

Moderator Guidance

Successfully moderating a panel requires some advance work. Read on for guidance on the moderator's role and key tips.

The Role of the Moderator

- Opens and closes the panel, and facilitates discussion among the panelists and with the audience. Moderators can introduce each panelist, or ask them to introduce themselves (in 30 seconds).
- Keeps the panel on time (giving equal time to speakers and saving time for audience questions), balancing the desires of the speakers and audience.
- Helps the audience make sense of what the panelists say, highlighting themes and connecting the dots.

Tips for Managing Time

- Announce time limits to the audience. (You or the organizer should have already communicated them to panelists in advance).
- Politely announce what you want to happen, rather than trying to be subtle.
- Leave sufficient time for discussion among the panelists and with the audience.

Tips for Encouraging Discussion

- Limit the use of slides; in most panels, the focus should be on the discussion.
- Frame the panel with a clear, specific question rather than a vague, open-ended topic. Consider ways to structure the discussion.
- Start off with broader, easier questions; ask about overall importance, benefits, and risks. Then get into the details with more difficult questions such as "what if..." or "why is (or isn't) that the case?"

Tips for Managing Questions

- Reserve time for questions from the audience. Decide in advance when you're taking questions.
- Ask the questioner to state their name and affiliation. Repeat the question before directing it to a speaker.
- If a question is long or unclear, ask speakers to give just one example. Break a long question into two, or rephrase.
- If the questioner gives a long-winded statement, politely interrupt and ask for their question.

Sources Include:

[The Eloquent Woman's Guide to Moderating Panels](#), Denise Graveline
[How to Be A Great Moderator](#), Guy Kawasaki
[How to Successfully Moderate a Conference Panel](#), Jeremiah Owyang