

Session Format Descriptions



A session format is the blend of topic, performance standards, level of difficulty and attendee activities. This document serves as a resource for presenters to have a better understanding of the different formats that sessions can be.

BUZZ GROUP: Roundtables are set up around the room with easels displaying the topic positioned next to each table. One presenter at each roundtable facilitates the discussion. Throughout the session, groups react to multiple topics or charges given to them.

DEBATE: Two individuals or teams take opposing sides of a clearly specified issue. Attendees observe, unless other strategies are used for involvement. Value of this session comes from the discussion.

GAMESHOW: Polls and presentations are used to interact with audience and play a game. The moderator acts as the host.

LECTURE: Formal presentation on a particular subject given before an audience.

LIGHTNING TALK: Very short presentation lasting only a few minutes. Typically, several lightning talks will be delivered by different speakers in a single session on similar topics. Other variations of lightning talks include:

- **Ignite Presentations:** Speakers get five minutes and must have 20 slides. Each slide advances automatically after 15 seconds.
- **PechaKucha:** Storytelling format similar to Ignite Presentations, but slides advance automatically after 20 seconds.
- **TED-style talk:** Delivered presentation from memory with presenter using lapel or headset. If using slides, they are highly visual. Personal and concise taking the audience on a journey and generally under 20 minutes.

MOCK TRIAL: Trial is a case study where the presenters act out the situation. Presenters act as the judge, defendant and attorneys while participants act as the jury and are exposed to the situation in live time. Slides are used as the exhibit.

OPEN FORUM: Designated when a broad discussion of a topic is appropriate. Includes substantial audience participation.

PANEL DISCUSSION: Experts presenting specific topics. Limited audience participation.

ROLE PLAY: Interactive format that uses dramatization to explain human behavior problems in a non-threatening way.

TALK SHOW: Conversational panel discussion featuring one to four guests led by a skilled moderator. The moderator facilitates and brings the audience into the conversation.

TEACHING SESSION: One or two experts with an instructional, how-to approach, to the stated subject matter. Works with a relatively small group of participants.

WORKSHOP: Provides an opportunity for a more informal, hands-on and detailed discussion of a topic. Structured for small groups.

OTHER: Any format style that isn't mentioned above. Creativity is encouraged!