

Philosophy Weekend at Cumberland Lodge

How To for participants

Everyone or nearly everyone chairs a session, leads a discussion or gives a talk. These notes explain what's involved.

How to chair a session

Before the session

Find the speaker

Make sure you can pronounce the speaker's name

Explain to the speaker (a) how long her talk is, (b) how long the questions are, (c) what you will do if she speaks for longer than the allocated time

At the start of the session

Introduce the speaker and title

Stop the speaker if she goes over the allocated time

Before the discussion

Invite questions from the floor

If several people put their hands up, select one and note the others

Don't let any one individual dominate

Ask a first yourself question if no one asks one after a couple of minutes

After the discussion

Stop the discussion when the session is due to end

Invite the audience to thank the speaker

How to lead a discussion

Before the weekend

Consult one of the organisers about a suitable 1-2 page text for discussion

Obtain 30 copies of the text

Plan the discussion, specifying how long each part of it will last.

e.g.: 5 minutes for intro, 10 minutes reading time, 10 minutes for discussion in small groups, 15 minutes for whole group discussion, 5 minutes summing up.

Before the session

Arrange the chairs for the style of discussion you will be leading (e.g. use four circles if you're planning to start with small group discussion; use a large circle for a whole group discussion)

At the start of the session

Say a couple of sentences (<3 minutes) about why you chose the text

Explain what you want participants to do first and how long they have to do it.

During the session

People will ask questions. Resist the temptation to answer them. You're leading the discussion not giving a talk. It's your job to get others to answer questions.

At the end of the session

Give a short summary of the main points arising from the discussion.

How to give a talk

Before the weekend

Consult one of the organisers about a suitable topic

As there will be around 30 people in your audience, your session involves more than 20 brainhours. Brainhours are scarce, prepare the talk carefully.

After you have written or thought up the full content of your talk

Consider preparing a 1 page handout.

You might also like to prepare visual aids

Practice giving your talk to a friend or wall at least twice.

Practice again, and make sure your timing is good (no more than 20 minutes)

Before the talk

Locate the person chairing your session and make sure they can pronounce your name and the title of your talk.

After the talk

There will be 20-30 minutes for questions. The chair will take questions for you.