

Presentation Session Chair Guide

Thank you for volunteering to chair a presentation session at ILA's Global Conference. As chair, you're the person who makes the whole thing run — connecting presenters beforehand, keeping the room on time, and creating space for a rich collective discussion at the end. It's a small role with a big impact.

SESSION FORMAT AT A GLANCE

60 min.

12-13 min. per presentation (in a 3-4 presenter session) + Q&A at the end.

Q&A Last

collective Q&A after all presentations — not after each one

AV in room

laptop, projector, screen, podium & mic. Presenters bring slides on a USB Drive.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

What Chairs Do

- **Connect with your presenters before the conference.** ILA will connect you via email. After that initial connection, please introduce yourself, confirm the session plan with presenters (e.g., speaking order), and remind presenters to review the Presenter Guide at ilaglobalconference.org/presenter-resources/ if they haven't already. Since presentations are grouped after submissions, it can be helpful for everyone to have a virtual meeting so each presenter can share a little about their work and presenters can think about connections to their own work.
- **Arrive 5–10 minutes early.** Get to the room before your presenters if you can, greet everyone as they arrive, and reconfirm everything.
- **Open the session.** Welcome the audience, briefly explain the session format (including that Q&A will be held at the end), and introduce each presenter by name and presentation title when it's their turn.
- **Keep time.** Give each presenter a 2-minute warning and a clear "time's up" signal. Be prepared to politely but firmly intervene if a presentation runs over — you're protecting everyone's time.
- **Moderate collective Q&A.** After all presentations are done, open the floor and moderate discussion for the remaining time. Facilitate across the whole session — not just the last presenter.

TIMING REFERENCE

SESSION SIZE	TIME PER PRESENTATION	NOTES
4 presentations	12–13 minutes each	Remaining time for collective Q&A
3 presentations	12–13 minutes each	More time for Q&A — use it well
2 presentations	Split time equally	Unless ILA has advised otherwise

TIPS FOR A GREAT SESSION

Make contact before you arrive

A quick pre-conference email goes a long way. Introduce yourself, confirm who's presenting and in what order, and ask if anyone has concerns. Presenters who've met their chair before the session are noticeably more relaxed.

Be direct about time, but kindly

Letting a presentation run long is the most common chair mistake, and it penalizes everyone who comes after. A firm but warm “We need to wrap up in two minutes” is a kindness, not a rebuke. Practice your signal in advance so it feels natural.

Bridge the presentations in Q&A

The collective Q&A is more valuable when it spans the whole session, not just the last talk. Open with something like: “We heard three quite different takes on this topic today — I'd love to start by asking about what connected them.”

Have a question in your pocket

Q&A silences happen. Have one genuine question ready for each presenter — something you're actually curious about after reading their abstract. If the floor goes quiet, your question gets things moving without awkwardness.

Adapt to what the session needs

If a presenter cancels last minute, redistribute time calmly and let the audience know. If technical issues eat into setup time, start slightly late but end on time regardless. The audience follows the chair's energy — steady and confident is the move.

A little warmth goes a long way

Presenters are often nervous. A warm welcome, genuine appreciation after each talk, and a sincere “thank you” at the close costs nothing and means a lot. The best chairs make everyone in the room feel like the session mattered — because it did.

AV & ROOM SUPPORT

AV support: Rooms have a laptop, projector, screen, podium, and mic. Presenters should load slides (if applicable) from their own USB drive. There is no dedicated AV person in every room, but floating AV techs and student room volunteers are available if issues arise.