

QUICK TIPS: MASTER OF CEREMONIES

By Shaila Khan

Information provided by Travis Thibeault (from Bedstone Toastmasters)

Becoming a master of ceremonies for a wedding, isn't a last minute job. Here are some tips on how to do the job effectively and professionally.

- Spend time with the couple. Gather names and other information for your speech well in advance. Make sure you are able to pronounce names properly. The couple will give you an agenda for the evening and a list of speakers but it will be up to you to coordinate the speakers. Since you will also be introducing these speakers, take time to talk to them and get to know them since this will help you prepare proper introductions.
 - At the beginning of your speech, introduce yourself and give a brief overview of the agenda for the event. Guests like to know what to expect.
 - Once the bride and groom arrive and head table is seated, introduce people at the head table from the outside of the table towards the bride and groom on both sides. Introduce the bride and groom last.
 - Before dinner, introduce parents of the couple, out of town guests and special dignitaries. If the majority of guests are from out of town, you may want to skip this portion since you want to avoid lengthy introductions. Also you may want to mention housekeeping details such as washroom locations, fire exits, time the bar will close and so on. The majority of your speech should take place after dinner.
 - Before dinner starts, introduce the person who will be giving grace and ask them to do so.
- If dinner is a buffet, draw or announce table numbers after the head table is served. If dinner is a sit-down style, announce it as so.
- If you like, mention how the bride and groom met, provide some anecdotes in your speech or make some entertaining references to married life. It's always nice if you can include a few words on your behalf to the couple.
 - Separate toasts to the bride and groom can be included. Traditionally the best man gives the toast to the groom and the maid of honour gives a toast to the bride, but this not written in stone. The bride and groom should reply to the toasts, but make sure they are aware of this in advance.
 - Parents can be encouraged to speak as well since this gives them a chance to welcome a new son or daughter into their family. Again make sure they are informed in advance so they won't feel put on the spot.
 - Special announcements can also be made if any guests have anniversaries or birthdays.
 - Announce the cutting of the cake, if there is one and lastly, announce the couple's first dance.
- Try to keep your speech light but if humour is not your style, don't use it. If you feel uncomfortable, your audience will feel it too.

- Enjoy yourself. If you take time to properly prepare, research and rehearse your speech, you will radiate confidence. There is no set format for your speech, and you can include as much information as you want. Be professional and don't hold the guests captive for too long. If you need help preparing your speech, there are some excellent emcee books you can refer to. Professional speaking organizations, such as Toastmasters (www.geocities.com/bedstoneolympics/), are also excellent venues for you to practice your speech. Members of these organizations will offer excellent feedback and tips.

QUICK TIPS: GIVING A TOAST

By Shaila Khan

(Information provided by Travis Thibeault (from Bedstone Toastmasters))

If you are asked to give a toast at a wedding, here are a few tips to help you out. Typically a wedding toast lasts a maximum of three minutes, but these minutes are ones that will forever be in the memories of the bride and groom. Thus make sure you take the time to prepare and practice your toasts.

- Start your toast off by asking the guests to "charge their glasses." (i.e. Fill their glasses)
- There are no set rules as to the format of the toast but let your words come from your heart. Remember whether you are the best man, maid of honour or a family member or friend, you have been asked to perform this special task by the couple. Quality, not quantity is what counts.
- Complete your toast with "Please rise and join in a toast to "person you are toasting".