

**Platform Control**  
by Joe De Rico, ATM  
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One of the most important roles we perform as Toastmasters is that of Toastmaster of the meeting. Not only does this role teach us how to be a master of ceremonies, it also adds cohesion to the meeting and keeps it flowing. A key function of the Toastmaster of the meeting is to control the speaking platform. Here are some things to consider when performing that important duty:

**You are in charge of the Speaking Platform**

Consider yourself a sentry on duty at your post. Do not abandon your "post" until properly relieved. That is, someone should always be at the speaking platform. This becomes a challenge when speakers finish their speeches and are eager to hurry back to their seats. You must lead the applause and reach the speaker before he has a chance to "escape," thus leaving the lectern unattended. As soon as the speaker finishes, start clapping, then return quickly to the podium and firmly shake his hand. Say something nice, then remain on the podium or behind the lectern and clap until the speaker has returned to his seat.

Words such as "nice job," "very nice," "super," "well done," or "that was great" mean a great deal to speakers. Lengthy comments like, "The same things you mentioned in your speech happened to my Aunt Ethel back in 1978 when she lived in Poughkeepsie and we were visiting her for the summer. . . ." are best saved for after the meeting. Remember, when speakers are finished, they want to sit down. Let them.

**Sit Near the Podium**

You will need to get up frequently and with alacrity, and you don't want an awkward delay while you make your way to the front from a distant seat.

**Yield the Lectern when the Speaker Arrives**

When you see the speaker coming, step to the side of the lectern opposite the speaker's approach so that she will already stand behind the lectern when shaking hands with you. This puts the speaker in control, and allows her to begin speaking as soon as you return to your seat.

**Make sure the lectern is free from papers**

Including your notes, when the speaker arrives. Speakers usually scoop up all papers when they leave the platform. It is embarrassing to delay the meeting while you ask the last speaker to look through her notes to find your copy of the meeting agenda. Carry the agenda with you to your seat or tape it to the lectern.

**If the speaker has told you he will not use the lectern, remove it prior to his arrival**

You can replace it while the speaker is returning to his seat.

Proper control of the platform demonstrates polish and skill, and distinguishes you as an accomplished professional.

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