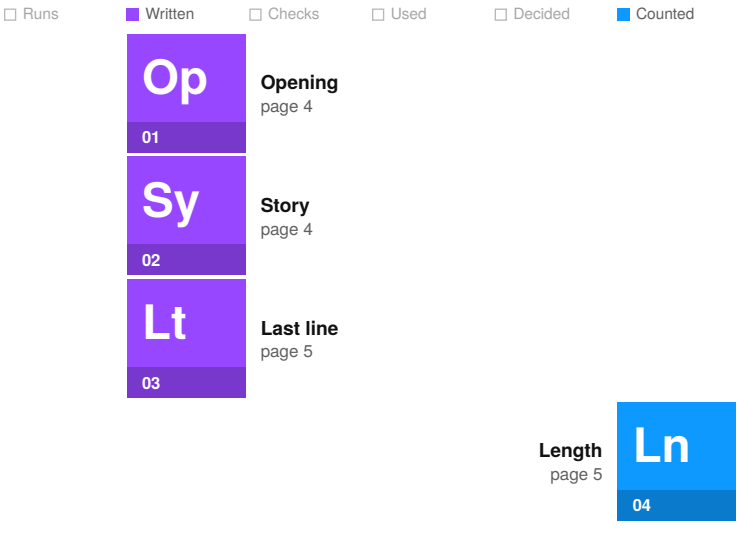
Giving a Toast

A pocket-sized guide to giving a short, warm toast.



My friend has a lot of questions.

What goes in a toast?

A toast needs three things: a quick introduction, one short story or quality and a last line that asks everyone to raise a glass. Keep the whole thing positive and aim for two to three minutes.

Tie what you say to the occasion. Lean toward sentiment at a wedding and toward nostalgia when someone retires.

Opening	Your name and how you know the person you're toasting.
Story	One kind story or quality that everyone can follow.
Last line	An invitation to raise a glass and drink.
Length	Two to three minutes from start to finish.

How does a toast go?

Toasts usually come once drinks are poured, at the start of the meal or just before dessert. A toast then follows six small steps.

Get attention	Stand, lift your glass or wait quietly until people notice. Don’t bang on a glass.
Stand and lift your glass	Stand to signal the start. At a small, informal meal, you can stay seated.
Opening	Say your name and how you know the person you’re toasting.
Story	Tell one short, kind story or describe one positive quality.
Last line	Raise your glass and invite everyone to join you: “To Sam.”
Everyone drinks	Everyone except the person being toasted takes a sip.

Tip. Write a few points on a notecard, then practise the toast out loud. You’ll hear where a sentence is too long before the room does.

Opening

Op
01

Identify by The first sentence after the room goes quiet.

What **The opening is the first thing you say.** Give your name and explain how you know the person you're toasting.

So what **Guests who don't know you can place you straight away.** That makes the story easier to follow.

Field marks

Rule of thumb
Name and connection.

Watch for
Starting the story too soon.

Confused with **Getting attention**
Getting attention comes first and needs no words. The opening begins when you start speaking.

Story

Sy
02

Identify by The one memory or quality you share.

What **The story is one short memory or one positive quality.** Pick something the whole room can follow.

So what **One main idea keeps the toast easy to follow.** A kind story keeps the attention on the person you're toasting.

Field marks

Rule of thumb
One short, positive idea.

Watch for
Inside jokes and private details.

Confused with **Roast**
A roast teases someone for a laugh. A toast celebrates them, so a touch of clean humour is fine, but leave out anything embarrassing or too personal.

Last line

Lt
03

Identify by Your final words with your glass raised.

What **The last line invites everyone to join the toast.** Raise your glass and say something short, such as “To Sam.”

So what **A clear last line tells the room when to drink.** Everyone else raises a glass together.

Field marks

Rule of thumb	Watch for
End with the invitation.	**Forgetting to raise your glass.**

Confused with **Reply**
Your last line invites everyone to drink. The reply belongs to the person being toasted, who smiles, nods or says thank you without drinking to themselves.

Length

Ln
04

Identify by The time from your first word to the raised glass.

What **Length is how long you speak.** Two to three minutes is the aim for a toast you prepare.

So what **A short toast keeps the attention on the person you’re toasting.** Practise out loud to check the time.

Field marks

Rule of thumb	Watch for
Two to three minutes.	**More than one main idea.**

Confused with **Casual toast**
At a casual dinner, a few heartfelt sentences are enough, ending with something like “To our hosts.” Two to three minutes suits a toast you prepare.

What do I leave out?

Inside jokes	Most of the room won't understand them.
Embarrassing stories	Off-limits. The spotlight belongs on the person you're toasting.
Overly personal details	A toast isn't the time to overshare.
Rambling	More than one main idea makes the toast hard to follow.

Common questions

Who goes first?	The host may give the first toast, at a dinner party or a wedding. If the host doesn't, a guest may toast the hosts.
Do I stand?	Stand when you give a toast. You can stay seated at a small, informal meal.
Do I need a drink?	You don't need alcohol. Raise whatever you're drinking. A sip is enough.
What does the person being toasted do?	The person being toasted stays seated and doesn't drink. A smile, nod or thank you is enough.

Sources

These public sources were checked in October 2026.

Toastmasters International, How to Give a Toast
October 2026 · `toastmasters.org/Resources/Public%20Speaking%20Tips/How%20to%20Give%20a%20Toast`

Emily Post Institute, All About Toasting
October 2026 · `emilypost.com/advice/all-about-toasting`

Emily Post Institute, Toasts and Toasting: Tips You Can Use Today
October 2026 · `emilypost.com/advice/toasts-and-toasting-tips-you-can-use-today`

Emily Post Institute, The Groom's Toast
October 2026 · `emilypost.com/advice/the-grooms-toast`

Op Sy Lt Ln

An Accidental Guide to…

Giving a Toast

A pocket-sized guide to giving a short, warm toast.

Written and reviewed by a person. AI does the grunt work. Set in TeX Gyre Heros and Newsreader.

Leave a star: `accidental.info/star`

My friend has a lot of questions.

oops@accidental.info · CC BY 4.0 · October 2026