Welcome Panel Moderators!

Thanks so much for taking on moderating a panel for Escapade whether in person or online. We look forward to seeing you in whatever format you are participating.

Online mods: by this time, we think that people are pretty skilled with Zoom. We are offering tech training to all attendees and mods a week before the convention. As in previous years, are lining up "tech mods" for each online panel, so there will be someone to track raised hands, and also watch the Zoom chat and the text channel in discord. It will also be their job to boot anyone who might not belong, and to help you watch the clock and end on time. As much as possible, we want you to be able to focus on the content of the panels rather than the technical details.

About Escapade Panels….

Discussion panels at Escapade are lightly-moderated roundtable discussions. You are a moderator, not an instructor or authority. The more audience participation, the more successful the panel. The only distinction between mods and attendees is that you volunteered to moderate this particular panel. Next hour, your roles may be reversed. The best advice we can offer is to be more interested in what your "audience" has to say than you are in your own opinion or agenda. You and they will have more fun.

Escapade aims for provocative panel topics; we think a bunch of people sitting in a panel titled, "Tony Stark is Hot!" and agreeing that Tony Stark is hot (and he is) can get a bit boring. In every panel, folks have the right to say what they think, and everyone has the right to disagree. You must be an adult to attend Escapade. Adults can have fun sharing differing, divergent, and sometimes utterly cracked positions, and all it takes is a little trust.

Escapade has a Code of Conduct (attached, and also available on the Escapade website). Please read it, so that you can keep an eye out for any unacceptable behavior. If something comes up in your panel, feel free to remind people of the Code of Conduct, and ask to get the conversation back on track. If you don't feel comfortable, please message the tech mod (if online) or contact any convention committee member, including Misti in the consuite. You can also email alert@escapadecon.net. Someone will check in and try to resolve the situation.

Don't Panic!

- It's a good idea to talk to your co-moderators(s) before the panel and make a plan. It doesn't have to be much—"You argue one side, I'll take the other"—but a plan usually makes things more comfortable.

- While it's not right for all panels, you are encouraged to write up notes, how-to, resources, links, etc..

- Online mods: If you're planning to share video in the panel, please test your screen sharing via Zoom beforehand. If you need help, email info@escapadecon.net and we'll find someone to help.

- In person mods: If you need video or other tech support for your panel, email info@escapadecon.net.

- You may want to prepare a short "opening statement" to describe why this topic was suggested and to relate any recent relevant activity online or on screen to put everyone on the same page.

- Think about a "starter" to get discussion going. You could poll the room; ask things like Y/N on a meta question, who has a favorite character or OTP, how many have written a drabble, and so on. This helps you know your audience, and gets people interacting with you.

- Think about splitting up the time into 3 or 4 subtopics. For each, prepare 3 or 4 open-ended questions to start discussion. If discussion lags, go on to the next topic; if discussion is lively, feel free to stay with it. Having backup questions that you don't use is better than running out of things to talk about.

Begin at the Beginning

- Tell people the name of the panel, and maybe read the description.

- Introduce yourself/selves, including your journal/discord/twitter names or other pseuds.

- Online mods: The tech mod will monitor in the chat and discord, so you don't have to. Know that some conversation/commentary may be going on out of your sight. (Think of the people who sit in the back row and whisper during an in-person panel.) If the tech mod spots something they think will add to the conversation, they may bring it forward.

- In person mods: You will have a giant post-it flip chart on an easel and markers. Feel free to invite someone from the panel to scribe if you don't want to talk and write at the same time. Ask someone to photograph the flip chart pages and share them on Discord.

- Call on people by the name on their badge or Zoom profile (even if you know them by another name).

- In a smaller panel, you may ask folks to briefly introduce themselves and give their reason for attending.

- Do your best to make sure everyone who wants to speak gets an opportunity to be heard.

Escapade Endgame

- Wrap up at ten minutes before the end of the hour so folks have a chance take a break between panels, and the next moderators have a chance to set up. If you're online, tech mod will give you a 5-minute warning. In person, it's up to you.

- A poll at the end of the panel can be a good way to signal your wrap up. Has anyone changed their minds on a meta topic? Summing up by asking for lists of examples of what you've discussed, or favorite stories in the genre can also be very useful for the attendees.

- Be sure to share any "best quotes" on social media (without any names attached). There is a "heard at Escapade" channel on the discord server.

With ~~great~~ moderate power comes ~~great~~ some responsibility.

While you may personally believe someone is wrong on the Internet, it works best to start in neutral and let the attendees come to their own conclusions. (You would not be the first person to think a panel will go one way and you end up moderating a very different discussion!) Also, while pre-brainstorming is useful (like making a list of shows in your genre of interest), it's best to use that as a reference and let the attendees provide their own input. Be interested in what they have to say. They may surprise (and delight) you. Don't forget, a sense of humor is always useful to keep the most "purposely controversial" discussions moving.

It's really easy to have a fun panel if you have a few seeds to start conversation, and then let the conversation drive the discussion. Think about what made your favorite panels fun. Differing opinions? Spirited disagreement? Controversial topics and surprises? Something you hadn't considered? A thoughtful theory that isn't so rigid it stifles conversation? Laughter? Fannish passion? —you get the picture.

Most important of all: relax and have fun. That's why we are all here. If you have any lingering concerns or questions, feel free to contact us at info@escapadecon.net. We are here to help. Thanks again! We couldn't do this without you.