

Keys to Holding a Successful Session

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A Session Chair can make the difference between a successful session and one that appears pointless and disorganized.

Session Chair's Role

- *Form a coherent theme for the session*
- *Set a positive tone and maintain momentum*
- *Encourage audience participation and lively discussion*
- *Assist and support the presenters*

**You've graciously volunteered to be an AIAA Session Chair.
THANK YOU!**

- **Develop a session overview**
 - Find a unifying theme.
 - Develop focused questions to stimulate discussion.
 - Formulate session rules.
- **Prepare a session agenda slide that can be projected prior to the start of the session or during gaps.**
 - Provides a professional feeling to the session.
 - Provides a good visual for session gaps.
- **Prepare a TC “advertisement” slide to project during gaps.**
- **Prepare a “stand-in” presentation for last minute withdrawals.**
 - Sponsoring TC overview
 - Relevant topic that pertains to the session theme.
- **Invite audience members who could enhance the quality of the session.**
- **Maintain contact with your presenters**
 - Motivate them to prepare early and well
 - Be sure you have content and biographical information from presenters.
 - Offer to review their papers/presentations.
 - Verify that presentations will project well.(colors, font sized, content)
 - Ensure the material can be covered comfortably in 20 minutes
 - Ensure papers are submitted prior to the deadline. No Paper, No Podium
 - Tie separate contributions to a main theme
 - Guide presenters on their contribution relative to the theme
 - Inform each presenter of other contributions to the session
 - Remind authors to attend the Speakers’ Briefing at the conference.

Your diligent preparations will help get the best out of your presenters and minimize last minute withdrawals and no-shows.

- **Speakers' Briefing**

- Meet with your presenters in your session room at the specified time the day of your session. Check the program for times.
- Review biographical information. Verify pronunciations.
- Establish time-keeping rules
 - Signaling procedures
 - Ensure presenters understand the importance of keeping the session on track.
- Review and agree on session protocol—Q&A format.
- Have presenters load their presentations on the session room laptop and check that the files run on the laptop software.
- Check the session room sign for changes (i.e. last-minute withdrawals).
- Familiarize yourself with the room. Do you have any IT issues: Sound? Equipment?

- **Run the Session**

- Open

- Have session agenda on screen.
- Welcome audience and invite participation.
- Give a brief overview of the theme and how each talk contributes to it.
- Remind all attendees of time limits.
- Involve the audience from the start.
 - Invite them to note and ask questions.
 - Provide guidance on number of questions.
 - Tell when to ask questions.

*Prepare well and be accurate.
Give presenters the best possible start.*

- Manage Presentations

- Follow the schedule. If there's a no-show do not move later presentations up. Fill in with open discussion or other pre-arranged activity. Update the session room sign with a no-show sticker.
- Help with technical issues and emergencies
- Introduce each presenter in turn.
 - Proper introduction: name, position title, biographical/other relevant information, presentation title
- List questions or topics that the audience should consider.
- Control Q&A
 - Invite questions at the proper time.
 - Repeat questions or rephrase for clarity, if necessary.
 - Exclude or parry off-topic questions.
 - Stimulate discussion.
 - Ask focused questions when appropriate.
 - Call on specific people, if necessary.
 - Suggest ranges of questions.
 - “Connect” questions and comments to important themes.
 - Manage hostile or off-topic questions.
 - You are in charge – protect the presenter.
 - Be gracious but firm with the questioner.
 - Use well-meaning humor to deflect, or rephrase the question.
- Enforce timing rules.
 - Signal presenters on the time remaining.
 - Politely bring a talk to an end, if it's running long.

Question Types:

Focused: What is the trade-off between simulation fidelity and transfer of training?

Open: What can you tell me about flight simulation?

Closed: Is flight simulation effective for training?

- Close
 - Allow enough time for a closing statement.
 - Present a “take-home message” for the audience. Craft your session summary using:
 - your initially prepared notes and questions
 - audience comments and questions
 - Inform the audience of other sessions with related focus or relevance.
 - Thank the presenters for all their good work.
 - Thank the audience for listening and contributing.

- **Poster Sessions**

- Before the session
 - Ensure authors know when they are expected to be with their posters.
 - Inform authors how long they may leave posters on display. Frequently this is longer than just the presentation day.
- During the session
 - Check attendance of all presenters. Note no-shows.
 - Engage authors in conversation about their presentations. This helps attract other attendees to poster presentations and may help put authors uncomfortable with this format at ease.
- Post-Session
 - Request feedback from presenters and selected attendees.
 - Complete the AIAA Session Report and submit it electronically.