



HOW TO BE A GREAT MODERATOR

Moderators: Someone who presides over a debate or discussion

Moderators of panel discussions play a critical role in determining the effectiveness of continuing education sessions. Speakers may draw the audience but how the moderator orchestrates the session can make the difference between an event that is mediocre and one that is exciting, engaging and productive for both audience and panelists. Making sure the panel discussion is enjoyable and effective requires advanced preparation.

The Moderator has 4 roles: planner, stage-setter, facilitator and time-keeper

Below are a few tips:

<p>Tip #1</p>	<p>Research your topic Familiarize yourself with the topic before the event and be prepared with questions that can “stir up the pot”. Try to come up with current controversies or issues you know the audience will be thinking about.</p>
<p>Tip #2</p>	<p>Know your panelists Have a discussion with all the panelists together before the event (if feasible) about what you want to create i.e. a lively audience discussion offering as many opportunities as possible for the audience to ask questions and for all of the speakers to respond. Hopefully debates between speakers will also occur adding more to the energy and interest in the room. Outline coverage of the topic, set the agenda and define how the session will flow. Spending this time will help speakers feel more relaxed which in turn will relax the audience and make for a more informal and enjoyable experience.</p>
<p>Tip #3</p>	<p>Know your audience Set expectations for audience participation and questions. You can provide index cards to members of the audience for them to write their questions as they are listening to each speaker. This will allow more people to articulate their thoughts and questions and increase the likelihood of greater variety and volume of questions asked. Consider using a runner to bring questions to the podium. Technology can also be used to poll the audience and asks questions (e.g. twitter.com and www.polleverywhere.com)</p>

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<p>Tip #4</p>	<p>Introductions Welcome the panel and introduce the panelists BUT rather than reading long lists of accomplishments and qualifications – have each speaker introduce themselves in 30 seconds. Make an enthusiastic statement yourself about your interest in the topic and your intention to keep the discussion lively, informative and engaging.</p>
<p>Tip #5</p>	<p>Prepared questions Use your prepared questions to set the tone as the audience collects their thoughts about questions they would like to have answered. Look at the panel, ask a question and then look at the audience in order to encourage the panel to speak directly to the audience, not the moderator.</p>
<p>Tip #6</p>	<p>More questions Have more questions than you need and prioritize questions according to what the audience wants to learn. Based on the panelists’ background, try to sprinkle equal number of questions to each one giving them all equal opportunities to speak. Give your panelists the okay to speak out of turn and respond honestly to each other and not just you, the moderator.</p>
<p>Tip #7</p>	<p>Involve the audience Remember that panel discussions are regarded as an opportunity for active involvement of the audience and therefore at least 25% of the time allocated needs to be questions from the audience. If you have used question cards and demonstrate an attitude that emits a sense of confidence and informality, there should be plenty of questions to fill the time. In case there is a lull, use more of the questions you have prepared yourself or consider creating a controversial question to the audience that will encourage them to vote for one side or another. The panelists can then share their view on the controversy.</p>
<p>Tip #8</p>	<p>Integrate questions from the audience and panelist discussion Listen carefully to the panelists and tie in what they say to questions from the audience. You may need to re-focus the topic if a panelist is going off topic or repeat the question at hand for the next panelist.</p>
<p>Tip #9</p>	<p>Panelist who does not share the time It is the moderator’s role to ensure that all speakers have equal time. If someone is taking up more than their share, interrupt respectfully. “I am just going to you to pause for a moment and ask the other panelists to comment on what is being said.”</p>

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Tip #10	Member of audience “posing” A panel discussion can be tricky in terms of managing the audience. There are some participants who simply like the attention and being able to stand in front of a microphone. There are others who would like to ask a question but feel intimidated. Again – acknowledge the contribution of the person asking the question (or stating their opinion) and ask others in the audience to comment.
Tip #11	Time-keeping Keep a close eye on time – do not allow speakers to go beyond the allotted time – this is an opportunity for the audience to learn and asking questions is vital.
Tip #12	Summarize the key points and what you personally are taking away from the discussion.
Tip #13	Thank the audience and than the panelists.

For a helpful description of the multiple roles a moderator is expected to assume go to:

<http://www.masshightech.com/stories/2004/07/26/focus5-Avoiding-event-agony-The-roles-of-a-good-moderator.html>

YouTube Playlist

There are several YouTube videos available on moderator skills. Here are some we recommend:

Tips for Panel Moderators NAWMBA YouTube pod cast 1, 2 and 3

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4WUxU-ZI9dc>

How to Be a Rock Star Panel Moderator

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j1ZfMJCCA9Y>

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