

2024 Annual Meetings

San Diego
November 23–26

SBL



Instructions and Information for Session Presiders

revised 12 November 2024

Below you will find the guidelines for session presider as outlined in the Annual Meeting Program Unit Chair Handbook. Program unit chairs and presiders have a particularly important role to play at the Annual Meeting, making sure that sessions are conducted in such a way as to promote healthy, academic dialogue. It is the responsibility of every attendee to adhere to the guidelines laid out here and in [SBL Professional Conduct Policy](#) to ensure that the meeting fosters an environment of accessibility, inclusivity, diversity, professionalism, and engagement. Please take a moment to review these guidelines, along with the Professional Conduct Policy, so that you will arrive in San Antonio ready to help create a meeting that fosters biblical scholarship in accordance with [SBL's mission and core values](#).

Guidelines for Session Presiders:

The following guidelines are intended to help those who are moderating sessions encourage a professional and respectful environment.

Before the Session:

1. Confirm that presenters are able to access previously requested A/V. If there is a problem, look for an A/V tech in the hallway or come to the registration desk.
2. Do not rearrange room. Doing so will result in additional charges for which the program unit will be responsible. If there is a problem with the room setup, contact SBL staff.

Beginning of the Session:

1. Welcome the attendees to the session.
2. Be sure to mention the name of the program unit(s) sponsoring the session and any theme that the session might have.
3. Announce that the first row of seats is reserved for presenters and those with accessibility needs. All other attendees may take a seat in one of the remaining chairs.

Presentations:

1. Address. Refer to all panelists equally. Studies show that it is more common for women to be referred to by their first names even when they have a professional title. Demonstrating respect, you should confirm ahead of the session how panelists would like to be introduced. We recommend having you announce the first name and last name, so as to avoid using titles that some presenters/respondents might not have.
2. Sound. If there are microphones in the room, ask each presenter to use the microphone. Even if a presenter thinks that he or she speaks loudly enough, microphone amplification helps all audience members, especially those who have a hearing impairment.

3. Time. Managing time is critical so that each person in the session or on the panel has an equal opportunity to present. Before the session, reiterate the expectation for each presentation's length. Presiders should sit near the podium, in order to communicate with the presenting speakers. We recommend having a five-minute warning, a one-minute warning, and a "time is up" sign for you to use.

Discussion:

1. Try to allow for question-and-answer period of at least 15 minutes or as defined in the program schedule.
2. During Q & A, remind the audience to avoid jargon, speak briefly (ideally no more than 30 seconds), and ask a question. Repeat the question after it is asked, as it is sometimes hard for all attendees to hear the question as initially asked and also helps to ensure that the person asking the question knows that they have been heard.
3. To ensure parity, please be mindful of who is asking questions and seek out questions from a variety of attendees.

Please also be sure to familiarize yourself with SBL's [Professional Conduct Policy](#). In the event of unruly, disruptive, or inappropriate behavior, asking the person to stop and reminding them of why their behavior is inappropriate will cause the person to stop in most cases. If someone persists in that behavior, or if the behavior is serious enough to warrant immediate ejection from the session, please use the emergency numbers on the back of your name badge and/or notify meeting staff.

Violations of the Professional Conduct Policy, especially anything serious enough to warrant ejection from a session, should be reported to the chair of the Professional Conduct Committee or the Executive Director.