

# Guidelines for Moderators & Session Chairs



Your role is to guide participants to ensure your session is inclusive, engaging and memorable. These simple guidelines are designed to help you manage a successful session.

## Plan ahead

Envisaging how you'd like the session to run is an important part of your preparation. Plan for the outcomes you'd like to see. Put yourself in the shoes of your delegates and think about how you'd like them to feel after your session and work back.

## Open with clarity

Remind the audience of the key themes of the session. Outline your expectations, share the broad structure and be sure to mention what time the session ends (especially important if you start late).

Avoid asking your panellists to introduce themselves. Instead, share two or three key points about each of them as part of your opening.

## Stay on theme

It's natural that discussions will deviate from the theme. In fact, digressions are important to acknowledge and explore, but always be aware of the core topic and, if you need to, remind participants of the session aims of to help them stay on track.

Consider yourself as a curator of the subject matter, gently steering the audience back to the theme, if they begins to drift from it.

**You might say: 'That's a very interesting angle, however it's moving us slightly off topic so let's park it for now'.**

**Or: 'If we had longer session it'd be great to explore this more, but we've only got 10 minutes left, so we might have to continue it later over a coffee'.**

## Be flexible

Be prepared for the unexpected. Live events have a life and energy of their own and there are certain things you can't control.

Don't over plan. Sticking rigidly to a concrete plan can stifle a session. And, if something unexpected does happen, a flexible mind-set will allow you to adapt, without raising your stress levels.

**You might say: 'We'd planned for 20 minutes of Q&A, but we're going to have to reduce that to 10'.**

## Stay on time

There's obviously a limit to what each session can cover and it's very important that the overall symposium runs to time. Your audience will have a packed agenda so avoid overrunning, even by a minute.

Be wary of any one person, group or question absorbing too much time. Remind the room of the time constraints if longer debates begin to emerge, and encourage your audience to continue the discussion later.

**You might say: 'It's important that we hear as many points of view as possible within the time we've got, so let's move on.'**

### Stay on time (continued)

When groups share outputs from breakout discussions, be very clear about what you want them to report back on. Too much detail from any one group risks disengaging the rest of the audience and impacting your timings.

**You might say: 'Can you share just the three key points from your table so that there's enough time to hear from all our groups'**

Finally, remember to leave a few minutes to summarise your session.

### Take questions from a wide range of delegates

We're lucky enough to have a hugely diverse audience in attendance. Ensure that you engage as broad a spectrum of inputs as possible, to reflect that diversity.

Try to take the opening question from a woman. Research [shows](#) if women are given the opportunity to ask the first question, more women will subsequently contribute.

### Moderating Panel Discussions

The main role of a moderator is to ensure that each panel member gets equal time to provide his or her views on a particular topic. But you must also ensure the audience stays engaged and interested by maintaining the pace and energy of the discussion.

Intervene if one panellist is taking the majority of the time, offering too much detail, or if the general conversation is veering off topic. You need to be firm but fair.

**You might say: 'Thanks, that's really detailed but let's hear what the other panellists have to add on this'.**

A panel where everyone mildly agrees can be as disengaging as one that rambles. Don't be afraid to call on members of the panel with alternative viewpoints to force a deeper exploration of the issues you're discussing.

**You might say: 'That's obviously one approach to this challenge. But I know that (Panellist Name) has a slightly different view on this that we should hear about'.**

### Summarise

Make sure that you allow time for closing remarks. Reflection and revision help cement content in the minds of your audience.

If your session has raised new ideas or alternative viewpoints, try to acknowledge them in your summary and encourage delegates to continue the conversation. And be sure to thank everyone for their input.

Finally, don't miss an opportunity to point-out other sessions that compliment yours.

# Energisers

You may need to warm up the audience attending an early session, or energise a room post-lunch. Here we've listed a number of simple and quick energisers that might help you out.



## 1. It's all in the hips

Ask all participants to stand up, put their hands on their hips, and spell out the letters of their name using their hips. Expert version: Use cursive!

## 2. Invisible ball

Toss an imaginary ball across the room. People need to catch it and throw it as quickly as possible.

## 3. The limb-shake countdown

Begin counting while shaking a limb each time. So shake your left leg counting 1-2-3-4-5, then your right leg 1-2-3-4-5, then your left arm 1-2-3-4-5, then your right arm 1-2-3-4-5. The next time you count to 4, then 3, then 2 and 1, getting faster and faster with each round.

## 4. Neighbour to neighbour

Turn to your neighbour and introduce yourself by telling them your favourite season and why. Or pick a favourite anything to share; your favourite movies, candies, pop songs, or cities.

## 5. Whispering words

The aim here is to for everyone to shout the same word at the end of the exercise. People begin by whispering a word, it could be any word they like. They then say it a little louder, then louder, then louder again all the while adapting the word to try and match what's being said around them. The very last time, on the count of three everyone aims to shout the same word.

## 6. Heads & tails

The aim is to be the last person standing. Ask everyone in the room to select either heads or tails by placing their hands on their heads or on their hips (for tails). Then toss a coin. Those that guessed wrong sit down, and those that guessed right remain standing and get to play for another coin toss. Keep asking them to select heads or tails until there's one lucky winner left.

## 7. The counting challenge

This energiser tests concentration and coordination:

Round 1: Participants count to three: 1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2-3.

Round 2: Participants now count to three but swap the '1' for a hand-clap. This gets a bit harder!

Round 3: Participants again count to three using a clap for '1' but now swap a finger-click for '2'. This gets more challenging and requires even more focus.

Round 4: Participants now count to three using a clap for '1', a finger-click for '2' and a stomp of their foot for '3'. As the pace of the counting increases people find it harder to keep up.

**Feel free to use and of your own tried and tested energisers, and of course share them with your co-moderators.**