Useful resources for chairing a scientific conference session

https://www.nature.com/scitable/topicpage/chairing-sessions-13908566/

This link has got some practical examples of how to introduce, what to say etc.

Simple rules for chairing a session

Before the Session: (AI generated - Gemini)

- **Familiarize yourself with the abstracts and speakers:** Read the abstracts of all presentations in your session to understand the topics and speakers' expertise.
- **Review the schedule:** Know the timing of each presentation, Q&A, and any planned breaks.
- **Connect with the speakers:** Reach out to speakers to confirm their availability and address any logistical questions.
- **Prepare introduction notes:** Have a concise introduction ready for each speaker and the session itself.
- **Prepare questions:** Formulate questions based on the abstracts and research areas, ready to ask if the audience is quiet.

During the Session:

- **Start on time:** Begin the session promptly to respect the schedule and attendees' time.
- **Welcome and introduce the session:** Briefly introduce the session's theme, objectives, and speakers (ask for how to pronounce their names correctly).
- I**ntroduce each speaker:** Keep introductions brief and focused on the speaker's expertise and the presentation topic.
- **Facilitate presentations:** Ensure presentations are within the allotted time and encourage speakers to be engaging.
- **Manage Q&A:** Guide the discussion, allowing time for questions from the audience.
- **Encourage audience engagement:** Actively solicit questions from the audience and ensure everyone has an opportunity to participate.
- **Be a neutral arbiter:** Ensure all speakers and audience members are treated with respect.
- **Keep the time:** Monitor the time and ensure the session concludes promptly.
- **Thank the speakers and audience:** Express gratitude for the speakers' contributions and the audience's participation.
- **Conclude the session:** Summarize the key takeaways and thank the speakers and audience for their participation.

Tips for a Smooth Session:

- **Maintain a friendly and engaging tone:** Create a welcoming atmosphere where people feel comfortable participating.
- **Make eye contact with speakers and the audience:** This shows that you are engaged and listening.
- **Take notes:** Note key findings, points for discussion, and questions for future reference.
- **Be prepared for unexpected questions or issues:** Have backup questions and solutions for technical issues.

Useful resources for facilitating a panel discussion - ChatGPT

Facilitating a panel discussion effectively involves preparation, active moderation, and engaging both panellists and the audience. Here are some key suggestions:

Pre-Panel Preparation:

- **Know Your Panellists:** Research each panellist's background and expertise. Hold a brief pre-panel meeting or exchange emails to align on topics, discuss the format, and agree on key questions.
- **Define the Objectives:** Clarify the goals of the panel. Outline the main themes or issues to ensure the conversation stays focused.
- **Plan the Format:** Decide on the structure (e.g., opening statements, moderated discussion, audience Q&A) and share the agenda with panellists in advance.

Setting the Stage:

- **Introduce the Panel:** Start with a brief welcome, state the discussion's purpose, and introduce each panellist with a short bio and their relevant expertise.
- **Establish Ground Rules:** Explain the session format, time limits, and how the audience can participate (e.g., through live questions or using written notes).

Moderating the Discussion:

- **Ask Thoughtful Questions:** Prepare open-ended questions that encourage dialogue and multiple perspectives. Pose follow-up questions to delve deeper into interesting points.
- **Manage Time Effectively:** Ensure each panellist gets an opportunity to speak. Use gentle reminders if someone is dominating the conversation or if time is running out.
- **Encourage Interaction:** Facilitate exchanges between panellists. If disagreements arise, help clarify points and encourage respectful debate.
- **Stay Flexible:** Be ready to adapt if the conversation takes an unexpected yet relevant turn. Keep the discussion focused but allow for organic dialogue.

Engaging the Audience:

- **Open Q&A:** Allocate time for audience questions. Moderate this portion to ensure questions are clear and relevant to the discussion.
- **Balance Contributions:** If audience input is overwhelming or veering off-topic, politely steer questions back to the session's main themes.

Closing the Session:

- **Summarize Key Points:** Recap the main takeaways and insights shared during the discussion.
- **Thank Participants:** Express gratitude to both the panellists and the audience for their contributions.
- **Provide Next Steps:** If applicable, mention any follow-up resources or sessions that build on the discussion.

By preparing thoroughly, setting clear expectations, and actively engaging both the panellists and the audience, you can facilitate a dynamic and insightful panel discussion that adds value to your scientific conference.