

Escapade Panel Moderator Guidance

Dear Moderators,

First, thanks SO MUCH for taking charge of a panel at Escapade! People visit Escapade to see old friends, make new friends, share enthusiasm about what they love, and find new things to get enthusiastic about. That enthusiasm is stoked in panels, and moderators make a big difference in the panel experience. We appreciate that you've volunteered to be such an integral part of the con. We want you to have fun, and for everyone attending your panel to have fun, too.

There are probably as many ways to moderate a panel as there are fandoms, but below are a few ideas you can think about, as well as some useful logistics...

About Escapade Panels....

Our discussion panels are NOT a series of presentations like you might see at a professional conference, but are lightly-moderated roundtable discussions with a lot of audience participation. Since the beginning, Escapade panels have been labeled “PC—Purposely Controversial” because everybody has the right to say what they think, and everyone has the right to disagree. Grown-ups can have fun sharing differing, divergent, and sometimes utterly cracked positions, and all it takes is a little trust in the room. Everybody’s opinion is a valid thing to share, whether we agree with it or not (and frankly, regardless of whether it’s even true or not, because hey—fiction. Slash. Anything is possible).

Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance

- Talk to your co-moderators(s) before the panel and agree on a plan. It doesn’t have to be much—“You talk; I’ll write”—but going in with a plan usually makes everyone more comfortable.
- While it’s not appropriate for all panels, you are encouraged to write up notes, how-to, resources, links, etc., and print them to hand out. This is also darned useful to hand to a trusty scribe in the panel to mark up and then post as your panel notes later...
- If your panel would benefit from graphics, prepare them ahead of time. You might start by drawing a blank pie chart or four quadrants to fill in during discussion. (Or paste up 8x10s of all the Spider-Mans!)
- If you’re using video clips or PowerPoint, give it a trial run. If your panel is scheduled in Redondo, there is a wall mounted TV with an HDMI cable to connect a laptop. For other rooms, we have one 40” TV screen on a rolling cart (shared between the rooms), which has a blu-ray player and an HDMI cable. Be sure to let us know if you need tech for your panel, or need an adaptor to connect your devices.
- You may want to prepare a short "opening statement" to describe why this topic was suggested and to relate any recent relevant activity online or on screen to put everyone on the same page.
- Think about a "starter" to get discussion going. You could poll the room; ask things like Y/N on a meta question, who has a favorite character or OTP, how many have written a drabble, and so on. This helps you know your audience, and gets people interacting with you.
- Play games! Some people have ideas for games like “Pros Bingo,” or one-minute debates on “which Chris?” or bringing Nerf firearms into a panel about cowboys. Talk it up before the panel. Get “volunteers” early. Laughter = success. Silence = “That was a great warm-up; now let’s talk!”
- Think about splitting up the time into 3 or 4 subtopics. For each, prepare a list of 3 or 4 open-ended questions to start discussion. If discussion lags, go on to the next topic; if discussion is lively, feel free to stay with it. Having a few backup questions that you don't get to is better than running out of things to talk about.

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In the Room Where it Happens: a few guidelines

- Each panel room is equipped with a flip chart and markers. Note we don't have an inexhaustible supply of paper for these, so please use them wisely. If you need a resupply of pens or paper, call the con suite.
- Start by writing the panel hashtag (it's in the Panel Book) on your flipchart. This also helps folks know they are in the right room :)
- Feel free to rearrange the chairs; do remember to leave a clear path to the door at all times.
- Introduce yourself/selves, including your DW/LJ/IJ/tumblr/twitter names or other pseudos. Introduce your scribe, if you have asked someone to take purposeful notes.
- If the panel is not appropriate for live tweeting/blogging, make that clear up front.
- It's a good idea to call on people by their badge names (even if you know their legal name). If you can't read their badge, monikers like "Slytherin scarf" or "knitter in the second row" also work.
- In a smaller panel, you may want to go around and have everyone briefly introduce themselves and give their reason for attending.
- Do your best to make sure everyone who wants to speak gets an opportunity to be heard.

Wrapping up: do it fast, do it furious

- Please try to wrap up 5 minutes before the end of the hour so folks have a chance to get out and the next moderators have a chance to set up.
- A poll at the end of the panel can be a good way to signal your wrap up – Has anyone changed their minds on a meta topic? Summing up by asking for lists of examples of what you've discussed, or favorite stories in the genre can also be very useful for the attendees.
- Take some snaps of your panel flip charts and either post them online (and send the con a link) or email them to info@escapadecon.net
- If you're so inclined, the people who couldn't attend the panel will appreciate notes posted to social media in the weeks following the con.
- Be sure to share any "best quotes" on social media (with your panel hashtag)!

Thinky Thoughts – in a world of 1s and 0s... are you a zero, or are you The One?

While you may personally believe someone is wrong on the internet, it's best to start in neutral and let the attendees come to their own conclusions. (You would not be the first person to think a panel will go one way and you end up moderating a very different discussion!) Also, while pre-brainstorming is useful (like making a list of shows in your genre of interest), it's best to use that as a reference and let the attendees do their own brainstorming. Don't forget, a sense of humor is always useful to keep the most "purposely controversial" discussions moving.

It's really easy to have a fun panel if you have a few seeds to start conversation, and then you let the conversation drive the discussion. Think about what makes great panels great. Differing opinions? Spirited disagreement? Controversial topics and surprises? Something you hadn't considered? A thoughtful theory that isn't so rigid it stifles conversation? Laughter? Fannish passion? —you get the picture.

Most important of all: relax and have fun. That's why we are all here. If you have any lingering concerns or questions, feel free to contact us at info@escapadecon.net. We are here to help.

Thanks again! We couldn't do this without you.