

Tips & Tricks for Chairing a Seminar

Learning Objectives

- Understand the role of a seminar chair
- Identify the key challenges chairs' encounter
- Select appropriate chairing tools and strategies based on seminar format

Primary Chair Responsibilities

Introducing the speaker and seminar format

Keeping time to ensure everyone has a chance to contribute to the discussion

Introducing the Speaker

- Ask the speaker how they prefer to be introduced: name (including pronunciation), title, affiliation. Otherwise, look up the speaker beforehand to help build your intro.
- Think of the audience. How much information about the speaker do they need to know?
- Set the meeting format: time limits, how to ask questions/give comments, etc.
- Convey the tone of the seminar: informal meeting, formal presentation, collaborative workshop, etc.



Keeping Time

- Motivate the need to keep time in your introduction such as, "keeping to time limits will give everyone a chance to discuss."
- Explicitly state how you will inform speakers of time remaining during your introduction.
- Make sure to sit in a location within the speaker's eye line so you can signal their time is ending.
- Be firm and kind. You may need to interrupt (that's ok!).



Bonus Tips for Online Seminars

- You can change your video feed to a video of a countdown to provide a visual time reminder for the speaker.
- During Q&A, ask if anyone online has a question.
- Monitor the chat regularly.
- Get a copy of the presentation ahead of time in case of technical difficulties.
- If possible, have the ability to mute attendees.



Final Thoughts

Chairing a seminar is a great way to make a significant contribution to your research network with a small time commitment. If you are prepared, read the room, and speak with kindness, it will go well. Good luck!