

## *Mike Wabe - Toastmaster*

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### **So why have a Professional Toastmaster?**

Many people are unsure about what they can expect if they book a Professional Toastmaster. Let me explain the value that a qualified toastmaster really can bring to your Big Day.

### **So what does a Professional Toastmaster actually do at a Wedding?**

In general terms, the Toastmaster will take care of all the ceremonial duties at your Reception and Wedding Breakfast of course - but there is much more.

Basically it is my job to take all the worry about the management of the day off the shoulders of the Bride, particularly her mother, the Bridegroom and their families.

Of course a successful Wedding doesn't just happen - however smooth-running and relaxed the Big Day appears to be, it only happens that way because of the many hours of careful planning that have gone into the preparations. The Professional Toastmaster plays a vital part in this preparation, because on the day it will be the toastmaster who will co-ordinate all of the features of your celebration. He will add just a touch of authority - just enough for everyone to know who is coordinating all aspects of the proceedings and to reassure you and your families that all will go smoothly with nothing being left to chance.

The result of so much planning is that there is a great deal to be supervised on the day. Numerous people have important parts to play - whether caterers, photographer, florists or musicians. That's where I come in: in order that you and your guests are free to enjoy your day, I take responsibility for making sure that everything is in its place and that whatever should happen - happens on time! For example, I will know where the bouquets are being kept and will produce them at just the right moment; I will make all the announcements which are needed to let everyone know what is to happen next; I will ensure that we stick to the timings agreed with the venue (and Chef!); I supervise the safe storage of gifts and cards; I work with your photographer - getting groups together quickly to make sure we complete your 'list'; I escort you and your guests in to your Wedding Breakfast and I make the announcements to your Receiving Line if you decide to have one. And of course, I announce the various pieces of ceremony during the Breakfast itself - whether 'Cutting the Cake' or introducing the speakers and their toasts.

### **Beforehand - getting organised - nothing left to chance!**

I will always meet the Bride and Bridegroom-to-be a month before the Wedding Day. By then, all of the principal arrangements will be in place and thought can be given to the style and formality of the event. Many options will be open to you which will help to shape the celebration - some couples want a no-holds-barred party while others will feel that a quiet gathering will be more their style. A professional toastmaster will reflect those wishes by having had the chance to get to know you and the expectations of your families and friends.

So when I come to meet you, we will chat about your approach to your wedding - together we will complete a Questionnaire which becomes my planner for the Big Day.

Above all it is my job to make sure that you, your families and your friends enjoy the occasion. Our meeting helps me understand the level of formality that you feel to be right but more than that, you

may have a particular request or query - which can lead to an interesting and unique variation from the norm. So together we complete my planner which reflects your wishes in minute detail and covers all the options, such as:

- (If a Civil Wedding, I liaise with the Registrar re timings, announcements etc)
- Arrangements for Photography (I will be helping the photographer by getting the various groups together for pictures to be taken - so I will ask for a copy of your list!)
- Receiving Line?
- Grace?
- Unusual features (for example, diplomatic seating for divorced parents attending)?
- Disabled Guests? (access issues)
- Wedding Book to be circulated?
- Order of Speeches? More than the usual three?
- The Use of Microphones?
- Cake-cutting Ceremony?
- Floral Tributes? Gifts?
- Tossing the Bouquet tradition?
- Evening Entertainment?

### **On the Day...behind the scenes...working with the venue**

The Toastmaster must touch base with everyone involved - the Bride and Bridegroom, the Parents, the Best Man and anyone else who is to give a toast. But many others too.

Much of what I do is behind the scenes: a key task is to keep constant contact with the Catering team - adhering to the timing set for the start of the wedding breakfast is of critical importance to the chef. A signal is agreed with the Banqueting Manager to ensure he or she is ready for each announcement.

The photographer has an important job to do - he gets no second chances - he or she wants to be briefed in advance of each stage of the proceedings - so I only make announcements when everyone is ready.

I arrive at the venue a minimum of 60 minutes before the time set for the Ceremony or Reception. My first task is to check everything:

- (at a Civil Wedding) I meet the Registrar
- the location of emergency exits, washrooms, changing areas
- access for the disabled
- timings with the catering staff between their schedule and my planner
- timings and arrangements with photographers and entertainers
- the location of Table Plan and individual name cards, the position of the Wedding Cake and knife
- the safe storage of gifts and floral tributes
- table settings and favours
- arrangements for the Evening Entertainment
- ...and front of house.

I will:

- meet and greet the Bride and Bridegroom on arrival, welcoming them to the venue
- meet and greet the Families and Guests - offering help with the disabled and giving directions as required

- assist the caterers in ensuring prompt service at the Reception
- if appropriate, assist the Registrar with preparations
- assist the photographer at the Photo-Call - organising wedding party's list of family and guest groups
- place the Receiving Line and Announce the guests
- announce the entrance of the Bride and Bridegroom
- say Grace if appropriate
- announce the Cutting of the Cake - and invite the Guests to take photographs
- introduce the Toasts and Speeches
- help present Gifts and Floral Tributes
- lead the Bride and Groom from the Wedding Breakfast
- announce the time of the Evening Entertainment - and the arrangements for the Guests in the interim
- greet the Guests and the Bride and Bridegroom at the start of the Evening Entertainment
- announce the First Dance and escort the Bride and Groom to the floor and announce their choice of music (please be aware that this is an extra charge)
- and throughout I am available to offer last-minute help - with speeches, as a stand-in photographer and, on occasion, with a safety-pin!

### **Choosing a Professional Toastmaster**

Many are not qualified, but a Professional Toastmaster will undergo continuous training with one of the leading bodies - like the Executive Guild of Toastmasters and Town Criers. Society is changing - some customs are disappearing while others are modified and new and acceptable ways of doing things are always emerging. The EGT, of which I am a member, keeps abreast of the changes in Etiquette and Protocol to ensure that we can give guidance where called upon, on what is thought to be "correct".

So, think about the plans for your day - there will be many arrangements which will need to be managed: this is such an important occasion for the bride and bridegroom and for their families and friends that nothing can be left to chance. A skilled Toastmaster acts with polite authority to coordinate everything - and of course, he always has one eye on his watch.

I will have made sure that I am fully briefed for the occasion, just as you want it. Without making myself too obvious, I will diplomatically guide the party through the day allowing all the plans to unfold smoothly.

Of course, if you have any queries - just call.

Very best wishes

*Mike Wabe - Toastmaster*

Executive Guild of Toastmasters and Town Criers