

Moderator Tips

As a panel moderator, you can help make the panel focused and fun.

Before the Panel

- Prepare some questions/topics to keep the panel going if conversation lags.
- Meet briefly with the other panelists in the Green Room to talk about a general approach for the panel and a mutual understanding of the topic. (Don't get too detailed or you risk losing spontaneity.)
- If you're not sure, determine whether you are a member of the panel or whether you're there primarily to ensure that the other panelists stay on track.

During the Panel

- Start the panel after you are sure that a substantial number of the audience are in place. Introduce the panelists or have them introduce themselves, perhaps asking them to relate (briefly!) their interest in or experience with the topic.
- Briefly outline the topic of the panel for the audience.
- Make sure all panelists get a fair chance to speak. This might involve drawing out a quiet panelist, or occasionally cutting off a garrulous one for the good of the panel. (Try humor first, confrontation last.)
- Unless the topic is going nowhere, prevent the discussion from drifting away from the topic. No matter how interesting a newer topic might be, remember that people have come expecting to hear a discussion of the listed topic.
- Allow time for questions from the audience towards the end of the panel, but don't let individual questioners monopolize the panel. (Again, this might involve cutting people off but is for the good of the panel.) Don't move to questions too quickly: the panelists are on the program item because they are considered to have some expertise or interest in the topic and to be able to talk about it intelligently or amusingly (or both!)
- If you are in a large room, repeat questions from the audience so everyone in the room knows what was asked.
- If there are as many people in the audience as on the podium, make sure that you are covering topics that the audience wants to hear about. Ask them.

Logistics

- Please don't add anyone to the panel without confirming the addition with Program Operations (even if the person swears it's ok).
- Bring the panel gracefully to a close once your friendly neighborhood Program Operations volunteer flashes the "5 MINUTES" sign, and please be finished completely by the time s/he returns with the STOP sign.
- Please don't linger after the panel, and discourage other panelists from doing so, so that the next panel can start on time. If people want to communicate with the panelists, please encourage them to do so outside.