



How to Give Great Toasts

Keep it short. Don't talk about yourself. Skip any tales of humiliation. Ensure you practice!

Being prone to disaster, giving a toast can be a terrifying speech to make. Even Mark Twain, at the height of his fame, confessed that he "was in awful terror" as he climbed onto a table to give a toast.

So here are some tips to giving a great toast:

1. Don't make it about you. You're there to say nice things about others, so do just that. We all crave praise but this isn't the time or place - wait until you get married or die, and then maybe someone will deliver a nice, selfless toast about you.

2. Keep it short. Three minutes is the perfect toast length, and since you're not allowed to talk about yourself, how much is there to say? The moment you go over five minutes, the interior monologue of every brother present is, "Please shut up, please shut up..." Give people the gift of delight by finishing up fast.

3. Embarrassing isn't the same as funny. An embarrassing story can be awkward. The problem is the audience's lack of context. They weren't there with you. Also, the embarrassing story is often the only thing that everyone remembers from the event. Go with short and heartfelt instead.



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4. Use humour not jokes. One of the worst pieces of advice you can get about speaking is, "Start your speech with a joke." Unless you are a professional comedian the chances of people actually laughing at your joke are slim and depending on the joke you may offend someone in the room. Using humour in a speech is something altogether different from telling jokes, and is encouraged. Humour treats things lightly, even serious matters, not to ridicule them, but to keep people from taking themselves too seriously

5. Pick one story, maybe two. Those giving a toast often ramble from one anecdote to the next, turning their speech into a trail mix of stories, frustrating brethren desperate to find a mint. Choose a single theme about your subject and pick a story or two that let you say something amusing or sweet.

6. Write and rehearse. Don't even think about winging it. Write your toast down, then print it on note cards, because when you pull out big sheets of paper people's hearts sink. Practice the toast out loud at least five times in front of your cat (dogs are too easy an audience). You can memorize the speech, but bring your cards anyway—it's easy to go blank in front of friends!

