

A Guide to Moderating StokerCon Panels

Greetings and welcome to this brief guide on moderating panels for StokerCon.

Before the Panel

- **Connect with your panelists**

- It is helpful to contact your panelists ahead of time. Often a simple email will suffice to ensure open communication. This is a good time to assess any questions and/or special needs.
 - Don't assume everyone is experienced and comfortable
 - First-time panelists may need additional guidance and may not be comfortable or know what questions to ask
 - Ensure all panelists feel welcome and know their participation and input is valued. First time panelists or people on a panel with more well-known authors or Guests of Honor may feel intimidated; moderators should make all panelists know their inclusion on a panel is because their insights are wanted.
 - Ask panelists if any accommodations are necessary. This can range from crafting ways to alleviate anxiety (perhaps working on speaking order or a specific seating arrangement) or accommodating disabilities (such as a wheelchair). Feel free to contact Con organizers for help with accommodations. The registration desk at StokerCon is the best place to find information and volunteers.
 - Some panels may discuss or touch on personal and/or sensitive topics; ensure all panelists are comfortable and you understand any possible off-limits discussions/questions

- **Prepare and share questions and topics with panelists ahead of time**

- Sharing sample questions or topics with panelists in advance helps them to be prepared for the discussion. Moderators do not necessarily need to share the exact questions they will ask, but should be clear enough to help panelists prepare for the direction of the discussion. This is also a good time to ensure panelists are comfortable with the questions and have a chance to request changes if needed, or even suggest topics or questions they would like to address during the panel.
- Moderators should also prepare by researching the topic and making sure to familiarize themselves with their panelists' work as best as they can. This ensures moderators are equally prepared and have insight into what each panelist brings to the discussion.

During the Panel

- **Manage time**
 - Panelist introductions at the start of the panel should be brief. Whether the moderator introduces panelists or panelists introduce themselves, we recommend sticking to short, two sentence bios that connect the author to the panel somehow. There's no need to read everyone's full bio. Moderators can direct audience members to either look at panelist Sched profiles or web presences for more detailed bio information.
 - Every panelist should have a chance to answer questions and share insight. (After all, that's why they're there, of course!) Keep tabs on the time and be aware when a panel member may have spoken a little too long and/or if another panel member hasn't had a chance to speak. As moderator, feel empowered to interject if a panelist is dominating speaking time.
 - (Example of a polite way to phrase this: Can I interrupt briefly - you are making an interesting/important point, let's hear how some of our other panelists might react to it.)
- **Respectful interactions**
 - This is rarely an issue, but it is important to ensure everyone in the room (panelists and the audience) respect the panel and each other. Moderators should feel empowered to call out disrespectful behavior or comments and redirect the conversation.

After the Panel Discussion

- **Q&A**
 - Remember to allow time at the end of the discussion for questions from the audience (five to ten minutes should suffice).
 - Remind audience members that time is limited and they should stick to brief questions.
 - If an audience member begins to monopolize time, moderators are encouraged to interrupt, redirect, or move on to another question from the audience.
 - For example: "I'm sorry to interrupt, but we're getting close to our panel's end time and I want to try and get one more quick question in from the audience"
 - Try to end the panel by giving each panelist a chance to wrap up (and this is where they can promote their own work)
 - Don't run over your time limit! Remember, there is probably another panel waiting to use the room.
 - As the panel ends, encourage people to continue the discussion or ask more questions of panelists out in the halls or gathering areas so the next panel can get situated.