

ESU TEACHING RESOURCE



The Chairperson

The chairperson is a vital, if often misunderstood, role. The chairperson is not there to be the star of the show, but to enable others to shine. They are the host, and it is up to them to ensure that everything runs smoothly, to time, and that everyone leaves feeling they have had a positive, informative and entertaining experience.

There are some small, but important things every chair should do:

- Make the speaker feel welcome
- Ensure that the speaker and questioner are sitting at the right places on the table and that they have a glass of water if possible
- Introduce and thank individuals appropriately
- Invite the speaker to sit down when it comes to your summary at the end of questions
- Keep things running to time
- Lead the applause when it is due
- Start and end the event positively

Things to remember for your key tasks:

The chair's introduction

This sets the tone of the whole event. Don't spend too long talking about yourself and welcome the questioner briefly, but positively. Your first job is to introduce the reason for everyone being there: to hear the main speaker. Avoid in-jokes and focus on explaining the importance of the topic and why the speaker is speaking about it. Build up the speaker in a sensible way so that we all want to hear their presentation.

Running the question period

It may be that the questioner is not that clear or asks a somewhat lengthy or convoluted question. You may have to rephrase it for the speaker's benefit (so listen carefully) or you may need to ask the questioner to repeat it. You need to control the timings: help the speaker and questioner end their time neatly; towards the end of the question period you may want to warn both that there is time for one more question, or that an answer should be short, for example. After four minutes, thank the questioner and then invite the audience to ask questions. You select them one by one; try to take other students before adults and do not take questions from the speaker's school or supporters! After 2 minutes, you need to end the question time politely and thank everyone for their contributions.



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The Summing-up

You only have 2 minutes if you have controlled the other timings efficiently, otherwise adjust to the time remaining. You should have been preparing for this summary throughout the presentation, taking notes about the key points in the speech and the interesting questions and answers during the questioning periods. Yet, you need to be visibly listening to all that is said. Not easy to do both! Be positive and enthusiastic about the questions and the speaker's responses. Your summary should draw together the key themes of the speech and highlight the extra depth and issues that the questioning brought out.

The Vote of Thanks

This is going to have to be brief. You should thank the speaker and the questioner in your summation and it is then good manners to round everything up by thanking the teachers, other students, the judges and organisers for making it all happen. Hopefully, you will have enjoyed the event (now that it is nearly over) so this will be an easy task which comes from the heart!

