 nights (allowing arrival one day before and departure the day after the event is over)
- Reasonable daily allowance expenses for meals and transportation

CP05. Sponsorship may happen only against specific purchase proposals. Exchanging the sponsored products and services for money is not allowed. The sponsored participants must keep invoices of all sponsored goods and services and submit them electronically to their club’s Treasurer the moment they receive them and no later than two weeks after the purchase.

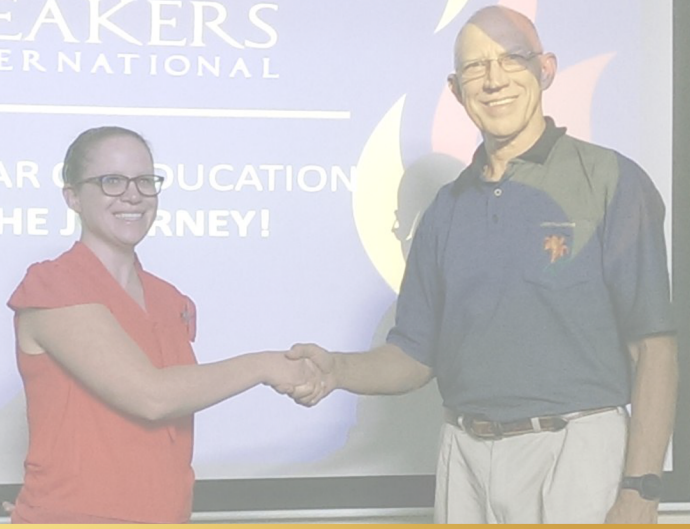
 **NOTE**

For example, if a suggested hotel’s cost is \$75/night, the sponsored participant may not purchase a \$50/night hotel and keep the difference.

The opposite is possible, however - the sponsored participant may complement the sponsored amount from his own pocket to purchase a \$100/night hotel.

■ **Rule Changes**

RC01. These rules may change from time to time. Clubs must be compliant with the new rules within six months of the change.



CHAPTER 10 THE MENTORING SYSTEM

Chris Callaghan (right), Agora Ambassador to South Africa, welcoming a new member

MENTORING IN A NUTSHELL

Contributed by Frank Thorogood

The Oxford dictionary defines a mentor as an “experienced and trusted advisor”.

Almost all people have an instinctive fear of public speaking. It takes courage to join a club, but then a new member is faced with a whole series of procedures and rituals used to conduct club meetings and complete the training program.

This can seem overwhelming to new members but has become routine for the more experienced.

Therefore, club mentoring's basic role is for the more experienced members to “hold the new member’s hand”, explain anything unclear to them, and be available to advise and help them as and when needed, including outside of club meetings.

The greatest problem is to match mentors with mentees. This is particularly true in newer clubs.

Here are a few suggestions for a successful club mentoring program:

- The club committee should compile a list of possible mentors. These should be the more experienced members, or, even if new to the club, those with some experience in public speaking, teaching, etc., or have shown particular ability to understand the club’s functions and objectives.
- Having obtained the potential mentors’ agreement, the VP of membership should prepare and maintain a list showing the mentors and their mentees, with a maximum of three mentees per mentor.
- This list should be given to each new member on his entry into the club, and they should choose their mentor from those still available on the list, even if after waiting for a few meetings to get to know them.
- Mentor and mentee should exchange telephone numbers and email addresses and link up on modern communication methods such as Facetime, Whatsapp, Skype, etc.

They can meet socially where the mentor can explain simply the educational program and the club procedures and duties and answer any questions.

Subsequently, the mentor remains available at the mentee's delicate moments, such as their first speech, correction of language, etc.

However, the new member should not become completely reliant on the mentor and should make an effort to understand the training program and the various members’ roles using the material available.

INTRODUCTION TO MENTORING

■ What is Mentoring?

Mentoring is a process by which more experienced members give their time, attention, knowledge, guidance, insights, and advice. For new members, this helps them to get started in Agora. For them, the whole Agora world can be a bit overwhelming, and they may not know where to begin or how to integrate into the community. Mentors provide guidance in four fundamental areas:

- The Agora Platform - They help new members to navigate their way through the different Agora systems - chat, forums, social media channels, club management, etc.
- Club Culture - They explain to new members how their club works, what specific cultural aspects and traditions exist, how to ask for help, how to sign up for roles. They introduce the new member to the club's non-Agora social activities (e.g., fellowship, get-togethers, parties), etc.
- The Agora Educational Program - How the educational program is structured, where to find the educational projects, how to correctly perform the different roles, advice on the initial projects.
- The Agora Worldwide Community - How the club integrates into the worldwide Agora community, what contests and multi-club events exist, regional and international convention information, etc.
- Support the new member to achieve their particular objectives in the club.

■ Why Mentor?

Mentoring is one of the most effective techniques for learning a skill in a short period of time.

According to Sir Ken Robinson (British author, speaker, and international advisor on education in the arts to government, non-profits, education, and arts bodies), mentors provide four basic roles:

Recognition - 'Mentors recognize the spark of interest or delight and can help an individual drill down to the specific components of the discipline that match that individual's capacity and passion...'

Encouragement- 'Mentors lead us to believe that we can achieve something that seemed improbable or impossible to us before we met them. They don't allow us to succumb to self-doubt for too long or the notion that our dreams are too large for us. They stand by to remind us of the skills we already possess and what we can achieve if we continue to work hard...'

Facilitating -'Mentors can help lead us... by offering us advice and techniques, paving the way for us, and even allowing us to falter a bit while standing by to help us recover and learn from our mistakes...'

Stretching - 'Effective mentors push us past what we see as our limits. Much as they don't allow us to succumb to self-doubt, they also prevent us from doing less with our lives than we can. A true mentor reminds us that our goal should never be to be 'average' at our pursuits...' A Mentor:

Has already walked the same path that you're starting - they know what works and what doesn't. They've already made mistakes that you could learn from without the pain of experiencing them yourself.

- Has already created a network of contacts. This is especially important if you're choosing a mentor for your community project. A mentor can introduce you to some key people that can open doors for you.
- Will push you to stay on course and to be consistent, creating a habit.
- Greatly increases your chances of success.
- Will provide you honest and unbiased advice about your speech or project. Since you're not paying the mentor anything, he owes you nothing and doesn't need to put up with things he considers are wrong.

MENTORING VS COACHING

Mentoring and Coaching do share some characteristics:

- Both require a high level of commitment from the mentee/client.
- Both are focused on improving the future prospects of the mentee/client (as opposed to counseling, for example, which aims at resolving past situations).
- Both require high levels of personal interaction.
- Both involve providing feedback and advice.

There are also significant differences:

	MENTORING	COACHING
Duration	Up to the participants	Achievement-based
Scope	Focuses on building a trust relationship and an improvement cycle	Focuses on achieving a specific goal (but trust is also important)
Approach	Dependent on the mentee	Dependent on the goal to achieve
Nature of the relationship	Mutually beneficial	Strictly professional
Openness	Confidential	Can be open or confidential depending on the format.
Direction	Mentee selects	Both can select
Formality	Generally informal	Uses a formal structure
Subject matter expert	Mentor	Client
Process expert	Mentor	Coach
Expectations	General skill development	Achieving a level of performance
"Speech distribution"	Mentor speaks more than mentee	The client speaks much more than the coach.

THE MENTORING PROCESS

■ The First Meeting

When beginning your journey with a new mentee, you should schedule a first "getting to know each other" meeting. If you can, try to meet the mentee in person - it might be in a coffee shop, in a park, at a co-working space, etc. You can also meet at the club venue, before or after the meeting.

If that is not possible, you can use any other technology for online meetings - Facebook or WhatsApp calls, Skype, etc. What is fundamental is to see each other so that you can interiorize that you're talking to a real person.

Enquire about the interests of the mentee. Most people prefer one of the big "legs" of the Agora program - it may be leadership, it may be debating / critical thinking, it may be public speaking. Ask about his expectations, his experience so far. Share your own experience in those areas - regardless of whether that experience has been within Agora or elsewhere.

You should emerge from the first meeting with:

- A clear understanding of the expectations of the mentee and his short and long-term goals.
- A clear set of rules as to the path forward, including how often and when you're going to meet or have mentoring sessions (i.e., a routine)
- An agreement on which communication channel you will use to get in touch with each other. Don't disperse and stick to one channel - be that EMail, WhatsApp, telephone, Facebook, etc. Only in exceptional circumstances (such as when someone has to send an attachment or a video recording, etc.) may you decide on additional options such as a file transfer service or EMail.
- A short-term immediate goal for the next meeting.
- A commitment by the mentee about the amount of time he will be dedicated to the task.

■ Mentoring Activities for Public Speaking

Mentoring for public speaking usually has two aspects:

- Speech content
- Speech delivery

For **speech content**, you'd usually want to see a draft of the speech beforehand. Check all the basics - structure, argumentation, language, opening, ending, etc. Then make suggestions on how to improve them. This process can be repeated several times until the speech is ready. Remember that your goal here is

For mentoring on **speech delivery**, it's best to ask the mentee to deliver the speech live - either in person or during the video call itself. Recorded speeches are not a good indicator because you never know how many attempts went into the recording, whether it has been edited, or it may simply be the case that the mentee is more comfortable speaking in front of a webcam than in front of someone "present".

Specifically for projects from the Educational Path, make sure the mentee understands each of the projects' goals and that he's aware

of the evaluation criteria. Make him aware that he can get in touch with his evaluator to request that he is also vigilant of other issues of particular concern to the mentee. For example, even though a particular project might be about Body Language, the speaker may ask the evaluator to monitor his use of rhetorical devices.

A usual problem is a mentee running out of ideas on what to speak. Always encourage mentees to speak on things that matter to them or that they feel strongly about, even if they are controversial or seem dry. In fact, an interesting challenge for a mentor would be precisely advising someone on how to present a controversial opinion in a way that doesn't alienate or antagonize the audience or how to present a supposedly dull topic in a way that is engaging and entertaining.

As a mentor, you should be present at the meeting where the mentee will present his project. Although it may sound counter-intuitive, don't sit in the front row - you have already had enough "first-row" experiences during the private sessions. Instead, sit at the back. This will allow you to experience the speech from the audience's viewpoint, on the worst possible point. Thus, you will be able to immediately notice problems that are not apparent CUT otherwise, such as props being only partially visible, voice not projected well enough, eye-contact problems with part of the audience, etc.

Try to talk privately with your mentee after the presentation has finished. Explore how he felt, whether he's happy with the way things turned out, etc.

■ Mentoring for Community Projects

Mentoring for community projects will involve basically doing pre-and post-mortem meetings for each of the project stages.

- In the pre-mortem meeting, you analyze with your mentee.
- whether he's fully prepared for the step that is about to be executed,
- whether it has been properly planned and
- whether the expectations are realistic and documented.

Offer suggestions and advice on improving the existing plan, but remember - do not do the work of the mentee. Also, remember that this is a mentor-mentee relationship and not a partners' relationship. As such, try to refrain from sliding into an "our project" mindset, in which you become a participant on an equal basis with the mentee, doing brainstorming sessions and bouncing ideas back and forth. You want to offer advice and suggestions, but the project must remain the mentee's project.

For example, a project may have a "fundraising" stage. Meet with your mentee before the fundraising activity is executed and check things like:

- Is there a reasonable fundraising plan?
- Are there specific actions to be executed, specific people responsible for them, and specific parties to be contacted for this activity?
- Is it easy for all contacted parties to make a donation?
- Is a concrete dollar amount mentioned?
- Are the expectations realistic?
- What can go wrong? Are the risks documented? What strategies are in place to handle them?

etc....

After the stage is executed, check out the results with your mentee. Were there any problems? Expected, unexpected? What can be done better?

If a specific community project step is long (more than a week), it's a good idea to schedule several in-process meetings to check how things are going.

■ **Mentoring for Meeting Roles**

Mentoring for a specific role will usually involve a one-time meeting that will include:

Clarifying questions about that role. Note, however, that you should not explain the role. Remember the rule that mentees should do their own work. This includes reading the documentation about the role and watching the appropriate videos. Only answer questions that are not clearly answered in the documentation.

Doing a small rehearsal for the role and providing feedback on how it was done.

Assisting the mentee in his interaction with the Agora Online Platform and/or with the club officers to help him secure that role in a future meeting.

BEING A MENTEE

■ Are you ready to ask for a mentor?

According to research, the top mentee-attributable causes for failure in the mentorship process are:

- Not being open to feedback
- Not sharing sufficient information about what's blocking you.
- Unwillingness to reach out
- Unrealistic needs
- Lack of motivation
- Lack of follow up

Before looking for a mentor, examine your own trajectory and ask yourself honestly if you have the time to commit seriously and regularly to the Agora educational model. Having a mentor is a much more intense activity than attending club meetings or training courses.

Ensure that you have the necessary time to attend club meetings and have sessions with your future mentor, and do the "homework" tasks he will assign to you.

Mentors are also simply Agora members who volunteer, and they have absolutely no obligation to act as mentors to anyone. There's nothing more frustrating or disappointing to a mentor than to see a mentee that lacks the desire, seriousness, or discipline to follow through - skips meetings, or doesn't show up or is always late at mentoring sessions, or never comes with completed tasks.

A mentor will also provide you with much more direct and probably more honest feedback than an evaluator, especially because the interaction is going to be one on one. Again, ask yourself honestly - are you ready to accept honest feedback that you might not like? Are you ready to apply it? If you're asking someone to be your mentor, you're acknowledging that they're more experienced and knowledgeable than you are. Take their advice as a gift instead of disregarding it (or worse - taking it personally).

Finally, consider what your expectations are and whether they are realistic. Do you expect that after the mentorship process, you'll be able to speak in front of a thousand people and charge \$200K per event? Do you expect that a mentor will prepare you in one week for that life-or-death public speaking event? If so, what you need is someone that can do miracles rather than a mentor.

Mentorship does not decrease the amount of effort and time you will have to invest - it makes it much larger. If you expect that a mentor will do part of the work you have to do, that's also unrealistic.

■ How to find a mentor

Ideally, you should find a mentor from your close environment your own clubs or clubs in the same city— so that you and your mentor can have the possibility of meeting in person. That will not always be possible, though, especially for new clubs in an area where everyone is inexperienced.

Fear not, for we live in the XXIst century, and with communication tools such as Whatsapp, Telegram, Skype, Zoom, etc., distance is no longer a problem, and the whole Agora community is at your disposal.

Regardless of the physical location of the mentor, you should follow the same procedure:

- Find an Agora member whose style and way of speaking/leading you like. Beware: Don't just pick, for example, the latest contest winner. He may have a speaking style completely different from yours. The mentor should be a lot more experienced than you, but he should also have a style that's close to yours. Maybe you love using stories in your speeches? Maybe you're very assertive when leading? Maybe you love word games? Props? Use criteria like these when selecting your mentor, instead of "he won this or that contest, or he's an Agora leader".
- If you absolutely can't find anyone, ask your Vice President of Education for advice, or use the **#mentorship** channel on the Agora Chat to ask for help. Note: In the future, there will be a special area of the Agora Online platform that will centralize these requests
- Once you've identified a candidate, reach out politely, requesting the person to be your mentor. Consider the process similar to a job application because, usually, good mentors have many requests. Don't just fire off an EMail saying, "Hey, bro, can you be my mentor?". Instead, introduce yourself, provide some background information and explain why you're choosing him or her as your mentor. Always provide several options to contact you - don't try to force a particular way of communicating with the mentor. Instead of "Please call me on this phone, 4 pm to 5 pm", suggest "I can be reached by phone, Whatsapp, Skype or EMail. Here's my full contact info. What would be your preferred way?"

■ The Mentorship Commitment - Giving back

As Santiago Becerra —Agora Ambassador to Spain— likes to say, "the more you invest in the club, the more you get for yourself". That's so much true with mentorship. Once you've experienced one side of the mentor-mentee relationship, try being a mentor yourself. You'll discover that not only you'll develop a much deeper understanding of Agora, public speaking, and leadership, but you'll probably build lasting professional and maybe even personal relationships.

BEING A MENTOR

■ Who can be a mentor?

Any experienced Agora member can be a mentor, regardless of whether that experience has been acquired within Agora or somewhere else. There isn't a clear-cut boundary in terms of how long you must have been an Agora member, or how many speeches you have delivered, or how many projects you have lead to be able to provide mentorship.

A 16-year old girl can be vastly more proficient with computers than a 60-old new member that just joined Agora. She can perfectly well be his mentor in terms of navigating his way in the Agora Platform or Wiki or related services.

It may happen that you just joined Agora because you panic at speaking in front of a huge crowd, but that in your day-to-day job, you're a stellar manager and thus have invaluable experience in bringing projects to success. As such, you can perfectly well be a mentor for someone's community project.

Mentorship is not about artificially imposed constraints, but about the experience, about "having walked that path," and about sharing. Just as in the case of mentees, you need to ask yourself whether you have the time, dedication, and commitment necessary to be a mentor.

■ How to be an effective mentor

Again according to research, the top mentor-attributable reasons for the failure of the mentorship process are:

- Lack of mentoring skills
- Lack of knowledge
- Lack of experience
- Lack of empathy
- Lack of understanding of the problems of the mentee
- Constantly giving negative feedback.

To be a good mentor, you have to regularly work on the following skills:

Listen. A good mentor is, above all, a good and active listener. A listener not as in "waiting for the other person to finish talking so that I can talk myself", but a listener as in someone that focuses all his attention and senses on what the other person is trying to express. Try to go beyond the specific words and techniques used, focus on the core message, and see if that can be improved or expressed better.

Be Open-Minded. Accept that your mentee and you are different people. Don't try to impose your own public speaking or leadership style on him. See if his approach is working (whether his projects are succeeding or not, how the audience is reacting to his speeches, etc.) and try to fix only the objective issues that you think are the reason. Don't just say, "it's not working because he should be using this particular technique that works so well for me".

Be Proactive. If you sense that something is not right (for example, the mentee isn't attending club meetings or isn't contacting you for a

long time), be proactive and reach out. Ask if everything is ok, offer help. Remind him/her/them that practice makes perfect and that consistency is the only way to achieve results.

Be Supportive and encouraging. Similarly to evaluators, as a mentor, you also have the goal of motivating and encouraging your mentee. People that are very nervous with their first speeches, debate, or project are especially in need of encouragement!! Don't merely wave away their fears - acknowledge them and address them.

"Listen, I know you're super nervous. That's normal, and it's good because you're on alert. Consider this: all the members that you see, even Peter that now seems so confident, stood once where you're standing now. If they can do it, so can you. It just takes practice, and you'll learn to channel that energy positively.

Be Patient. Needless to say, people learn at different rates, and they are also born with different characteristics that give them a head start in some areas and a stall out in some others. You need to be patient with your mentee and aware of his personal circumstances. However, do not confuse being patient with tolerating a lack of discipline. It's one thing when a mentee is not constant due to his family's serious health situation and a completely different thing when he is not constant due to "having a lot of work".

Be Curious. Learn about your mentee - what drives the person, what are the expectations, what he/she wants to achieve, why is he/she doing things that way. If you're mentoring him for a community project (especially when the mentoring is remote and not in person), try to understand what problem he's trying to address in his community. If your mentee is from a different socio-economic layer, or a different culture, or a different geographical area, he and his community might be facing problems that you wouldn't even have imagined or lack things you take for granted in your environment.

Being curious also means researching on your own. Don't just take what the mentee is saying for granted, especially when it's the "only" or the "best" solution for a community need. We're all products of our environment and develop a "cultural tunnel vision" in terms of how to approach problems. Doing your own research allows you to provide alternatives that the mentee couldn't have even imagined.

Be Aware of cultural differences and context. Agora spans the whole world and welcomes diversity. Even within a single club, there may be members from many, many different cultures. As such, always be respectful of cultural differences and the context in which the mentee will be developing his activities.

Strive for excellence and constant improvement. Even if your mentee just wants to be "good enough", your goal as a mentor should be crafting your mentee into a diamond. Don't accept an "I only need a basic skill level to be able to live through that project/speech" attitude.

As Oscar Wilde used to say, "Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you'll still end among the stars."

This doesn't mean that you should focus exclusively on one problem (e.g., eye contact) and never touch anything else until eye contact is perfect. Instead, focus on the most salient issues and work on them until they become less visible than other issues.

Be Honest and thorough. A mentor-mentee relationship is based on trust. There's nothing more damaging to the process than you withholding honest feedback that the mentee will learn anyway in the "real world". If you see something is wrong, or the mentee is not doing something correctly, it's your duty to tell him. Sometimes correcting that capability will be beyond his skill level at a particular point in time, or there may be too many other problems to solve first, but that doesn't mean the issue shouldn't be noted as something to work on in the future.

For example, a mentee may be fond of telling jokes during his speeches (a poor man's version of humor), but if he's still using notes or memorizing speeches, he has bigger problems to solve. Politely tell him that you'd need to work on the humor part of speeches later on, once the more pressing issues are fixed. If, instead, the only feedback you express is that he needs to work on being natural and not using notes, he might think that his poor jokes are appropriate.

Allow the mentee to develop their own natural style. One of the cornerstones of the Agora educational program is that each has to develop their own natural style in public speaking and leadership. As such, don't try to impose on the mentee a particular way of doing things. Maybe you like very paused speeches while your mentee likes to talk fast. Maybe you like to begin with a prop while your mentee likes to begin with a quote. As long as the speech or the project doesn't have a serious objective shortcoming (i.e., the mentee speaks so fast that he fuses words and it's difficult to follow), you should let that be. If anything, you might draw the attention of the mentee to the fact and let him decide:

"Marta, you speak super fast, but you have a very clear enunciation so that I can clearly understand and follow you despite the speed. Please be aware of it, and think if you want to change it or make it part of your style. "

Set a schedule and an agenda for each meeting. Regardless of whether it's an online meeting or a meeting in person, each meeting should have a clearly defined goal, agenda, and duration. Depending on the agenda, the meeting can last anywhere from 15 min (for example, for simply clarifying the process of asking for roles in the club) to one hour (for rehearsing a contest speech). The agenda may be something as simple as "Q&As regarding contests", but there should always be one.

Do not do the work of the mentee. Mentees should bear the bulk of the work. The mentor shouldn't be writing speeches or doing the homework of the mentee. This is especially true for short, simple tasks, where there's a temptation to "show" the mentee how to do the task by doing it yourself instead of simply guiding him. For example, imagine that the mentee is asking how to register on the Agora platform. Instead of saying, "I'll do it for you, give me your username and EMail", guide him through the process so that he performs all the tasks.

Remember the old saying by Confucius:

"I hear, and I forget, I see, and I remember, I do, and I understand." Sometimes the mentees can ask for more serious tasks, like rewriting the beginning or end of a speech or even writing a speech altogether. There's no benefit to either of you if you do that. Instead, you can

offer some suggestions and ideas, but the mentee should be the one that implements them. For example, you could say, "In this speech, you started by telling the story of that bus accident in your childhood. It would be great if you could finish the speech by somehow linking to the beginning ". You might even give a couple of ideas. However, the actual thinking and writing should be done by the mentee.

Cross only the bridge ahead. Mentees may be overwhelmed by the number of options, possibilities, and tasks and may start to worry about hypothetical problems or issues they will face in the future. Focus on the immediate task ahead, and address only the present-time, actual problems, starting with the most pressing ones.

■ The Mentor Badge

Once you've successfully completed a mentorship within Agora, you'll be awarded a Mentor Badge that will be shown on your personal Agora profile page. To gain this recognition, you will need to fill in a survey indicating:

- Your Agora username and EMail
- The Agora username and EMail of your mentee
- The club name and number in which the mentoring took place.
- A brief description of the mentoring activities.

Note: Badges are only awarded for members in officially registered clubs that follow all the branding guidelines.

■ How long should mentorship last?

Mentorship usually lasts until you feel fully integrated into the club, fluent with all the Agora platform tools, and comfortable asking for roles and performing them. There's no fixed hard limit, though, and it's up to the mentor and mentee to decide when to end the relationship. As with any other relationship, don't let it simply "ghost out". A sense of closure is always welcome from both sides, even if that closure comes as a result of challenging, hard reasons.

Both mentor and mentee should agree in advance to evaluate their relationship periodically.

CHAPTER 11 CLUB DEBATES

Debate on Euthanasia in the Parlanchinglish club in Madrid, Spain.

MOTIVATION FOR DEBATES

"Agora Speakers International is a worldwide nonprofit association of passionate volunteers devoted to helping people develop their public speaking, communication, critical thinking, debating, and leadership skills."

Debating was present in the Agora Speakers declaration of purpose since its very inception. Still, until now, it has been neglected in the educational materials, and with the second iteration of the Educational Program and the Agora Guide, it's time to address this. There's a growing body of research showing the huge benefits of debating as an educational tool:

- Debating enhances critical thinking, much more than public speaking alone (Allen, Berkowitz, Hunt, & Loudon, 1999), (Howell, 1943), (Hill, 1993), (Greenstreet, 1993)
- Debating is the most effective activity on college campuses for teaching research skills.
- Debating provides significant benefits for people entering careers in all sectors (Center, 1982) (Hobbs & Chandler, 1991)
- There's a clear relationship between debate participation and improved writing and listening skills.(Mezuk, Bondarenko, Smith, & Tucker, 2011), (Peters, 2009), (Huseman, Ware, & Gruner, 1972)
- There's a very high correlation between debate participation and attainment of leadership positions in society (Keele & Matton, 1984), (Union, 1960)
- Experienced debaters have much lower verbal aggressiveness scores in general life (Colbert, 1993)
- Debating drastically reduces (as much as three times) the dropout probability in schools (Anderson & Mezuk, 2012)
- Debating is one of the most endorsed activities by former participants. In fact, it enjoys almost unanimous (99.26%) endorsement from students, higher than any other educational activity. (Parcher, 1998)



Many debate contests and debating rule systems exist, most of them based on parliamentary systems and parliamentary procedure (especially the British Parliamentary Procedure). Usually, they proceed in turns with a strict order of what and when can be said and when new arguments and evidence can be introduced. However, in the fast-paced world of today, we must also take into consideration other forms of debate, especially those happening on TV, radio, or similar media, where the action is much less ordered and fast-paced, or those debate-like situations that also are much more flexible, such as court proceedings or business negotiations.

Debating also has its problems. A notable paper by professor Nancy Tumposky (Tumposky, 2004) argued that debates tend toward dualism, persuading participants to view issues as having only two positions and focusing them toward the question of winning or losing. Additionally, several studies suggest that debates' adversarial nature is not natural to the way females and certain minority groups think and communicate.

The proposed debate rules try to strike a delicate balance between:

1. Not making the meetings excessively long
2. Serving an educational purpose
3. Being as realistic as possible
4. Developing skills that can be used in a broad range of real word debate or debate-like situations.

5. Not creating a bad atmosphere in the club.
6. Allowing debates to be more than zero-sum sections in which one team wins and the other loses encouraging consensus building.

Point (1) is the easiest to achieve by altering the requirements that all meetings must have a minimum set of roles so that clubs can choose to have a completely classical meeting, or a debate-only meeting, or a mixture of both if time allows. There will be a requirement, though, to have at least four debates per year, with the VPE being in charge of organizing them. A debate is expected to last between 30 and 90 minutes, depending on the number of teams and the time the VPE allocates to each section.

We should be wary, though, of turning Agora clubs into debate clubs, as this is not the goal. This is a danger because debates tend to be funnier and more exciting than prepared speeches so that they can generate certain "addiction". Debates should complement and extend the existing educational program, not replace it. Also, we should remember that the goal of Agora debates is mainly educational for the members that participate in them.

DEBATE GENERALITIES

Debate Topics

Each Debate will have a clearly stated, short debate question, and each team will defend a specific, nonambiguous, and clearly defined answer to that question. For example, the debate topic could be "Should Higher Education Be Free?", and there could be three teams, each of them defending these sample answers:

- Team Y: "*Yes, Higher Education should always be free.*"
- Team N: "*No, People should invest in their own education.*"
- Team D: "*Higher Education should be free for those under a specific level of income.*"

We explicitly encourage a non-dualistic view of complex issues, so we suggest trying to avoid "yes-teams" and "no-teams" as rarely real-world issues have a simple "yes/no" answer.

Topics should be real-world, relevant topics and can be proposed to the VPE of the club by any member.

Topics that are not suitable for debates (APDA, 2016):

- **Purely subjective** topics for which no objective arguments can be presented. E.g., Which religion is "true"?
- **Tight cases** (Topics for which it's extremely difficult or impossible to argue a different side of the base position). For example, No person should ever be tortured by the state without reason.
- **Tautologies** (Topics for which only one position can logically exist). For example: Is the Earth smaller than the Sun?
- **Extremely knowledge-specific cases** (Topics that require a great deal of specific knowledge to be properly debated). For example: "Disposing of PVC: alternative compounds."

When organizing the debate, it's suggested that the VPE merely presents the topic to the members (either electronically or at a meeting) and waits for people to express the positions they want to defend, rather than presenting the topic and a pre-defined set of options. The first system allows teams to "emerge" naturally and avoids being labeled as biased or one-sided.

It is also recommended that people sign up for teams that truly represent their position, rather than defend half-heartedly positions they don't believe in.

It's the role of the VPE to decide the final composition of teams.

Time/Space debates

Time / Space debates (as per the APDA) are a special type of debate in which the teams are asked to play the role of a specific person (usually a political leader) or body (a government, a board of directors) at a specific point of time in history. For example: "You're John. F. Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis. You have just received the latest satellite photos showing that the URSS is installing ICBMs in Cuba".

The debates may or may not specify a spatial location. In the above case, it is not relevant - the place where Kennedy decided his course of action didn't influence his decision. However, if the debate topic was "You're General Gordon Meade; you've just defeated Robert Lee at Gettysburg", then the location (a battlefield where thousands lost their lives) might have certainly influenced his decision not to pursue the Confederate army.

Time/Space debates proceed as normal debates, with one notable exception: since they are debates that simulate a historical situation, a team representing a specific position cannot use information that wasn't available to the represented person or body at the time.

For example, if a team is representing the Japanese emperor in WWII, they cannot use the knowledge of the existence of Nuclear Weapons. Note that this rule restricts the use of information that was not known by the represented person, but not information that was known but not became widely known until afterward. Continuing with the same example, it's perfectly valid to assume that the Japanese emperor would know about the Pearl Harbor attack plans in a debate happening on Dec 1st, 1941, even though the attack itself happened on Dec 7th.

Information whose availability is not agreed on by historians should be avoided. Continuing once more with the above example, it's not yet agreed by historians whether the US government did or did not have clear prior notice of the attack, so if a team is representing the US government on Dec 1st, 1941, the Pearl Harbor attack should not be used.

Although the APDA recommends the rule that debate should be done respecting the psychological personality of the impersonated leader, we consider that this would steer the debate more into the theatrical, role-playing, and research area rather than the argumentative/educational side on which Agora is focused. For an Agora debate, it would be perfectly valid if a team representing the Nazi government on June 20th, 1941 (Two days before the beginning of Operation Barbarossa - the invasion of the Soviet Union by Germany.) and defending that it would be better not to proceed further scored higher than the other teams and "won". However, such an outcome of events could presumably have never really happened historically due to Hitler's personality.

It is also recommended that for Time/Space debates, topics are not picked from very recent or very controversial events unless the club has a solid tradition of civilized debate without personal arguments.

Roles, Teams, and Organization

Debates are organized and scheduled by the VPE of the Club at least two weeks in advance. Each debate requires that the following roles be filled:

- A debate moderator.
- Debate Judges, in the case of a contest format.
- A debate timer (can be the same as the regular timer of the meeting)
- Two or more teams with at least two members each. For practical purposes, it's recommended to have no more than

five teams.

- If possible, each team should have at least one backup member that can replace a no-show.
- All teams must have the same number of team members.
- Filler Words Counter and Word of the Day are not used during the section
- The Grammarian is used during the section since language correctness is a goal in all speeches.
- If the club has a Body Language or Listening evaluator, the role can be used during the section as well.
- The Meeting Evaluator should evaluate the debate moderator.
- The Meeting Leader introduces the Debate Moderator and the remaining roles as usual.

Materials Needed

The following is a list of materials needed for the debate:

- An Entry and an Exit poll "ballot", for each audience member.
- A set of cards with the team's names or numbers(for each audience member) for the Q&A section. If the teams are named with single-digit or single-letter names as suggested, these cards can be printed once and reused for all debates.

Debate moderator

The role of the debate moderator is:

- To introduce the topic of the debate
- To conduct the entry and exit polls and announce the results.
- To introduce the teams and the position that each team is defending.
- To give the floor to teams in turn and receive it from them.
- To make sure that the debate rules are followed.
- To apply disciplinary measures during the debate to keep the tone polite and respectful.

The timer helps the debate moderator to control the lengths of the speaking turns.

In contests, the Debate Moderator also briefs the Debate Judges.

Debate Judges

Debate judges are in charge of:

- Questioning the teams during the Q&A section.
- Offering feedback at the end of the meeting
- If this is a contest, awarding scores to each of the teams.

They should be unbiased (as much as possible) and qualified professionals. Debate Judges need not be Agora Speakers members, and, in fact, it is encouraged that they are not. Some suggestions for judges could be:

- Teachers or faculty staff of schools and universities.
- Journalists.
- Members of other clubs of Agora or other public speaking organizations.
- Local politicians or political party members/leaders
- Business owners.
- Doctors
- Lawyers

The last two are especially indicated for debates involving social or ethical issues.

DEBATE PROCEDURE

The Debate within the meeting

The debate is a self-contained section of the meeting, much like the "Hot Questions" section. The Meeting Leader will give the floor to the Debate Moderator, which will take the lead from there until the end of the debate, upon which the floor is returned to the Meeting Leader.

If the debate section is embedded in a classical meeting, it's up to the VPE of the club to decide where to place it. However, we recommend it to be after the prepared speeches (since prepared speakers are usually nervous and wanting to be finished as soon as possible), and before or in replacement of "Hot Questions" (If the debate is done before, the Hot Questions section can use whatever has happened in the debate as a source of inspiration for questions).

The VPE decides the amount of time to allocate to the debate, which cannot be less than 40 minutes, and whether the debate will take place during a "traditional" meeting or it will be a debate-only meeting.

The topic of the debate, the positions that will be defended, as well as the teams defending each position must be known by the time of the meeting. However, in the meeting agendas, only the debate topic and positions are written, not the teams' composition defending each position.

This would be a recommended meeting agenda entry:

18:20	Debate	Anetta Master - Moderator <i>"Should Higher Education Be Free?"</i>	40:00
	Team Y	<i>Yes, Higher Education should always be free</i>	
	Team N	<i>No, People should invest in their own education.</i>	
	Team D	<i>Higher Education should be free for those under a specific level of income.</i>	
	Break		

The order of speaking of the teams is decided by the Meeting Leader before the meeting by a random draw and given to the Debate Moderator.

A no-show by a team member on the day of the meeting will not be grounds for canceling the debate.

The Meeting Facilitator should make sure that Entry and Exit ballots are printed and available for the meeting and that they are previously distributed to all attendees, or at least placed on the tables or chairs where they will be seated, together with pencils or pens. Templates for Entry and Exit ballots will be available at the branding portal.

Structure and Timing

The Debate proceeds as follows (with suggested timings expressed)

#	ROUND NAME	MIN TIME	MAX TIME
1	Debate Introduction by the Debate Master	1	2
2	Entry Poll	2	2
3	Introduction of Teams and their positions	1	2
4	Introduction of Judges	2	2
5	Introductory Round		4 x # of teams
6	Q&A Round	0	10
7	Cross-Examination Round		3 x # of teams
8	Rebuttal Round		3 x # of teams
9	Q&A Round	0	10
10	Cross-Examination Round		3 x # of teams
11	Concluding Round		3 x # of teams
12	Exit Poll	2	2
13	Judges Feedback	5	7
14	Debate Conclusion	1	1

This gives the following timings depending on the number of teams:

NO OF TEAMS	MIN TIME	MAX TIME
2	45 min	1h 10 min
3	1h	1h 25 min
4	1h 20min	1h 40 min
5	1h 35 min	2h

Debate Introduction

Upon receiving the floor from the Meeting Leader, the Debate Moderator introduces the debate topic and provides short background information on the subject, such as why this topic is relevant or what recent news has happened that makes it interesting or worth debating. The Debate Moderator also enumerates the positions that will be defended, without commenting on any of them and without expressing a preference or endorsing any of them. Teams are not introduced at this point.


Entry Poll

Like everything in Agora, we strive to achieve an objective measure of our success. The goal of a debate is – besides educational – convincing people of your viewpoint. As such, the best measure of success is whether this has actually happened. This is done by two polls: an entry and an exit poll.

The Entry Poll is an anonymous poll conducted before the introduction of the teams and their members, with the goal being trying to get a snapshot of the true views of the audience while minimizing the

influence that can exert knowing that a certain friend or fellow member is on a team defending this or that position. Of course, team composition cannot be kept secret, but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't minimize its impact.

After introducing the debate topic and positions, the Debate Moderator will ask attendees to fill in the Entry Poll and hand it back to him. Results are neither counted nor announced at this point. Participating in the Entry Poll is voluntary.



DEBATE ENTRY BALLOT
DATE: _____

Should Higher Education Be Free?
(please mark one)

Yes, Higher Education should always be free.

No, People should invest in their own education.

Higher Education should be free for those under a specific level of income.

The Entry Poll and the collection of the ballots should not last more than 2 minutes.

Introduction of the Teams

After the Entry Poll has been conducted, the Debate Moderator introduces the teams, their members, and states which position each team is defending. It is recommended that each team is given either a number or a single-letter name.

Unless impracticable, team members should be seated or standing together, separate from members of the other teams and the audience. All teams should share an area away from the audience – either on stage or a special seating area of the room.

After the Debate Moderator has introduced the teams, he announces the speaking order drawn before.

Introduction of the Judges

After the teams are introduced, and if there are Debate Judges, the Debate Moderator proceeds to introduce each of them in turn. If they are not club members, the Debate Moderator should also speak briefly about each of them and their credentials. Under no circumstances should the Debate Moderator express what position (if any) a Debate Judge has in the matter being debated.

Introductory Rounds

During the Introductory Round (equivalent to the Affirmative or Government Round in traditional debate systems), a representative from each team explains the team's position and the supporting argumentation. The representative speaks uninterrupted for a maximum of 3 minutes, with a 30 second grace period.

Normal timing signals are used during this speech, and the Debate Moderator should stop any speaker that exceeds the 3:30 time mark.

Q&A Rounds

Q&A Rounds are rounds during which both the Debate Judges and Audience members (in this order) can make questions to the teams. They can also make their own points as part of a question, but the Debate Moderator should not allow these to be turned into speeches.

Each question should take no more than 1 minute, and each answer should take no more than 1 minute also. There's no grace period for the question, and there's a 30 second grace period for the answer. Judges are the first to ask questions, with the audience next when the judges have no more questions.

Follow-up questions are also allowed, but again, the Debate Moderator should be wary of these turning into a ping-pong match or a dialogue.

For questions from audience members, the person wanting to ask one or more questions raises the card with the team name to which the question is addressed and waits for the Debate Moderator to give him the floor. All questions must be relevant to the topic, stated unambiguously, and addressed by a specific team.

Ideally, the use of cards with the team name will allow the Debate Moderator to conduct a balanced Q&A session, distributing the

questions so that all teams get a similar number of questions.

After the person has finished speaking, the Debate Moderator can give the floor to the alluded team to answer or can declare the question inadmissible and state the reason.

The Q&A Round finishes either when the time allotted for it is up or when there are no more questions.

Cross-Examination Round

The Cross-Examination round is a similar round to the Q&A Round, and in it, teams are given a chance to cross-examine other teams. The order of questioning is the reverse of the order of speaking that was drawn for the Introductory Round (so that if the speaking order was Team 2, Team 3, Team 1, for example, the Cross-Examination round order would be Team 1, Team 3, Team 2).

The Debate Moderator will give the floor in turn to the different teams. As in the Q&A round, questions and answers should take no more than 1 minute.

Rebuttal Round

The Rebuttal Round (equivalent to the Negative or Opposition round in other debate systems) is a second speaking round where teams can offer arguments against the positions of other teams or offer additional arguments in support of their position.

The mechanics, timing, and order of speaking in this section are the same as in the Introductory Round.

Concluding Round

In the Concluding Round, teams make their final statement. During the concluding round, no new arguments or interruptions are allowed.

The order of speaking is the same as in the Introductory round. This is especially important to balance the primacy-recency effect.

Exit Poll

After the debate has concluded, the Exit Poll is performed. The Exit Poll and the collection of the ballots should not last more than 2 minutes.

As in the previous case, the Exit Poll is an anonymous poll that tries to measure whether the arguments presented by the different teams affected the ideas of the audience.

The Exit Poll is carried out regardless of whether there was an ending consensus or not. An attendee can choose to participate only in the Entry and not in the Exit Poll, only in the Exit and not in the Entry one, in both, or none.

This could be a sample Exit Poll ballot (the design is subject to change):



DEBATE EXIT BALLOT
DATE: _____

Should Higher Education Be Free?
(please mark one)

- Yes, Higher Education should always be free.*
- No, People should invest in their own education.*
- Higher Education should be free for those under a specific level of income.*
- Other: _____*

Feedback for the teams

Team Y: _____

Team N: _____

Team D: _____

If there is enough time for counting and summarizing the results, the results of both polls are announced at the end of the meeting. If not, they are posted on the Club webpage / WhatsApp group / Facebook group/blog, etc. If the club doesn't have any of these, they are announced at the beginning of the next regular meeting.

DEBATE RULES

■ Speeches

It is always the Debate Moderator the one that grants the floor to a team member, a judge, or a person from the audience to speak. Once a speaker has begun, he is only obliged to give up the floor when ordered by the Debate Moderator or timer.

Members from debate teams must stand up when speaking - regardless of whether they are delivering a prepared speech, offering a POI / POA / etc., or asking a question. To avoid wasting time, it is recommended that they speak from their position rather than walking to a central stage.

Reading pre-written speeches should be avoided, except for snippets of data – statistics, historical events, third-person quotes, etc., or for referring to arguments made by the other side.

To avoid personalization of the debate, all speakers should refer to the rest of the teams in the third person ("The other team", "The speaking member from Team 2", "Our opponents") instead of statements like ("you" or "John, that is false"). Formality, however, is not needed.

■ Points of Information (POI)

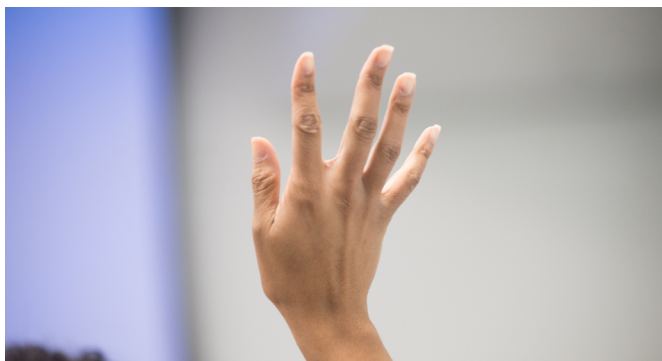
Points of Information are well spread in most debate styles and are brief interruptions of the speaker by members of other teams to offer counter-arguments,

POIs can be requested only by members of teams other than the one that is speaking. To do that, the member of the other team raises his hand. The speaker to which the POI was addressed can choose to accept or not the offered POI. In the first case, he can simply say "Yes?" and temporarily yield the floor to the opponent. In the second case, he can say "No, thanks" or merely make a hand gesture dismissing the request and continuing.

A POI can last no more than 15 seconds.

Usually, most debate systems define a "protected time" of a speech, during which POIs cannot be made. Considering the length of our rounds, this protected time would be the first and last 45 seconds of the speech.

■ Points of Order (POO)



A Point of Order can be raised by any team member who believes the debate rules have been broken, and it must be done immediately

when the violation is noticed.

The procedure for raising a Point of Order is the following:

- The debater wishing to make a POO stands up and says, "Point Of Order."
- The speaker stops speaking.
- The debater with the POO addresses the Debate Moderator and explains his case. During this period, timing is suspended.
- After hearing the case, the Debate Moderator makes a decision.

In general, Points of Order:

Can interrupt a speaker.

Are not debatable

Cannot be amended or reconsidered

Are decided by the Debate Moderator, with the decision being final

■ Points of Agreement (POA)

Points of Agreement are an innovative feature of Agora debates directed at steering debates towards consensus building. The purpose of a POA is to state a team's acceptance of an argument proposed by a different team. This acceptance cannot later be withdrawn. To raise a POA, all members of the raising team must agree (there must be a consensus).

To prevent "yes, but..." scenarios that represent disagreement rather than agreement, A POA must repeat the argument of the opposing team exactly as it was originally stated. It cannot be distorted, adorned, nuanced, or in any way elaborated further. For example, a team cannot say, "We agree with the position that there's a moderate amount of fraud happening in subsidized high education, but....". Either the statement made by the opposing team is accepted as it was stated, or there can be no POA on it.

The procedure for a Point of Agreement is:

During their speaking turn, a team member proposing the POA explicitly states, "Our team agrees with the position/statement of team XXXX that : statement".

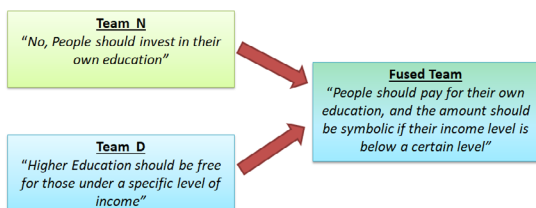
The statement must be an exact repetition of an argument or position that the other team has made.

The target team either replies "Accepted" (if the statement as quoted indeed reflects their position) or "Rejected" (if it does not). If the latter, a short explanation may be added.

■ Fusion of Teams

Fusion of Teams is a unique characteristic of Agora Speakers Debates that encourages trying to reach a consensus.

At any point of the debate, two teams may reach an agreement and merge as one team, defending a common consensus position. In the example above, Teams N and D might agree to merge, defending a common position that "People should pay for their own education, and the amount should be symbolic if their income level is below a certain level"



When two teams fuse their position and become one team, an appropriate number of members of the resulting fused team must leave to maintain fairness and the rule that all teams must have the same number of members.

Fusing requires unanimous agreement by all the members of the two teams and proceeds as follows:

- The proposing team decides to offer a consensus position to another team. All the members of the proposing team must agree to the wording of the consensus position. Also, the proposing team must have pre-selected the team members who will leave if the offer is accepted.
- During any speaking turn of the proposing team, the speaker starts by addressing the target team and saying something like, "We would like to offer the following consensus position to team XXXX : ". Whatever formula is chosen, it must be made clear that this is a proposal for merging positions, the proposal must be worded clearly, and it must be directed to a specific target team.
- After the offer is made, the speaker proceeds with his regular speech.
- When the turn of the proposing team concludes, the moderator grants a pause of 1 minute in the debate for the target team to decide. During the pause, the target team deliberates and makes a decision, which can be only to accept or decline the offered consensus position. Acceptance must be unanimous, and it must be clear which team members from the accepting team will leave to maintain balance in the fused team.
- After the pause, regardless of whose turn to speak is, the moderator addresses the target team and asks if they accept or decline the offered position. The target team can only respond with acceptance or rejection; no arguments or speeches are allowed at this point.
 - If the target team declines, the debate proceeds normally, with the moderator giving the floor to the next team in turn to speak.
 - If the target team agrees, then the pre-selected team members leave, and a single fused team continues. This new team cannot speak during this round, as it is considered that it has already used its turn in point 3.

Re-splitting on fused teams is not allowed.

Fused teams are considered from the point of their fusion as a single team, enjoying a single speaking and cross-examination turn, with the standard timing applicable to any normal team. Debate ends automatically with "Consensus" if no more teams remain after a fusion.

If this is a debate contest, all teams fused into the final, and last one are declared "Winners with Consensus". Contests should encourage

this kind of outcome.

Note that if any kind of individual awards are available, they should be given to all the initial members of fused teams, regardless of whether they left the debate during the fusion to maintain team balance.

■ Unacceptable behavior

It is imperative for a healthy debate and club atmosphere to prevent any kind of insults, personal arguments, respectful speech, or raising the tone or shouting. None of these is allowed and can result in the disqualification of a team member or the team itself. Note that insults can be nonverbal (in the form of gestures, for example), and they still have to be penalized.

A Personal argument is any argument (or question, or comment) targeting the characteristics or attributes of a person of the opposing team or items outside the sphere of the debate, including (but not limited to):

- Age, Gender, Sexual orientation or identity, Nationality, Race, Color, Religion, Ideology, Medical conditions.
- Educational or Professional Background.
- Lifestyle, preferences, hobbies, and interests.
- Publications or statements made outside of the debate. (Debates are self-contained, and the only arguments that can be opposed are those expressed during the debate itself).

Personal arguments are also arguments that are applied at generalizations of groups of people based on the above criteria, even if the addressee does not belong to the group. For example, "All Spaniards are lazy" is an ad hominem, even if no one in the debate is from Spain. Note, however, that offering objective non-judgmental research evidence concerning groups of people is allowed. For example, it's legitimate to claim that "People in Elbonia work only 12.6 hours per week, as opposed to 37.4 hours per week in France".

The debate moderator must act immediately upon hearing a personal argument. If this doesn't happen, the member to which the personal argument was addressed may raise his hand and state "Ad hominem" to compel the moderator to act, to which the moderator should either reply with "Disagree" or "Agree". If the moderator believes that a personal argument has been used, he or she may do one of the following:

1. Warn the team member using ad hominem to refrain from future similar arguments.
2. Stop the speaker from speaking, and deprive the offending team of their speaking turn during one round.
3. Disqualify the offending team member and remove him from the offending team.
4. Disqualify the team itself if members of the team persist in using personal arguments after one of their members has been disqualified for that reason.
5. Terminate the debate itself if he sees that it has devolved into an ad hominem match.

A different kind of less severe but equally unacceptable behavior is:

- Constantly interrupting other speakers with spurious POIs or

fake POAs

- Using stalling to "eat into" the other team's time, especially during the cross-examination rounds.
- Being persistently overtime.
- Breaking or abusing the rules

■ Rules for Evidence

Evidence are facts, pictures, videos, data, quotes, etc., that support a speaker's argument.

The following rules apply to evidence:

- Each piece of evidence must be clearly separated from the speaker's own opinion and from other pieces of evidence.
- All evidence should be identified, sourced, and independently verifiable. This explicitly disallows "abstract or fuzzy evidence" in statements similar to "Research shows that ...". Instead, such statements should be reformulated as "Research done by in shows that ..."
- Evidence may not be distorted, misquoted, partially quoted, or quoted out of context. Such behavior is considered unacceptable.
- All evidence used should be made available to the other teams, the audience, and the judges, so that any of them can make use of it during their speaking turns. This means, for example, that if you use a printed chart to make a point, the printed chart must be placed in a place inside the room where others can take it to use it.
- Upon request by any other team or the judges, the evidence used must be provided in a detailed form and in writing. If the evidence is too long, at least one page of it must be available.
- Each piece of evidence should provide at least the following information:
 - Author's name
 - Author's qualifications that are relevant to the topic at hand.
 - Complete bibliographic source information, including date and page number
 - In the case of Internet sources, the full URL and the date of access

■ Accessory Rules

- Team members cannot receive any external coaching during the duration of the debate.
- Interruption of speakers by the audience or other team members is not permitted and should be handled by the Debate Moderator. Cheering is not allowed.

DEBATE JUDGING AND SCORING

The result of a debate in Agora is not "Winning" or "Losing", but being awarded a specific amount of points depending on how convincing the team was.

The scoring system will have to be developed once all the rules have been settled, but the following basic guidelines should apply:

- Acceptance of POAs and Fusion of Teams should be greatly encouraged (and therefore score awarded to both teams) to give more weight to consensus building and finding bridges than to adversarial confrontation.
- Exposure of fallacies in the reasoning of other teams should be rewarded
- Constant reading of notes should be penalized, especially if the team member is reading a pre-written speech.
- Misrepresenting evidence, or citing nonexistent evidence should be greatly penalized, and exposing it should in turn greatly rewarded.
- Unacceptable behavior should be greatly penalized

It is also suggested that each Agora member has a global personal debating score that can encourage participation. This system, however, should not be purely accumulative in order not to present an insurmountable barrier to newcomer

DEBATE RESOURCES

■ Other Debate Rule Systems

For explanations of other debate systems, check the following:

- The Sydney 2000 Rules :
- <http://worlddebating.blogspot.ru/2000/03/wudc-sydney-2000-rules.html>
- Lincoln-Douglas Debate Rules: <https://www.uilitexas.org/files/academics/speech/LDRulesProcedures.pdf>
- British Parliamentary Debate: http://www.willamette.edu/cia/china_debate/doc/ReviewerOnlyFiles/Ch%2003%20BP%20DebateAsModelOfSocialAndEducationalDebate.docx
- Catholic Schools' Debating Association: <http://www.csga.nsw.edu.au/debatingRules.html>
- Saskatchewan Elocution and Debate Association: <http://www.saskdebate.com/media/32277/2013revisedgeneral%20rules%20of%20debate.pdf>

■ Learning to Debate

- <http://www.learndebating.com/> offers a free downloadable e-Book on debating.
- The Monash Association of Debaters offers a free Guide to Debating- <http://www.monashdebaters.com/downloads/Schools%20Training%20Guide.pdf>
- MIT Debating 101: http://courses.csail.mit.edu/6.141/spring2013/pub/lectures/Forum-7_Debate101.pdf
- A set of video tutorials on debating: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmx7Qc5fx1sqlz8Gz5MFN3A>
- Toronto Debating tutorials and examples: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBNJPhtaO5a974DyFTRMByA>
- Coursera course on negotiation: <https://www.coursera.org/learn/negotiation>
- (Commercial) The Art of Debate, from The Great Courses series : <https://www.thegreatcourses.com/courses/the-art-of-debate.html>

■ Debate Topics

For ideas about debate topics, as well as arguments for both sides of a topic, check the following debate-centered websites:

- <https://www.kialo.com>
- <https://www.procon.org>
- <http://www.debate.org/>
- <https://idebate.org/>
- <http://www.urbandebate.org>
- <http://www.parli.org/resolutions/>

Also, check the NY Times list of debate topics : <https://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/02/24/our-100-most-popular-student-questions-for-debate-and-persuasive-writing/>

[nytimes.com/2016/02/24/our-100-most-popular-student-questions-for-debate-and-persuasive-writing/](https://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/02/24/our-100-most-popular-student-questions-for-debate-and-persuasive-writing/)

NY Times' list of 301 topics for argumentative writing:

<https://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/02/05/301-prompts-for-argumentative-writing/>

282 Original Ideas for argumentative writing:

<http://www.myspeechclass.com/ideas-for-argumentative-speech-topics.html>

■ Debate Videos

For sample debate videos of debates in other organizations, you can watch the following:

- The Munk Debates - <https://www.munkdebates.com/>
- Debate Matters - <http://www.debatingmatters.com/resources/debatingmattersonfilm/>
- <http://videos.apdawebo.org/>
- Recordings of Debate Contests of in the High Schools of the US - <http://www.parli.org/resource/>
- Debate Central videos -<http://debate.uvm.edu/wudcvideo.html>

Simple formulae
Introduction
Past Present Future
Position Reason Position.
Problem Cause Solution

Agora
3rd Ma

CHAPTER 12

AGORA AMBASSADORS

Drian Von Golden - Agora Ambassador to Japan, preparing a meeting of the Agora Speakers Tokyo club

THE AMBASSADOR ROLE



Michal Papis, the First Agora Speakers Ambassador - for Poland. September. 2016

An Agora Ambassador acts as a leader or evangelist for the organization in a country during the initial stages of Agora in that country, representing the organization, its principles, and its core values. They constitute the embryo of the future Board of Directors.

■ Requirements

To fulfill this purpose, Agora ambassadors must be extremely ethical, supportive, and willing to help people in their country with starting and running Agora clubs and help the organization expand in the country. Depending on the size and population of the country, there may be one or several ambassadors.

Ambassadors need to meet the following requirements:

- Run a [Reference club](#) in their country.
- Be completely familiar with all the information about Agora - our purpose and mission, the educational program, all meeting sections, and roles and the guidelines for creating and running the club.
- Create at least one new club in their country per year. This

does not mean running it (unless you want and have the time to do so) - merely helping found a new club and mentoring it so that it can thrive independently.

- Share media (photos and videos) about their club.
- Officially add their title ("Agora Speakers Ambassador for country") to their social networks profiles.
- Have a behavior consistent with the ideals and principles of Agora Speakers International.

From a logistical and operational viewpoint, Agora Ambassadors must:

- Live in the country which they represent.
- Have daily access to a computer and internet connection, and be able to participate in the Ambassadors mailing list.
- Be able to communicate in English and have native fluency in the country's official language or region in which you live (If the country has more than one official language, then native fluency in one is enough).
- Be able to participate in the monthly Ambassador meetings regularly.



Please note that granting Ambassador status is not an automatic process and remains solely at the discretion of the Agora Speakers International Foundation. Even if you meet all of the above requirements, the status may be declined for other reasons. The opposite is also possible: even if you don't have some of the above requirements, you may still be granted Ambassador status if you have made exceptional contributions or have added exceptional value to the Foundation.

Also, please note that the requirements to become an Ambassador change with time and are greatly dependent on the development of Agora in the country.

■ Running a Reference Club

An ambassador's most important task is running a "reference" or "template club" - an Agora club that other people in the country can refer to and can see as a close and real-life example of how Agora works worldwide. As such, reference clubs need to be aware of the suggested Meeting Format and the minimum requirements for roles in a meeting. A Reference Club has a bit stricter requirements than a normal public club because, after all, it's more than simply a club - it's representing the way the organization works. See this [comparative list](#) for the specific differences.

This is helped by recording some meetings, speeches, and roles and sharing them with the rest of the Agora community and especially in media, blogs, and other publications in their own country. Agora Ambassadors should uphold the values, ideals, and core principles of the organization; that's why it's vital that this club functions as flawlessly as possible.

The reference club must be public and very welcoming to guests - both from the general public and Agora or other organizations and place as few restrictions and requirements on attending as possible. It must meet at least twice a month.

The following, for example, are not recommended for reference clubs:

- Requiring attendance notice for guests long in advance
- Meeting venues in remote places or places not easily accessible by public transport
- Meeting venues that have strict security requirements
- Requiring guests to sign on groups or mailing lists before attending
- Meeting formats that wildly vary from the recommended meeting structure

Reference clubs should also have as low as possible fees and should not charge guests for attending.

■ Social Media

Agora Speakers maintains many social media outlets, including Facebook groups, forums, etc. An Ambassador is responsible for the social media channels of Agora for the country and has administrative privileges. These channels should also be kept running as smoothly as possible, which basically means approving membership requests as soon as possible, answering questions, removing questionable content, etc.



A well-kept Agora Speakers social group may become even more popular and numerous than the official one. Agora Speakers Ethiopia, maintained by Rajendra Singh, is one such example

There's no need for Ambassadors to publish anything regularly or to maintain any kind of blog or newsletter. Still, if they have the time and desire to do so, that's definitely welcome. However, we do request from Agora Ambassadors to periodically share media (photos or videos) illustrating the working of their club.

Regardless of the official languages used in Agora, Ambassadors are encouraged to use in all social media channels the languages of the country they're in to increase the organization's outreach.

■ Other activities

Agora Ambassadors also:

- Manage the Agora social network presence in the country (such as Facebook groups, Twitter, etc.)
- Act as an accretion point or center around which the organization grows.
- Grant awards to members and clubs that have had outstanding performances in different areas.
- Suggest people that can be contacted for further growth of the organization, in their country or elsewhere.
- Provide insight into local issues that the organization may be unaware of, such as specific religious or political issues, translation needs, suggested projects for development, etc.
- Provide a first contact point for media inquiries and media-related issues.
- Actively promote the organization and encourage and help with the creation of new clubs.
- Within their available time, perform demo meetings at prospective institutions.
- Provide answers to questions of prospective club starters.
- Organize, participate, or suggest advertising campaigns or channels and opportunities for the growth of Agora.
- Provide also a local contact for projects involving or requiring the participation of local country authorities.
- Organize, participate, or suggest local Agora events, Contests, and Conventions.
- Participate with the rest of the ambassadors in a melting pot of ideas, suggestions, and insight into growing the organization globally.
- Act as appeal points for disciplinary issues

NOTE

As a volunteer role, there are no travel or any other "required" activities other than running the reference club in the country, promoting the Foundation, and upholding our values.

■ Recognition of Ambassadors

Ambassadors are recognized in Agora in many ways, including having a prominent presence on the website and in Agora publications.

All the Ambassadors feature a professional profile on our wiki.



Please note that being an Agora Ambassador does not grant the right to represent the Agora Speakers International Foundation legally, to negotiate on its behalf, or to enter into binding agreements.

■ Limitations

Also, your role as an Ambassador may not be used to promote any other organization, business, service, or product, nor it can be used in such a way that might create the impression that Agora Speakers International endorses, supports, partners or is somehow affiliated with other organizations, businesses, services or products.

Finally, ambassadors act as mentors, coaches, and guides, but the Ambassador role does not confer authority over any club, nor the ability or capacity to impose decisions on its members.



NOTE

Being an Agora Ambassador is **compatible** with having a similar role in other organizations, as long as you execute your Ambassador role correctly, as described here. Of course, if you constantly promote other organizations instead of Agora, then you should think about whether you're really a good fit for an Agora Ambassador. We do expect that you will promote Agora **at least as much** as the other organizations.

■ Current Ambassadors

The current list of Ambassadors can be found on this page - <https://wiki.agoraspeakers.org/worldwide> -, and this list is the only source of truth in that regard. Some countries don't have an Ambassador, and that's ok: it just means that the country has members and clubs, but no one has yet volunteered to step in as an Ambassador.



Agora has become so popular recently that some people have started claiming to be Ambassadors, Representatives, Directors, and whatnot.

The only currently recognized "positions" in Agora are:

- Club Founders - at the club level.
- Club Officers - at the club level.
- Country Ambassadors - at the country level.

There are no "regional directors", "continent ambassadors," or similar invented roles.

■ Honorary Ambassadors

Ambassadors who are no longer active but have provided exceptional service to the Foundation retain an Honorary Ambassadorship which allows them to keep the title but frees them from the obligations of actively running or creating clubs or moderating the social networks.

BECOMING AN AMBASSADOR

■ Do you want to become an Ambassador?

Are you sure? 😊 First of all, please read about [the role of the Ambassador](#) to learn what you're getting yourself into... If, after reading about it, you still want to become one, here's what you need to do:

To become an Ambassador, you need:

- To commit to promoting Agora in your country - our ideals, community, core principles, and educational program, and to actively encourage and help others set up Agora clubs and grow the community overall.
- To charter and stabilize a new Agora club in your country. A stable club can meet and execute the Agora Educational Program without you having to be present in the meetings or constantly on top of people.
- To start promoting Agora and your club publicly in your social networks - using your own posts, or club meetings, or pictures (either from your clubs or others), or sharing our official posts.
- You need to be the President of the club for at least a few months and make it a [Reference club](#). (A Reference club is basically a club that adheres closely to the Agora guidelines and that can be used as a model or reference by other people in the country wanting to start their own).
- Finally, you need to have full knowledge of Agora, its system and educational approach, all the different rules, and of course, the implications of being an Agora Ambassador, especially in terms of time and energy commitment to the Foundation.

If you think you're ready for the Ambassador role, once you've met the above requirements, send us a note to info@agoraspeakers.org indicating your desire to become one.

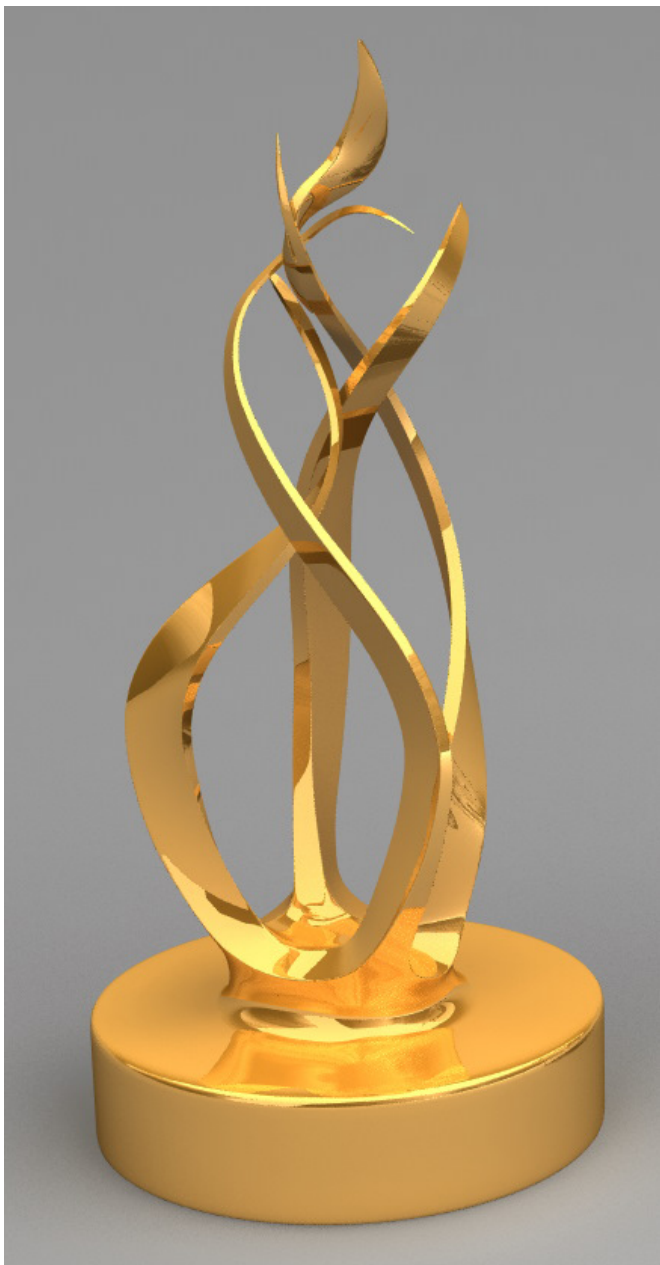
The ambassador's role can be shared between several people as needed and is a volunteer role appointed by the Board. Especially for big countries, there may be several Ambassadors in different areas.

The duration of the role is until the organization has enough presence and clubs in the country so that the standard leadership positions can be elected, which usually happens when there are 10 clubs and at least 300 members.

CHAPTER 13 CONTESTS AND CONVENTIONS

First International Agora Convention in Lisbon, Portugal - 2019

CONTESTS



Every year in Agora, we recognize the best speakers from our membership. The way our contests are structured, as well as our Contest Rulebook, represent our vision for Public Speaking as a tool that enables leaders to achieve their goals and effect a positive change in the world. You will see that we don't have a "generalistic speaking contest" because, for us, public speaking is a means to a goal, but not an end in itself.

We currently have four thematic contests:

- [Educational Speech Contest](#)
- [Storytelling Contest](#)
- [Humorous Speech Contest](#)
- [Social Awareness Speech Contest](#)

Some of the highlights of our contest system:

- Each contest is celebrated yearly, with the official contest season being from January 1st to the [International Convention](#) date.
- All speeches need to be original.
- All contests proceed in rounds, where each round has up to 10 contestants.
- The core contests are in English, but countries, regions, and groups of countries are free to celebrate contests in any language (for example, all German-speaking countries could have a German World Public Speaking contest)
- Our Financial Rules allow clubs and groups of clubs to sponsor contestants so that they do not have to cover the costs of participation themselves (travel, accommodation, etc.)
- We have special provisions for allowing people with disabilities, including blind and deaf people, to participate.
- To make sure that we don't develop an endogamic contest style where all speeches become clearly recognizable as "an Agora-type speech", judging at the higher levels is performed by external professionals that are not Agora members, such as journalists, media professionals, lawyers, scientists, etc. (depending on the type of the contest).
- Different Agora levels (clubs, regions, countries) can organize

Special Contests (such as Evaluation, Improvisational Speaking, Powerpoint Karaoke, etc.), and we explicitly encourage that. The contest season for these special contests is from July 31st to December 31st.

■ **Formal Contest Rulebook**

[Part 1 - Contest Structure](#)

[Part 2 - Contest Conventions](#)

[Part 3 - Contest Development](#)

[Part 4 - Contest Judging](#)

[Part 5 - Special Contests](#)

EDUCATIONAL SPEECH CONTEST



■ **Speech Duration**

The Educational Speech Contest has the goal of finding excellent science communicators who can enlighten, inspire, and teach people.

Speeches entering the Educational Speech Contest must have a maximum duration of 10 minutes.

■ **Speech Topics**

The Educational Speech Contest's speech topics must be on topics from the formal, natural or social sciences.

The speech content should be aligned with the agreed state of science as understood by the community of active scientific researchers publishing in recognized peer-reviewed journals.

Contestants that present speeches versing on pseudo-scientific topics or topics other than the above will be disqualified.

■ **Selection of Judges**

For contests at the Country and above levels, judges will be non-Agora members from the following professions:

- Media professionals - presenters, show hosts, actors, producers, etc., from the TV, radio, press, or movie industries.
- School or university professors.
- Journalists
- Executives of middle and large companies.
- Speakers from the professional (for-pay) public speaking circuits.
- Speakers from other public speaking events such as TEDx., Munk Debates, etc.

■ **Scoring of Speeches**

Judges will score speeches according to the following criteria:

- **Clarity and Focus (0 to 10)** - Will consider whether the speech had a clear, single educational goal
- **Use of props or visual aids (0 to 10)** - Will consider the props' appropriateness and originality / visual aids used.
- **Scientific accuracy (0 to 10)** - Will consider how close the speech was to the current scientific understanding of the subject that was being presented.
- **Adequacy for the general public (0 to 10)** - Will consider how understandable the speech is for the general (layman) population.
- **General quality and interest of the speech (0 to 10)** - Will consider how entertaining the speech was, whether it was able to capture and hold the listeners' attention.

For each speech, the average of the above scores will be computed, and that will be the final score assigned to that contestant.

■ **Titles**

The winner of any level except the World Final will have the title of "Best Educational Speaker of (region)"

STORYTELLING CONTEST



language, pauses, and other narration characteristics.

- **Emotional content (0 to 10)** - Will consider the storyteller's ability to convey and elicit emotions in the audience.
- **Story Message (0 to 10)**- Will consider the depth of the story's core moral message.

For each speech, the average of the above scores will be computed, and that will be the final score assigned to that contestant.

■ Titles

The winner of any level except the World Final will have the title of "Best Storyteller of (region)"

■ Speech Duration

The Storytelling Contest has the goal of finding excellent story creators and narrators who can entertain, move, and teach people.

Speeches entering the Storytelling Contest must have a maximum duration of 10 minutes.

The stories may include humor, but they must not be solely based on humor.

■ Selection of Judges

For contests at the Country and above levels, judges will be non-Agora members from the following professions:

- Media professionals - presenters, show hosts, actors, producers, etc., from the TV, radio, press, or movie industries.
- Fiction writers
- Journalists
- Speakers from the professional (for-pay) public speaking circuits.
- Speakers from other public speaking events such as TEDx., Munk Debates, etc.

■ Scoring of Speeches

Judges will score speeches according to the following criteria:

- **Originality (0 to 10)** - Will consider how original the story is.
- **Story development (0 to 10)** - Will consider the overall story arc, its opening, development, climax, etc.
- **Character development (0 to 10)** - Will consider whether the story's protagonists had depth and proper introduction, development, and conclusion.
- **Usage of language (0 to 10)** - Will consider the richness, expressiveness, and vividness of the language used. The ability of the speaker to project images into the audiences' minds.
- **Narration quality (0 to 10)** - Will consider vocal variety, body

HUMOROUS SPEECH CONTEST



■ **Speech Duration**

The Humorous Speech Contest has the goal of finding excellent comedians and entertainers.

Speeches entering the Humorous Speech Contest must have a maximum duration of 7 minutes.

■ **Selection of Judges**

For contests at the Country and above levels, judges will be non-Agora members from the following professions:

- Media professionals - presenters, show hosts, actors, producers, etc., from the TV, radio, press, or movie industries.
- Comedians
- Professional clowns, artists, and mimes.
- Fiction writers.
- Journalists
- Speakers from the professional (for-pay) public speaking circuits.
- Speakers from other public speaking events such as TEDx., Munk Debates, etc.

■ **Scoring of Speeches**

Judges will score speeches according to the following criteria:

- **Originality (0 to 10)** - Will consider whether the speech had a clear, single educational goal
- **Usage of language (0 to 10)** - Will consider the richness, expressiveness, and vividness of the language used.
- **Usage of body language (0 to 10)** - Will consider the richness and expressiveness of the speaker's body language and whether it reinforced the humorous content and was synchronized with the narration.
- **Use of props or visual aids (0 to 10)** - Will consider how effective visual aids or props were for amplifying the humor in the speech.
- **Humorous content (0 to 10)** - Will consider how funny the speech was.

- **Audience reaction (0 to 10)** - Will consider how the audience received the speaker's humor.

For each speech, the average of the above scores will be computed, and that will be the final score assigned to that contestant.

NOTE: The use of props or visual aids is optional. If a participant did not use any props or visual aids, that category would be excluded when computing the averages.

■ **Titles**

The winner of any level except the World Final will have the title of "Best Humorous Speaker of (region)"

SOCIAL AWARENESS SPEECH CONTEST



■ Speech Duration

The Social Awareness Speech Contest aims to find people capable of inspiring and galvanizing support for acting on the problems that our world is facing.

Speeches entering the Social Awareness Speech Contest must have a maximum duration of 7 minutes.

The speech topic must be a problem that people are facing, and how to act on it.

Speeches on other subjects or that verse on imaginary “problems” (e.g., we want NASA to come clean on the moon landing hoax) or have a pseudo-scientific basis will be disqualified.

■ Scoring of Speeches

Judges will score speeches according to the following criteria:

- **Social Accuracy (0 to 10)** - Will consider how real and accurate the problem described was.
- **Usage of language (0 to 10)** - Will consider the richness, expressiveness, and vividness of the language used. The ability of the speaker to project images into the audiences’ minds.
- **Use of props or visual aids (0 to 10)** - Will consider how effective visual aids or props were for amplifying the message in the speech.
- **Narration quality (0 to 10)** - Will consider vocal variety, body language, pauses, and other narration characteristics.
- **Emotional content (0 to 10)** - Will consider the speaker’s ability to convey and elicit emotions in the audience.
- **Social Message (0 to 10)** - Will consider the depth of the speech’s core message.
- **Persuasiveness (0 to 10)** - Will consider how persuasive the

speaker was and their capacity to move people to action.

- **Actionability (0 to 10)** - Will consider whether the speech contained actionable proposals, their viability, and how the audience reacted to them.
- **Action Originality (0 to 10)** - Will consider the originality of the actions proposed.

For each speech, the average of the above scores will be computed, and that will be the final score assigned to that contestant.

NOTE: The use of props or visual aids is optional. If a participant did not use any props or visual aids, that category would be excluded when computing the averages.

■ Titles

The winner of any level except the World Final will have the title of “Best Social Awareness Speaker of (region)”

ATTENDING AN AGORA CONVENTION



Jorge Dias, Agora Speakers Ambassador to Portugal and organizer of the first Agora Convention in Lisbon, 2019

Agora International Conventions (usually called “AgoraCon”) are multi-day events where members from all around the world gather for competing, learning, socializing, and charting the future of Agora. Although they are centered around Agora, its goal, and its mission, they are open events that any person can attend. Membership in Agora is not a requirement. Attending an Agora Convention is, without exaggeration, a life-changing event. The number of people you will meet, the degree of camaraderie, friendship, and warmth that you will feel, the knowledge you will acquire, and the connections you will establish will resonate for many years.

Every Agora Convention has a specific logo and theme. For example, the first 2019 Convention had “Dream Big. Make it Happen”. The Second Convention (which had to be postponed from 2020 to 2021



due to the COVID19 Pandemic) had the tagline “New Leaders for a New Time.”

Agora Conventions are celebrated yearly, usually close to our [birthday](#) - August 21. Every year a different city and country are selected for hosting the Convention. The selection is based on a number of criteria, such as:

- The growth of clubs in the region.
- The availability of sufficient support infrastructure (transportation hubs, hotels, etc.)
- The accessibility of the location - both political (in terms of country entry requirements) and practical (in terms of safety, reachability, etc.)
- The commitment and capability of the organizers to successfully prepare an event of this magnitude.
- The location of the previous conventions (for example, if the past convention has been in Western Europe, it’s unlikely that Western Europe or even Europe would be chosen for the next one).

Unlike the rest of the activities, attending a Convention is not free and requires paying a ticket. The ticket price goes towards payment of costs such as renting the venue, organizing the catering, all the infrastructure costs (equipment, lights, furniture), consumables, professional services such as photography and video recording, and possibly paying the expenses of some prominent guests or keynote speakers.

■ Activities

The organizers of a convention have a lot of flexibility in deciding what will happen during a Convention, and that’s why there are no two equal conventions.

At the core, each Convention will have one “Main Track” happening in the main Convention Hall that will feature:

- One or more keynote speeches
- The [Contest](#) Finals
- One or more workshops
- A Gala dinner
- An entertainment program
- A networking event.
- An Awards ceremony - both for contest winners and other distinguished members

SPEAKING AT AN AGORA CONVENTION



There are several ways in which you can speak at an Agora Convention, but please note that we strongly favor people that are actively involved with Agora (either as members or as sponsors)

■ Keynote Speakers

Keynote speakers speak during the main track and present speeches of exceptional value to the members.

To be a keynote speaker, you need to be an accomplished professional in your field and have an excellent command of English.

Keynote speeches:

1. Must be of general interest to all Convention attendees.
2. Must be aligned with Agora's [Core Principles](#) and [Bylaws](#)
3. Must be educational in nature.
4. Be related to the core mission and values of the Agora Speakers International Foundation.
5. Must contain actionable advice that members can apply to improve their skills.
6. Must be delivered in English (including all of the presentation materials).
7. Any advice, recommendation, or technique suggested in the speech must be backed by peer-reviewed research.
8. May not promote products, services, or third-party organizations.
9. May not promote specific ideologies or political, moral, or religious views.

To apply, please submit a proposal to info@agoraspeakers.org with the following information:

1. Your full name.
2. Your resume, which must detail your experience in the field you want to talk about.
3. An outline of the speech that you want to present and its duration.

4. Supporting research references
5. A one-sentence, specific answer to the following question: "What will the Convention attendees be able to do better in their lives after they hear your presentation?"

■ Workshop Leaders

Workshop speakers speak during the side tracks and lead practical workshops and seminars.

To be a Workshop leader, you need to be an accomplished professional in your field and have an excellent command of the language in which the workshop will be delivered.

Workshops:

1. Must be of interest to at least a sizable portion of Convention attendees.
2. Must be aligned with Agora's core principles.
3. Must be educational in nature.
4. Must be related to the core mission and values of the Agora Speakers International Foundation.
5. Must contain actionable advice that members can apply to improve their skills.
6. Must be delivered in one of the official languages of the Convention (this requirement extends to all of the presentation materials).
7. Any advice, recommendation, or technique suggested in the speech must be backed by peer-reviewed research.
8. May not promote products, services, or third-party organizations.

To apply, please submit a proposal to info@agoraspeakers.org with the following information:

1. Your full name.
2. Your resume, which must detail your experience in the field you want to talk about.
3. An outline of the workshop that you want to present and its duration.
4. Supporting research references.
5. A one-sentence, specific answer to the following question: "What will the Convention attendees be able to do better in their lives after they attend your workshop?"

■ Convention Organizers / Agora Officials

Convention Organizers can grant speaking time during the main track to:

- Members of the Convention organization Team
- Agora Ambassadors and other Agora officials
- Officials from Agora clubs.

■ Contestants

You can also speak at a Convention event if you have classified yourself in any of the immediately lower-level contests.

■ General Roles and other Convention Speakers

The general roles of MC / Meeting Leader, Timer, impromptu speaker, and any other similar are reserved exclusively for active members of active Agora clubs.

■ Agora and Convention Sponsors

Sponsors of the Agora Speakers International Foundation or the Agora Speakers Convention can lead workshops related to their specific service or product offering. They also enjoy further branding and positioning benefits. Please send us a message to info@agoraspeakers.org for details.

Common Requirements

We use TEDx Content Guidelines (especially the “Bad Science” section) for vetting external speakers and the content of their workshops. This community letter from TEDx discusses at length many criteria for detecting bad science.

All Speakers must agree (through a signed release form) to grant a perpetual, non-exclusive, royalty-free license to Agora Speakers International Foundation on their presentation content and materials, allowing us to distribute it in any way and form, without limitations.

In particular, all speakers need to agree that:

- Their speech and presentation materials will be live-streamed to all Agora members worldwide.
- A recording of their speech and a copy of their presentation materials will be made available to all Agora members worldwide.
- The above will not be DRM-locked.

CHAPTER 14

BRANDING GUIDELINES

Trophies for participants in the Agora Visakha Orators Club in India

■ 1. Goal of these guidelines

- The Branding Guidelines specify all the rules that must be followed whenever a club wants to use any digital assets from the Brand Portal of Agora Speakers International.
- Only officially registered clubs that have been assigned a number may use the digital assets of the Foundation.
- The assets may only be used by the club for purposes directly related to the goals and mission of the Foundation and must always be used in compliance with the Core Principles.
- All Agora Speakers International assets are protected by copyright. Additionally, the logo and the flame are trademarked symbols.
- None of these guidelines represent a transfer of intellectual property of any kind. The rules regulating the use of digital assets may change at any time. The permission given to a club to use these assets may be revoked at any time if the Foundation determines that the assets are being misused.

■ 2. Our purpose

Agora Speakers International is a worldwide nonprofit association of passionate volunteers devoted to helping people develop their public speaking, communication, critical thinking, debating, and leadership skills.

■ 3. Textual elements

Our Name

Our full name is Agora Speakers International. You may refer to us in any of the following ways:

- Agora
- Agora Speakers
- Agora Speakers International
- The Agora Speakers International Foundation

Please note, however, that “Agora” is a common word of Greek origin and, as such, if you simply use “Agora,” there might be some

confusion with other companies or entities that use the same word and are completely unrelated to us.

Our name may not be modified, translated, or transliterated. It is always written in the Latin character set, regardless of the target language. For example, the following are incorrect uses of the name:

- ❌ *Aropa*
- ❌ *Ágora Speakers*
- ❌ *Agoras Foundation*

Exceptionally, for languages in which diacritics indicate the accent of the word (such as Spanish), Agora may be accentuated only when it appears alone. For example, *Ágora* would be valid, but *Ágora Speakers* - not.

Our Mission Statement

Our mission statement is worded as follows:

“Agora empowers you to become a brilliant communicator and a confident leader who will actively build a better world.”

The mission statement may not be modified in any way, except:

- To translate it to a different language.
- To replace “Agora empowers you” exclusively with “We empower you” where appropriate in materials, provided that the Agora Speakers International logo is also displayed. No other replacements are allowed (for example, you may not change it to say “Agora Speakers Madrid empowers you...”)

No text may be added to the mission statement.

All parts of Agora Speakers and all affiliate clubs share this single common mission.

4. Visual characteristics

Main Color Palette]



HEX Web safe: CC3300
RGB: 206, 60, 23
CMYK: 13%, 90%, 100%, 3%



HEX Web safe: FF9900
RGB: 247, 175, 15
CMYK: 2%, 34%, 100%, 0



HEX Web safe: 660033
RGB: 86, 15, 59
54%, 99%, 46%, 47%

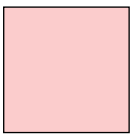


WHITE

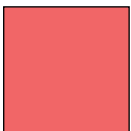


BLACK

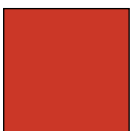
Secondary Color Palette



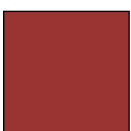
HEX Web safe: FFCCCC
Hex: F9D7CF
RGB: 249, 215, 207
CMYK: 1%, 17%, 13%, 0%



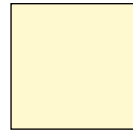
HEX Web safe: FF6666
Hex: F47C60
RGB: 244, 124, 96
CMYK: 0%, 64%, 62%, 0%



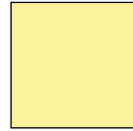
HEX Web safe: cc3300
Hex: CC3C17
RGB: 204, 60, 23
CMYK: 14%, 90%, 100%, 4%



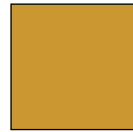
HEX Web safe: 993333
Hex: A0353B
RGB: 160, 53, 59
CMYK: 26%, 90%, 75%, 19%



HEX Web safe: FFFFCC
Hex: F4F2D4
RGB: 244, 242, 212
CMYK: 4%, 2%, 19%, 0%



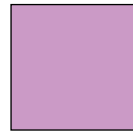
HEX Web safe: FFFF99
Hex: F7E99A
RGB: 247, 233, 154
CMYK: 4%, 4%, 49%, 0%



HEX Web safe: CC9933
Hex: D1952A
RGB: 209, 149, 42
CMYK: 17%, 43%, 100%, 0%



HEX Web safe: 996633
Hex: 976B1E
RGB: 151, 107, 30
CMYK: 34%, 54%, 100%, 18%



HEX Web safe: CC99CC
Hex: CCB2D6
RGB: 204, 178, 214
CMYK: 18%, 31%, 0, 0



HEX Web safe: 666699
Hex: 765285
RGB: 118, 82, 133
CMYK: 62%, 77%, 22%, 4%



HEX Web safe: 003366
Hex: 15416E
RGB: 21, 65, 110
CMYK: 99%, 80%, 32%, 18%



HEX Web safe: 333366
Hex: 351C4D
RGB: 53, 28, 77
CMYK: 88%, 98%, 37%, 37%

Logo Presentations

Full Horizontal Format



Square Format



The square format may only be used for digital media where a square logo is required (icons, applications, etc.)

Simplified Horizontal Format



Only allowed for physical merchandising materials where the size of the logo and the resolution of the target material makes it impracticable to have fine detail. In these cases, the width of the logo must be no greater than 5cm.

Logo Presentations

Logo Spacing



Always leave a spacing of at least the size of the letter "S" around the logo, as shown.

Logo Spacing

Print



2cm

Web



128px

Logo Variations

The following variations of the logo are the only ones allowed. All of them can be downloaded from the Brand Portal.



Grayscale over a clear background



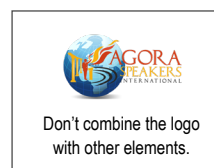
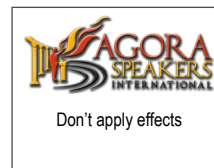
Color over dark background



White over dark background

Logo Variations

The logo may not be altered in any way. Especially don't do the following:



Combination with other logos

The logo may not appear, without prior written permission, in combination with a non-club logo unless it is in the context of a listing of sponsors, meeting venues, or similar auxiliary meeting-related organizations, and these are clearly labeled as such. In this last case, the logo of the club(s) or events being sponsored must appear as well, and there must be no confusion as to the fact that it is the club/event the one being sponsored and not Agora Speakers International.

Allowed



Not Allowed



Fonts

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

The main font is CapitalisTypOasis. It consists only of uppercase characters (and only the Latin-1 set), numbers, and punctuation signs.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

01234567890[]()!/?={}* /&%\`áéíóúâêîðúâèìðñÑäëïöüçÇ

A secondary font American Garamond BT which is a full UNICODE font

5. Custom materials

Agora Speakers International allows clubs a lot of flexibility in the use of brand material and digital assets to create their own logos, certificates, rewards, stationery, even merchandising, and to produce all the materials locally or order them from the provider the club finds most appropriate.



Custom Materials can be created for their use in clubs, events (such as conferences, contests, etc.), geographical areas (e.g., a leaflet of all clubs in a city), language groups (e.g., German Speakers), etc., but may not be created by members for personal use (e.g., a custom-designed business card for the use of one or more unrelated members).

In this guide, for the sake of brevity, we will refer generically to all of them as “club” materials, and the name and logo of the club, event, geographical area, language group, or similar will be referred to as “club name and logo”.

All custom materials need to comply with the following rules:

- Must comply with the bylaws.
- May only be created and used by clubs.
- Must be related to the mission of Agora Speakers International.
- Affiliation with Agora Speakers International must be displayed.
- The usage of the Agora logo must comply with the Brand Guidelines.
- The author of the material will be solely responsible for any IP claims by a third party against it.
- The club name and/or logo must always be present, must be no smaller than Agora’s, and must always be significantly more prominent than any other logos present.
- (In order to avoid people thinking that a custom material developed by a club is an official Agora Speakers International material).
- Clubs may produce them locally or order them from any provider they consider appropriate.
- If the contact information is present, the contact information of the club and the contact information of Agora Speakers International must be clearly separated, and at least the website address of Agora Speakers International must be present (www.agoraspeakers.org)

■ **6. Derived assets**

Derived Materials are items created by modifying the official templates or that incorporate parts of the digital assets of Agora Speakers International (e.g., parts of the logo, parts of the mission statement, the font, and color scheme of Agora’s name, etc.)



For example:
These parts make this logo a «derived» one

All derived assets must, in addition to the rules for custom assets, comply with the following rules:

- No Intellectual Property rights may be asserted or claimed on any derived material. This means, for example, that if you create some business cards or logos for your club using Agora’s digital assets, you may not copyright or trademark them.
- They may not be associated with ideologies, religions, political parties, or worldviews.

■ **7. Displaying affiliation**

All affiliated clubs need to display their affiliation with the Foundation explicitly. Affiliation with Agora Speakers International can be displayed by including the Agora Speakers logo and optionally a word combination such as “affiliated with” or equivalent. The club name and/or logo must not smaller than the logo of Agora Speakers.

Incorrect



Correct



■ **8. Derived logos**

Agora Speakers International encourages clubs to create club logos derived from the official logo.



The derived logo may not include any elements from other recognizable logos or symbols of any kind.

Not Allowed



Allowed



(Regardless of the legal situation of the other logo, and even if you’re the legal owner or are authorized to use it. “Symbols” here refers to abstract symbols associated with some sort of worldview (political, ideological, or religious) or associated with a different organization. It does not refer to physical entities that have achieved symbolic status such as the Eiffel tower as a symbol of Paris, or the Eagle as a symbol of the US, or Don Quixote as a symbol of Spain)

Not Allowed



Allowed



Affiliation with Agora Speakers International must appear in all communications.

Incorrect



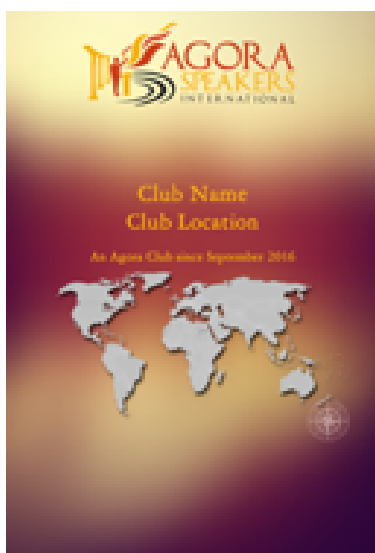
Correct



■ **9. Stationery**

Club Banner

In order to maintain the worldwide consistency of the brand and club presence, any club that wants to have a banner must use the official design and size. Note that it is not mandatory for a club to have a banner in the first place. This requirement only means that if a club wants to have a banner, it has to use the official one.



Club Banner

Clubs may produce the banner locally or buy it from any provider, as long as the quality and materials are similar.

Other Elements

For all other elements (such as business cards, flyers, leaflets, etc.), clubs have complete flexibility in using the suggested templates in

the Brand Portal, tweaking them, or designing new ones altogether, with the following limitations:

- The design must follow the Brand Guidelines and rules for creating materials.
- The design must make it clear that it is a communication or stationery created by a club and that is not an official publication by Agora Speakers International.

■ **10. Publications**

This basic agenda requires at least 8 people, and it has the following roles:

Publications by clubs

Clubs may create all types of publications (books, magazines, brochures, etc.), in any format (digital, print, audio, etc..) provided that:

- The design must follow the Brand Guidelines and rules for creating materials.
- The title and design do not cause confusion with any existing official Agora Speakers International publication.
- No content is reproduced from other publications (including Agora Speakers International publications) without prior written approval.

Allowed



Not Allowed



Title conflict with an official publication



Design conflict with an official publication



Unrelated to our mission

These include, for example:

Official Awards

Official Agora Speakers International Awards and Certificates may only be produced and granted by Agora Speakers International.

Custom Awards

Clubs may create their own certificates, awards, ribbons, and other tokens of recognition, and grant them as they wish, provided that:

- The award refers to an action or milestone that has actually happened and has been completed (i.e., certificates may not be given for “just trying”)
- The award is given for actions related to the mission of Agora Speakers International and consistent with its bylaws.
- The outcome of the actions or milestones depend exclusively on the efforts, skills, and knowledge of the award recipient (meaning: awards may not be given for things that depend on luck or on the intervention of third parties)
- The award is non-discriminatory (meaning that any member can opt for it)
- The award does not have any economic compensation attached to it.
- The design complies with the Brand Guide.
- The award does not replace or overlap an existing official award.
- There’s no confusion that the grantor of the award is the club and not Agora Speakers International.
- There may not be any text or design suggesting that Agora Speakers International endorses these awards or certificates.
- At least the month and year when the award was earned must be present. Exceptionally, for awards that are given only once per year, the month may be omitted.

11. Awards

Awards are any token of recognition given by a club to a person (not necessarily a member) or other organization.



Certificates



Pins



Ribbons



Trophies



Medals



Digital Badges



Examples of Valid Awards

Allowed

(Certificates are used as an example, but the rules apply to all types of awards)



Examples of Invalid Awards

This basic agenda requires at least 8 people, and it has the following roles:

Not Allowed

(Certificates are used as an example, but the rules apply to all types of awards)



12. Merchandising

Clubs are allowed to create and produce locally their own merchandising materials under the following conditions:

- The design must always include the club logo as the most prominent feature. Optionally it may include the Agora Speakers International logo in a less prominent position and with a smaller size.

- The design must follow the Brand Guidelines.
- Merchandising may be sold at prices above the production price, provided that the difference is used exclusively for the same purposes allowed for club funds.
- Merchandising may be sold and shipped worldwide

Example of allowed merchandising:

13. Membership cards

Clubs are allowed to create and produce locally their own membership cards, name tags, and similar, provided that:

- The design must follow the Brand Guidelines.
- The club name and/or club logo must be present.
- The design must make clear that it represents membership in the club.
- The design must not suggest that it is an official membership card of Agora Speakers International.

Allowed




Not Allowed



Allowed





Agora Speakers International is a worldwide nonprofit organization of volunteers, present in over 70 countries, whose goal is helping people improve in their public speaking, communication and leadership skills. If you're involved in any kind of communication with other people, these skills can help you improve a lot both professionally and personally, and will allow you to more easily achieve your dreams. You will also become a leader that has a real, positive impact in the lives of people around you.

We provide a free educational program and a worldwide network of clubs organized and managed by local volunteers. These clubs are a safe, fun, relaxed, friendly and supportive environment for members to learn and practice, starting from the very basics of speaking in front of an audience (even for people who are afraid to speak in front of an audience) to advanced public speaking and business presentations skills.