

## AECT Annual Convention: Session Facilitators FAQs

Each session at the annual convention needs to have a facilitator. This person helps to make the session happen and sees that it takes place with as few problems and distractions as possible. This handout answers frequently asked questions (FAQs) about session facilitators.

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**Q1:** Who assigns session facilitators?

**A1:** The program planner of the group sponsoring a session usually assigns the facilitator. The national convention chair may assign facilitators for special sessions.

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**Q2:** What does a session facilitator do?

**A2:** The session facilitator is responsible for:

1. Welcoming session attendees as they come in.
  2. Making sure that the necessary technology is available in the room –and, if not, contacting the AECT Tech Center in the Royal Room on B-level (right by the escalator on the main convention level).
  3. Distributing evaluation forms to the audience.
  4. Introducing the session by number and name and then introducing the first speaker by name and announcing the name of his/her presentation.
  5. Assisting with distribution of handouts.
  6. Tracking time and being sure to allocate it **equally** between presenters in a session. The facilitator needs to make this clear to presenters at the very start of the session, noting that he/she will use signs for five minutes, two minutes, one minute, and then the finger across the throat for “Time is up.” (This may require **firm** action. Equity is important and is a form of mutual respect. If a presenter runs more than a minute over, the facilitator should stand up, interrupt, and say something like, “I’m sorry to have to stop this interesting presentation, but we are limited in time and want to be sure to hear from both our presenters. Perhaps our first presenter would be willing to stay around just outside this room for a few minutes afterwards to talk more about his/her work?”)
  7. Introducing the second presenter by name and announcing the name of his/her presentation.
  8. Counting the maximum number of attendees for each presentation and marking that information on the facilitator form.
  9. Ending the session by standing up, thanking the attendees for coming, thanking the presenters, and calling for applause.
  10. Reminding attendees to complete the evaluation form and collecting those forms as attendees leave.
  11. Separating the two collected sets of multi-copy evaluation forms and providing one set of copies to each presenter.
  12. Completing the facilitator evaluation sheet in the packet and making sure to put it, the time-remaining warning signs, and the evaluation forms back in the envelope, and then dropping the envelope off at the room designated on the envelope.
  13. Notifying the AECT Tech Center of any tech problems encountered during a session.
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**Q3:** Can one of the presenters be the facilitator?

**A3:** The answer could be *yes*, but we don't recommend it. The reason is that there are many things to do to make a session run smoothly and having a presenter be the facilitator is likely to lead to problems. For example, it is hard to collect evaluation forms while also answering the questions of attendees that have come up afterwards to talk with you. Imagine also what would happen if the person tracking the time was also a presenter that ran badly over his/her time. How fair would that be to the second presenter? Lastly, suppose tech problems occur. A presenter can continue to talk while a facilitator goes for help, but not if he/she is both presenter and facilitator. Thus, it is better to have separate individuals fill these roles. Besides, the more people we involve in the convention, the better it is for them and AECT in the long run.

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**Q4:** How does a *facilitator* differ from a *discussant*?

**A4:** A discussant is responsible for discussing the papers (or presentations) in a session. Discussants are integral to the session's **content** and were part of the original proposal or session type (like Featured Research). In contrast, a facilitator is responsible for facilitating the process by which presenters deliver their content and the process by which audience members evaluate that content and delivery.

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**Q5:** Can a discussant be a facilitator?

**A5:** The answer is *yes*. The only caution here is that the discussant needs to understand that he/she must abide by the time constraints. If the discussant speaks at the end of the session, however, this should not be an issue, provided this person distributes and collects evaluation forms, completes the facilitator form, and delivers the envelope to the designated room.

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