Boskone 59
Tips for our Moderators

Moderators have the unique position of focusing and making panels more fun and interesting. While you should try to keep the topic on track, don't let any of these guidelines cause you to stop a discussion that is interesting to the panelists and audience! Keep the "big" picture in mind.

Most program items are either 50 minutes or 25 minutes long, depending upon if you are schedule in an hour slot or a half hour slot. Please be sure to end on time to allow the audience time to leave the room before the next panel.

As Moderator, we ask that you:
- Be prepared. If possible, briefly talk to your fellow panelists before the program item. Develop some questions or topics that can be used to keep the panel going if conversation lags. Make a crib sheet. And....start and end on time!
- Briefly outline the topic of the panel for the audience.
- Briefly introduce the panelists, or ask them to introduce themselves. (Do not allow others to join the panel unless the Program staff okays this addition.)
- Above all, please avoid the temptation to start the panel by announcing that you have no idea what it's about or why you're on it. If you are unsure of why you were chosen for a panel, you will have plenty of time to communicate with the program committee prior to the convention.
- Let us know what you're thinking, and we can help explain our thinking or find a more suitable panel for you. Keep others from doing the same since it will help to create a better and more enjoyable program item for everyone involved.
- Make sure that all panelists have an equal chance to participate. As moderator you may need to adjust or encourage panelist participation depending on panelists' contributions. Be fair, but firm.
- Prevent the discussion from drifting away from the topic, too much. Don't let panelists (including yourself!) pursue individual agendas unless they are directly on topic.
- Allow time for questions, but don't let individual questioners monopolize the panel or take it away from the topic. If you are in a large room, repeat questions from the audience so everyone in the room knows what was asked.
- Keep an eye on the time (check a watch or clock.) Consider asking a summing-up question near the end of your allotted time. Then, bring the panel gracefully to a close when your time is up. Thank everyone!
- Please discourage lingering in the program room, so that the next program item can start on time. If people want to talk with the panelists, please encourage them to do it outside the room.
- If you have a chance, we'd appreciate your "counting the house" for us, and giving us some idea of how many people attended this program item.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Program.

Go with the flow. Relax. Enjoy. Being a moderator is a JOB—but it can be a rewarding one. Thank you for your willingness to take it on.