



Officer Training  
**Tail Twister**

**Meeting Member Needs... Fun, Flexibility & Service**

**Thank you for serving!**

**If you have any questions, please contact your  
District 27-D1 Global Action Team:**

**GLT Lion Tony Sobczak [tonysobczak@yahoo.com](mailto:tonysobczak@yahoo.com)  
GMT Lion Adam Crowson [adam.Crowson@gmail.com](mailto:adam.Crowson@gmail.com)  
GST Lion Bruce Voight [bfvoight@gmail.com](mailto:bfvoight@gmail.com)**

# Tail Twister

A Resource Guide for the Tail Twister



**Lions Want to Have Fun**

## History of the Tail Twister

Having fun while doing good has been a Lions specialty from the beginning.

In the early 1920s, many U.S. clubs had pep committees charged with enlivening routine club meetings. Lions soon entrusted the merrymaking function to a single energetic and enthusiastic officer, known as the Tail Twister.

Students of Tail-Twisting lore will find rich veins of anecdote and remembrance among longtime Lions and, also in Lions publications.

How did the name Tail Twister come about? *The World's Biggest Doers*, a 1949 history of the Lions, described this origin story, as recounted by Lions founder Melvin Jones:

"One Sunday afternoon three or four of us were discussing this matter of putting pep into the meetings. One fellow who had been born on a farm said we needed to do what used to be done on the farm. When a cow refused to go through the gate, someone would grab her by the tail and twist. We all laughed, but one of the boys said, 'Why isn't that a good name—tail twister?'"

The fact that lions—*real* lions—also have tails gave the name another amusing twist.

Now optional for all Lions clubs, the role of Tail Twister had been an established office under charter bylaws for decades. But as a 1941 article in *LION Magazine* made clear: "Of all the officers in the club, he [the Tail Twister] has no rigid code, no well-defined plan of action. He must be a Lion of originality."

Indeed, Tail Twisters have been remarkably creative in promoting fun and fellowship and boosting club treasuries by "twisting" small fines from members for minor breaches of club rules, such as not wearing a nametag or talking during a guest speaker's presentation.

The fines system is both autocratic and democratic. No member can appeal a Tail Twister's levy, and no member is above paying it.

"President Westfall Fined on Southern Trip," ran a banner headline over a full-page story in the April 1927 issue of *LION Magazine*. While visiting the Columbia Lions Club in South Carolina, USA, International President William Westfall forgot his Lions pin when changing "from his train clothes to his speaking clothes." An alert Tail Twister named Goldschmidt spotted Westfall's bare lapels and fined him 10 cents, the going rate for such infractions in the 1920s.

Contests, quizzes, brainteasers, jokes, lighthearted songs and poems are time-tested tools of the tail-twisting trade. Today's practitioners can find and share fresh material on several club websites and on a Tail Twister page on Facebook.

Concepts of humor do not always transfer across different cultures and times, and that has led to a gradual decline in the tail-twisting tradition as Lions have expanded around the world. But every day in countless other ways—from pancake breakfasts to picnics with needy kids to big parades at convention time—Lions still know how to have fun.

**Effective Tail Twisting** – There is fine line between entertaining and being obnoxious. How to compliment the event, add humor, and keep Lions in line without being offending. Guaranteed to put a smile on your face and thoughts with ideas to share with others.

## FUNCTIONS & DUTIES OF THE “TAIL TWISTER”

A lively Tail Twister can have an uplifting effect on the club meetings. The Tail Twister can also assist the President with keeping the meeting moving and not getting stalled. In many instances, the success, or failure of a meeting may —hinge directly on the lively imagination and creativity of a good Tail Twister

### DUTIES OF A TAIL-TWISTER

**1. INSTILL ENTHUSIASM & GOOD FELLOWSHIP AT MEETINGS.** You are probably aware that one of the main reasons we lose members is long boring meetings. It is, of course, up to the president and speaker chair to make sure the meetings are productive and interesting. However, the tail twister is also responsible to make sure every meeting is interesting and fun. Below are several suggested activities for adding enthusiasm and good fellowship at meetings. I am sure you will come up with even more activities for your club. We also lose members be-cause of lack of involvement and lack of recognition and again, we will see that the tail-twister can provide solutions to these situations.

**2. PROMOTE HARMONY.** Other than in the musical sense, “harmony” is defined as “agreement, concord, to fit together”. The job of the tail-twister is to make sure all lions feel they are part of the club. Some suggestions....

- Have a mystery greeter. After the meeting starts – have the mystery greeter announce who did not shake his/her hand. Anyone named is fined. For a variation on the mystery greeter – appoint two of them. It is fun when they each name the other lion for not shaking their hand.
- Make sure your lions do not always sit together. There are several ways to overcome this problem:
- Simply fine members who always sit together
- Use a deck of cards and have lions select a card as they come into the room. Have signs on the tables and all the “aces” sit together at this table, all the “twos” here, etc.
- Another way is to have numbered cards at each place and have lions draw a number on the way in. That is where they sit for that night.

*Remember, that we all have special friends in our club, and do want to sit with them – on the other hand, it is important to sit with and get to know other lions in the club. Try to strike a balance with sitting with old friends or sitting in a new spot. I have found that once every 3rd or 4th meeting it is OK to mix up the seating.*

- Answering a cell phone, texting, or talking during a meeting is poor manners – yet there are lots of lions who do it. You can fine them. Don’t make a big deal about being rude – just fine them for interrupting the meeting.
- Sometimes there are legitimate reasons for late arrivals – your job as tail-twister is to make light of it – perhaps suggest who are we going to talk about now?? However, even a small fine might make them think twice be-fore they do it again.
- Recall the definition of harmony – to fit together – to make sure all lions, especially new lions, feel part of the club. The tail-twister has a great opportunity to get a new lion or quiet person involved. Occasionally, “deputize” that lion for the evening and have him/her assist you with the running of an activity, the collection of fines, etc.

**3. REWARD EXTRA EFFORT.** The tail-twister has the unique opportunity to reward extra effort by club members. For example, our club was doing a community BBQ and a lady came along and asked how much the hot dogs were. She was obviously not well off – and opened her purse and started counting out the change – a dime, a quarter, ....she was not sure if she had enough. One of our lions

reached into her purse, took out the \$4, put it in the till, and told the lady to put her money away as the hot dog and drink was her treat. As tail-twister, at our next meeting, I gave that lion a fine-exemption card for the next 6 months - a reward for extra effort! Fine exemption cards are easy to print off on your computer. A variation on the fine exemption card is a pass-it-on card. This card allows the lion getting the fine to pass the fine on to any other lion in the room (tail-twister included!). Also, keep an eye on the local papers for any lion recognized in the paper. You could share this information with your fellow lions.

**4. IMPOSE AND COLLECT FINES.** At some of the clubs I have been to, the tail-twister simply walks around and collects money - in some cases, without even giving a reason for a fine. The job of the tail-twister is **not to collect money** – it is to install enthusiasm and good fellowship, promote harmony and reward special effort. It is a bonus if some funds are added to the administration account at the end of the meeting – but contrary to popular belief, that is not the main purpose of a tail-twister.

If your Club has a maximum fine amount – know what it is. However, you can also leave it up to the lion to put in what they feel the infraction is worth. If questioned how much they should pay – just reply “from 5 cents to a dollar, whatever you feel that infraction is worth.”

**5. BOARD OF DIRECTORS.** It is up to your club if the tail-twister, along with the lion tamer, are members of the Board of Directors for the club. This is optional according to LCI. The position of tail twister may be an appointed or elected position. He/she may do the job for one year – or several years – again, it is up to the club.

## **LIONS INTERNATIONAL SAYS:**

TAIL TWISTER – The Tail Twister is an officer and the “pep master” of his/her Lions Club. The duties are to instill enthusiasm and good fellowship in the meetings and to keep harmony. The Tail Twister is empowered to impose, as well as collect, fines from the members. There shall be no appeal from his/her decision in imposing a fine, and he/she may not be fined except by the unanimous vote of the members present ( *remember, the Tail Twister is also a member with a vote and can require matching fine from all members if he/she is fined*).

The **good** tail twister keeps an alert eye on the head table **during the entire meeting** and **avoids letting his/her tail twisting activities interfere** at any time with the progress of the meeting.

Know your crowd-use diplomacy. There is a time to be serious and respectful of others! Ask for a donation not a fine. Must be fun!

## **GETTING STARTED:**

The tail twister performs one of the most important functions of a club. When guests leave a meeting, it is the tail twister that they will remember.

The Lion President is important in keeping the meeting on track, but it is cooperation with the tail twister that will make the meetings great.

When you attend a club meeting and there is an atmosphere of fellowship and good cheer, chances are that the tail twister has done his/her planning and is hard at work. If the club has a good tail twister, he/she will see to it that there is plenty of laughter and good cheer.

The tail twister must generate fun and prevent meetings from becoming boring.

It is important to know what the rules are in your club. How much are the fines? Your members should plan to bring coins or bills for your antics. IOU's are usually accepted. Protocol would be that guests (including the District Governor) are not fined. If you intend to fine a guest or DG in fun, consider supplying them with proper change in advance of the meeting or that a Lion sitting next to them provides the change. Most clubs set an upper limit of fining for each meeting. Be sure you know how long you have for Tail Twisting at each meeting and where you fit on the agenda. Communicate with the President in advance.

Don't forget that you can move a meeting along by fining a member who goes on too long, including the

President. You may fine members that are late (*but don't discourage them from attending*) or don't bring vests, pins, and so on. Try to fine each member at least once every two to three meetings. No sense overlooking anyone – they may feel left out. Find a fun container to use for collection of funds. Funds collected at each meeting (and the IOU's) go to the Club Treasurer. Remember, the money you collect goes to the club's Administrative fund, so your creativity during the year in collecting the fines will help your club.

### **Do's**

- Demand respect! Demand it from everyone! Use fines, or whatever tactic is necessary.
- Keep fines at a reasonable amount.
- Have a no change policy. What you get is what you keep. (unless you agree otherwise-use good judgement)
- Use your position to keep the meetings interesting.
- Use your position to maintain order.
- Use your position to keep the meetings —on track.
- Be the center of attention.
- Collect fines to help build the administrative fund (the tail twister is an important fundraiser).
- Be polite, be pleasant, and have fun.
- Promote fun
- Be creative
- Be professional
- Fine members who do not wear Lion vest/emblem/pin.
- Do fine members who are unruly, disrespectful, or holding —private meeting.

### **Don't**

- Never embarrass anyone.
- Do not tell jokes
- No private fines-all fines are public.
- Do not fine guests including guest speaker, DG or ID.
- Do not interrupt the President or the ongoing program.
- Do not make an issue out of a member who does not want to pay a fine. (Take IOU's)
- Do not make anyone feel uncomfortable.
- Do not make members feel unwelcome.

## **IDEAS FOR PEPPING UP MEETINGS:**

**HAPPY DOLLAR** – Allow some time for Lions to contribute a dollar and brag about themselves, their kids, grandkids and so on. Its 30 seconds of advertising for \$1. Be sure to fine them if they go on too long.

**AUCTIONS** – Have auctions to help raise funds for the club. Don't take too long. Something quick and fun. Maybe folks pay NOT to get the item.

**LOUDER & FUNNER** – Announce one meeting in advance that a prize will be given to the member who wears the loudest tie and present a novelty tie for the prize. This stunt helps attendance and goes over big!

**SALUTE THE FLAG** – Most clubs use the Pledge of Allegiance as part of their program. Have Tail Twister pass around and ask each member who wrote it and when. Francis Bellamy wrote it in August 1892, in Rome, New York for a public-school celebration. Fine those who fail. Use this idea for other historic events.

**HISTORIC OR LIONS EVENTS** – The same idea as above, using other events. By using Lions information, you can educate the club as well. The Lions Orientation Guide is a good source of information, as is *The Lion* magazine.

**NEWS OF THE DAY** – Club President appoints a different member each week to stand and ask another member of his/her selection two questions pertaining to the news of the day. If he/she answers both questions, the member asking pays the fine. If he/she can't answer, then they pay the fine. Trick is for the first member to try and pick the right party.

**CAN YOU SPELL?** – Have a spelling bee. Invite 4 or 5 school children about 11 to 12 years of age and put them in a spelling bee with members. It is fun and the members seldom win.

**KANGAROO COURT** – Appoint a lawyer and prosecutor and try different members for the following: A strictly cash man for giving credit to one having no visible means of support; a Jew for eating pork; a member for being in the news; any other ideas that will conform with your members and be of local interest. The more dramatic and comedy effects, the better. Trump up any charge that is funny.

**TIT FOR TAT** – Arrange with a neighboring club to exchange meetings. The other club comes to your meeting and their entire staff of officers takes over and runs the meeting in their own way. The other club does everything such as bringing their own speaker, stunt man, song leader, etc. When your club visits them, your officers take over in a similar manner. This gives two wonderful meetings as each club tries to outdo the other!

**MYSTIC TRIANGLE** – Create a special purpose for the Mystic Triangle Club. Maybe they worked on a project, or other event. Maybe they have graduates or grandkids, whatever. Provide a special recognition that they must bring to each meeting for a length of time (4 meetings)— something fun and embarrassing, if possible. If they miss a meeting or fail to bring their recognition, they are fined. Have others sing to them or find some fun way to keep the club going.

**FLUXE** – When a members birthday falls during the week, serve them a special meal at the meeting or provide special recognition. Then fine them for taking up too much club meeting time.

**LIMERICKS** – Pass out paper and pencils before dinner and announce that everyone is to compose limericks. Read the following examples and then start them on their own. They have until after the meal to finish. Winner is one who writes best limerick as judged by the Vice-Presidents. Winner gets a free meal. A free meal each week is a good idea to promote attendance.

**WELCOME FRIENDS** – When the guests are being introduced, be sure to do it in this manner: —And now, we have a guest from New York City, Howard Jones. All members shout, —Hi, Howard! Be sure to mention their names last in the introduction. Fine members who are too loud, too soft, or too annoying.

**SPELLING FOR THE DOUGH** – Sell sheets of paper and pencil as an entry fee for 25 to 50 cents. Each writes their name at the top of a sheet. Now read the following list and have members spell out on their paper:

Recommend, Accommodate, Vilify, Innuendo, Inoculate, Desiccate, Piccalilli, Supersede, Repellent, Embarrass, Harass, Diminutive, Separate, Picnicking, Irascible, Rhythm, Chinquapin, Rarefy.

They're not easy! After list is read, they exchange paper and correct as you give correct spelling. An erasure counts as a mistake. Each word correctly spelled counts 10 points. One with highest score wins one-half entry fee money while rest goes in the kitty. It's fun!

**DEAF & DUMB** -After eating, have members be entirely silent for five minutes. They can use signs, make notes, or express themselves anyway silently. No talking, not even to the waiter. Blow whistle to start and stop the period. Fine those who break the silence.

**GOOD OLD DAYS** -Call on Past Presidents to tell the most important thing that happened while they were in office. Vary by asking most amusing thing. Lots of fun and good for club. Makes old veterans work harder!

**HONOR THE VETERANS** – Place members who have been Lions for 10, 15, 20 years at the head table. Have them give a short talk, sing a song, or tell a story. This is appreciated, as they feel they are looked up to, as they should be.

**GOON SQUAD** – Pre-arrange with a small member of your club to have his pockets full of pennies. They will refuse to pay their fine. Arrange for 2 large members of your club, known as the GOON SQUAD, upon whom you can call when a member refuses to pay his fine. They turn the non-paying Lion upside down and shake all the pennies out on the floor, as a warning to other slow payers that they had BETTER PAY UP OR ELSE!

**NECKTIE CLIPPING** – This one should be pre-arranged with a member to wear an old necktie and upon his refusal to pay his fine, the Tail Twister takes out a pair of scissors and in a simulated struggle, the Tail Twister cuts off the offending Lions necktie.

**SUGGESTION** – occasionally, if a member is clever enough to out-smart you, and in doing so, provides laughter and entertainment for the other members of the club, pay him a dime out of the Tail Twister 's Fine Pot!

**GAG BUSTERS** – Tell several members a week in advance they will be called on to get up and tell a joke. This gives them a chance to prepare. If they don't have a joke ready, they are fined. Use



five or six a meeting. This is a help to attendance. Warn them to keep the jokes clean. Maybe have a vote for the best joke. Fine the —losers||, then fine the winner for obviously bribing the club.

**CONFUSION PLUS** – President introduces speaker of the evening and announces the subject. Program Chair rises and says it his job to get the speaker and he has one present who he introduces and announces his subject! An argument ensues, after which the Program Chair says that if this is the way the club is going to be run, he resigns. President begs him not to do that, saying he is a wonderful chair and that the club needs him. They finally decide to let both speakers talk five minutes. Secretary now rises and says they haven't the time for both speakers. So, it is decided they will both talk at the same time. They do this! It is very confusing and funny, if they have different subjects of opposite nature. Of course, all is cooked up beforehand by the persons involved.

**POKER DERBY** – Get two decks of cards – one red, one blue. Have your best auctioneer take blue deck and auction it off. First, one card at a time, then in pairs, trios, and hands of five. Get as much as possible out of the cards! DO NOT TELL members what you are going to do and say that someone is going to win something very nice; in fact, six are going to win! After auction, divide the money in half. One-half will be divided into six parts – three big prizes and three small prizes.

The other deck is now shuffled, and three cards drawn and placed face down on table. Shuffle again and draw three more and place under the first three. Turn up first card in top row for first prize, second card for second prize, etc. The three bottom cards are the consolation prize, which is divided in three parts of 10 cents, 5 cents and 2 cents. Be sure to make the first prizes attractive! This can also be repeated at other meetings to raise funds for different things. It goes better the second time, as they know what is coming! They really go for it! It's fun and it raises money!

**Use these ideas and others to create a fun, entertaining and profitable meeting.**

- Happy dollars
- Bragging Bucket (limit time)
- Ask about —membership car
- If you weigh more/or less than drivers license, pay donation.
- On drivers license what color is bald?
- Have a secret greeter or mystery lion
- Year became lion
- No nail polish-donation
- Picture in paper-donation
- Not wearing lion pin.
- Auction —No fine card and —pass it on card
- If on trip and don't send postcard to club-donation.
- Not wearing lions vest.
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**A GOOD TAIL TWISTER KNOWS** when to stop & not push his/her luck too far!

### More Ideas

- Set aside 10 minutes in every meeting to conduct tail twisting duties.
- Cut out news articles and read at meeting inserting a member's name.
- Fine members for being in a media article and not mentioning that they are a Lion
- Fine members who go on vacation trips and do not send a postcard to the club.
- Fine members when they get their picture in the newspaper or newsletter (unless they mention they are a Lion)
- Auction monthly a —fine free card which allows the member holding the card not to be fined for one month.
- Auction monthly a —pass it on card that allows the holder of the card to pass a fine on to anyone he chooses in the club.
- Have a —secret greeter that identifies those members who did not shake hands with him/her at the beginning of the meeting.
- Give a question out at the end of each meeting related to Lions and then have a verbal quiz on the answer at the next meeting.
- Some clubs collect a fine from every member automatically. Whatever members want to contribute. Do not make an issue out of the amount.
- Fine members who tell a —bad joke (your judgment)

**LION TAIL TWISTER HAVE A GOOD TIME THIS YEAR PROMOTING GOOD,  
CLEAN FELLOWSHIP AT YOUR CLUB MEETINGS!**

