

# Hosting a Stoicon-X Event

## Facilitator Guide & Recommendations

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# Introduction

So you're thinking about hosting a Stoicon-X conference in your community. Wonderful! But maybe you've never hosted this kind of event before, and you're not sure where to start. No problem! We put together this guide to make the process simpler for you. We'll provide some best practices for you based on the experience of other Stoic Fellowship groups, and we'll suggest some formats that tend to work pretty well. Along the way, we'll try to answer the most common questions facilitators have when organizing events. With this document as your guide, you'll feel confident as you prepare an excellent Stoicon-X conference.

Before we start, we at The Stoic Fellowship want to thank you for being an active member of our organization. We appreciate the time and energy you devote to sharing Stoicism with others and helping connect people in your community. You are making a positive impact on the world!

## Who can host a Stoicon-X event?

Anyone! *Stoicon* is a trademark event of Modern Stoicism, but anyone interested in Stoicism can apply to host a *Stoicon-X* conference in their location. In years past, Stoic groups from all over the world have hosted events, like Stoicon-X Melbourne, Stoicon-X Orlando, and Stoicon-X Brazil. The process is simple. Just fill out this [license agreement](#) and send it back to [admin@modernstoicism.com](mailto:admin@modernstoicism.com). You will be asked to abide by some common-sense guidelines, but otherwise, you are free to conduct the event as you see fit.

## Why host a Stoicon-X event?

The only thing better than practicing Stoicism on your own is practicing Stoicism as part of a group. Joining with other like-minded people can help solidify our commitment to philosophical practice and help us develop our character toward virtue.

You may already be a facilitator or member of an existing Stoic group. In this case, you will be familiar with the many benefits of practicing Stoicism with others in your area. Hosting a Stoicon-X event for your group offers a special opportunity to explore Stoicism in a different way from your regular weekly meetings. For example, you can invite well-known speakers from around the world to give a talk, or you could select a theme and offer several presentations clustered around that theme. This will help deepen your group's understanding of Stoic theory and practice. You might also decide to host the event at a special location, or you could provide food and drinks for an especially convivial experience. You have the option of pursuing whatever you think will suit the needs of your particular group.

## When to host a Stoicon-X event?

You are welcome to host your event at any time of the year, but groups tend to get the best results in the autumn season (September through November). That's because the main Stoicon event, along with Modern Stoicism's Stoic Week, usually takes place in mid-October. Stoicon-X conferences are often planned around this time to participate in the Season of Stoicism. This allows you to advertise your event alongside all the other Stoic events happening around the same time. Both Modern Stoicism and The Stoic Fellowship host an events calendar and make announcements about Stoicon-X events in autumn, which helps you publicize your event to others in the Stoic community.

At the same time, it can be challenging to select a date during these months that has not already been taken by other Stoic groups. The earlier you can get your event on the calendar, the better. As you are selecting a date for your Stoicon-X conference, be sure to check the events calendar and also ask the Modern Stoicism coordinator if any other events are planned on your preferred date. It will be easier for you to get well-known speakers if they are not already busy with other Stoic events.

## Should your event be in person or online?

It depends on your goals for the conference. If you plan to invite speakers who do not live in your community, and if you're interested in attracting attendees from around the world, an online conference would be the clear choice. If, however, you already have a strong local Stoic community and you'd like to bring everyone together and build camaraderie, an in-person event would be the clear choice.

Keep in mind that if you decide to host an in-person conference, there will be far more logistical planning (reserving the venue, coordinating speaker arrivals, planning refreshments, etc.). There will also be costs involved (unless your venue is free), which may require you to sell tickets rather than hosting a free event. In addition, you will be limiting your pool of potential attendees to people who live nearby. Therefore we recommend that you only plan an in-person event if you have a large Stoic community near you and you are a fairly well-established group.

## Which online platform should you use?

If you decide to host your conference online, you will need to select a platform such as Zoom or Google Meet for your event. In the past, most events have been conducted through Zoom. You will need a (paid) professional account in order to host a conference. If you do not already have a professional account, we recommend checking with The Stoic Fellowship to see if any

assistance is available. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the technology beforehand and what is required of you as a host. Zoom has training and video guides available if you are new to the organizer role.

## Which in-person venue should you use?

This depends on your needs for the event. If your conference will be relatively short and you're not providing refreshments, a public room at a library can be a great (often free) option. If you're near a public college or university, you can look into renting conference space, or perhaps an auditorium at a nearby high school. We recommend sticking with a free or low-budget venue, especially your time holding the event. Once you become established and have a reliable audience, you may wish to find a more expensive venue in the future.

## What expenses can you expect?

When hosting an online event, your biggest potential expense is Zoom or another video conferencing platform. Many speakers in the Stoic community will speak without expecting reimbursement for online events.

When hosting an in-person event, here are some of the costs you can expect:

- Venue rental, which may or may not include a/v equipment
- Food and drink (optional)
- Reimbursing speakers for travel (airfare or gas) and accommodation (hotel)
- Ticketing platform (like Eventbrite)
- Optional extras like printed programs or nametags

If you are inviting a speaker who lives in your city or within a one-hour driving distance, transportation reimbursement may not be expected.

## What format or schedule should your event use?

Whether you are doing an online or in-person event, we recommend for your first time that you stick to a fairly standard conference format. (If you are an experienced event planner, feel free to try out new formats—and let us know what works well for you!) This is usually in the form of talks or presentations in one of the following formats:

- 20 minute talk + 10 minute Q&A session
- 15 minute talk + 5 minute Q&A session
- 30 minute talk with no Q&A session

**Keynote talks.** You might also invite a well-known presenter to give a keynote talk, which is typically a bit longer. Some formats that work well include:

- 30 minute talk + 15 minute Q&A session
- 45 minute talk

**Pre-recorded lightning talks.** Another popular format is pre-recorded lightning talks, which are usually around 5 minutes long. Including this format enables you to feature a larger number of speakers. This is a great way to showcase new voices from people who may never have presented before. And because the videos are usually pre-recorded, these speakers can edit their videos and send you their best versions. You can preview them in advance and be confident that you are showing your attendees high-quality videos.

The downside to pre-recorded talks is that you, as a conference organizer, will need to condense them into a single video file before playing them at your event. (You should never try to play each individual video during the conference.) Most organizers try to edit these videos a bit for a pleasant viewing experience—for example, providing the right amount of lead time and space between videos, including closed captions, etc. If you don't have the appropriate video editing skills or equipment, make sure you find someone who can help you with these tasks.

**Panels.** Panels, consisting of three or more experts discussing a particular topic or theme, are a wonderful but tricky format. We recommend that you do not host a panel unless you are a very experienced facilitator.

**Breaks.** Make sure to build breaks into your schedule. Even if your event is online, people need time to use the restroom, get a cup of coffee, etc. We recommend at least a 5-minute break every hour, or a 15-minute break after 90 minutes.

**Transitions.** Make sure to plan for transitions. This is the time it takes to say goodbye to one speaker and welcome the next speaker. Plan for around 1 minute of introduction time at the beginning of a talk and 1 minute of exit time at the end of a talk. Normally this is not accounted for on the schedule, but as the organizer, you should know that the true time window is shorter than what's written down. So a 30-minute talk really has 28 minutes of speaking time for the speaker, due to the 1-minute intro and 1-minute outro.

**Sample Schedule.** You have the option of using several of these formats in your event. For example, here is one sample schedule for a 2.5-hour event:

Conference opening: 10 minutes

Presentation 1: 20-minute talk + 10-minute Q&A

Presentation 2: 20-minute talk + 10 minute Q&A

10-minute break

20-minute lightning talks (4 x 5 minutes each)

Keynote talk: 30 minutes + 15-minute Q&A

Conference closing: 5 minutes

## How long should your event be?

For your first event, we recommend that you keep it fairly short, around 2-3 hours. This will keep it easier for you to plan, and you can ensure that your audience stays engaged the whole time. If you are a more experienced organizer, the event can be as long as a full day. However, make sure you have enough speakers available to provide high-quality material for that extended length. In general, most Stoicon-X events are no longer than 4 hours.

## What should talks be about?

Obviously, all the talks should center around Stoicism, but other than that, speakers have leeway to choose their own topics. You may want to suggest a theme for all the talks, but be aware that speakers can sometimes find it difficult to stick to a theme. We recommend that you invite speakers to present on a topic they have some expertise in. This will ensure they enjoy the talk and can be responsive to audience questions. The audience will be more engaged and comfortable if the speakers are engaged and comfortable.

Rather than choosing one theme, another strategy is to choose a variety of speakers who can present on a variety of topics. This increases the likelihood that attendees will find at least one talk they are strongly interested in.

## Who should speak?

It's up to you! As we mentioned earlier, this can be a good opportunity to invite well-known speakers your attendees would like to hear from. Think about authors you've read, speakers you've heard on podcasts, or presenters from other Stoic conferences. A good strategy is to invite at least one well-known speaker to anchor your lineup, then choose a few members from your group who would like to speak. This enables your group members to develop their skills and share ideas they are interested in. (As we mentioned earlier, a lightning round is a great way to do this.) Some groups open up a call for proposals to their members (and the wider Stoic community). See the sample call for proposals from New England Stoics included later in this guide.

If you would like to invite someone you don't know personally, you can often find their contact information on their website or social media pages. Most people are happy to respond when you reach out to them directly. If you prefer an introduction prior to reaching out, feel free to contact The Stoic Fellowship and ask us to put you in touch. We can provide contact information and an introduction to your potential speaker.

## When should you start planning?

As soon as possible. It's never too early to start planning! The sooner you reserve your date, the sooner you can secure your speakers and claim your date on the Stoic calendar. It's polite to give your speakers several months of lead time so they can prepare their talks without rushing.

## What should talks or presentations look like?

For an online event, speakers can choose whether to speak without slides or to use slides. Speaking without slides is simpler for everyone, but using slides can convey useful information and help keep the audience engaged.

If your speakers use slides, you will need to decide whether they will share the slides from their own computer, or whether you will share from your computer as the event host. Either way, it's best to have speakers send their slides to you in advance. That way, you can make sure there are no technical issues with the slides, and you will also have a backup copy if your speaker is unable to share their slides for some technical reason.

Some speakers may also want to use audiovisual materials such as video or sound clips. If this is your first time as an organizer, we recommend that you say no to these requests. There is so much that can go wrong with audio and video! For more experienced facilitators, we recommend that you preview the material and have it already loaded prior to the presentation.

## Should you sell tickets?

Many online Stoicon-X events are free to attendees. In some cases, the cost of the platform (such as Zoom) is either covered by the facilitator (if they already have an account), or it may be covered by existing funds from the group. In other cases, if the costs are significant, you may want to charge for tickets. Be aware that charging for tickets significantly decreases the number of people who will register for and attend your event. If you charge, you will also need to find a platform that supports ticket sales. Many organizations use Eventbrite, but you will have to pay a portion of your proceeds to Eventbrite.

If your event is free, you may still want to use some sort of platform to allow attendees to register. Eventbrite usually doesn't charge you for free events.

For in-person events, you may need to charge for tickets if you have costs associated with your venue or any refreshments. Think carefully before you commit to paying for a venue. What is a reasonable ticket price in your area for an event like this? How many people can you reasonably

expect to purchase a ticket? Make sure you'll be able to cover your costs. You will also need a plan in case your ticket sales do not cover all the costs of your event. The last thing you want is to be left covering unexpected costs by yourself!

## How do we promote the event?

You can think of two main types of promotion for your event: local and international.

**Local.** If your event is in person, you will want to focus on local promotion, since these are the people most likely to attend. Obviously, make sure your local Stoic group knows about the event, but also think about other related groups whose members might be interested (other philosophy groups, for example). Are there local universities or institutions that have a close connection with Stoicism? Are you a member of any other local groups where you can share information about your Stoicon-X event?

**International.** If your event is online, you have a much larger potential audience. In this case, you'll want to advertise to the international Stoic community through organizations such as The Stoic Fellowship, Modern Stoicism, and perhaps others. Be sure to contact both of these groups to add your event to the [conference calendar](#). You can also ask to write a blurb or blog post about your event. If you have any social media accounts (your personal account or your group's account), be sure to share widely.

**Visuals.** You might want to create a poster or other visual with the name, date, major speakers, and website for your event. If your event is online, make sure to add the time zone. (Canva.com is a wonderful platform for creating graphics for free.) Having a graphic that can be easily shared will encourage other people to actually share it. Also, ask your speakers or anyone connected with your event to share with their networks.

**Eventbrite.** If you are using Eventbrite for your registrations, you can also choose to promote through Eventbrite. There are both free and paid options for promoting your event. Be sure to take advantage of all the free options available.



# Sample Stoicon-X Planning Kit: New England Stoics

New England Stoics have generously offered a sample of their conference materials from the past two years. In this sample planning kit, you will find:

- Call for proposals
- Conference schedule
- Eventbrite flyer

# Stoicon-X New England 2021

## Call for Proposals

Stoicon-X New England 2021 will be held in [TBD] on Sunday, October 17, 2021 from 12 PM-6 PM ET. Our conference is dedicated to helping participants grow in Stoicism through teachings, discussions, and exercises. Our keynote speaker this year will be William Irvine, Professor of Philosophy at Wright State University, author of *A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy* and *The Stoic Challenge: A Philosopher's Guide to Becoming Tougher, Calmer, and More Resilient*.

### Proposals

We invite proposals for individual talks and panel discussions on topics related to Stoicism and Stoic practice. The deadline for proposals is September 24, 2021. Acceptance will be announced October 1, along with a proposed time slot. You should inform us of your decision to present by October 6.

### Membership is Required to Present

You need to be a member of the New England Stoics to present. You can join NES here: <https://www.meetup.com/New-England-Stoics/>. New members can submit a proposal. If your proposal is accepted, you must schedule a rehearsal or submit a video of your talk by October 6. We will vet new member presentations and may suggest revisions or, in exceptional situations, cancel the talk if it does not meet expectations (described below).

### Presentation Types

**INDIVIDUAL TALKS:** Individual talks are 20 minute presentations on Stoic topics, followed by 10 minutes for discussion.

**WORKSHOP:** Workshops are 45 minute presentations that involve interactive components that engage the audience in practicing Stoic ideas and exercises. A workshop must have a substantial audience interaction component.

**PANEL DISCUSSION:** Panel discussions are 45 minute presentations composed of 3-5 speakers. Speakers may give 5 minute talks. The majority of the time should be dedicated to Q&A with audience. Panel discussions should be designed to facilitate group discussion among attendees and presenters.

**SHORT TALKS:** Short talks are 10 minute presentations on Stoic topics, followed by 5 minutes for discussion.

**Evaluation**

All presentations will be blind reviewed by members of the NES leadership.

**CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION**

All categories are rated by reviewers on a scale of 1-5

Appropriateness and Importance of the Topic

Originality of Perspective

Connection to Stoicism

Clarity and Organization

Additional Workshop and Panel Discussion criteria include:

Potential to Facilitate Audience Engagement

## Stoicon-X New England 2021 Schedule

# STOICON-X NEW ENGLAND 2021

**12:00** Welcome

**KEYNOTE** **12:15** Self Carriage for the Practicing Stoic  
*Nona Maiorano*

**KEYNOTE** **1:00** Is There Such a Thing as Stoic Humility?  
*Dr. Sarah Byers*

**2:00** Break

**2:15** A Beginner's Journey to Stoicism  
*Dr. Claudia Ganser*

**2:30** Fewer Complaints, More Gratitude  
*Dr. Roger Taylor*

**3:00** Your Words Betray You  
*Zeph Chang*

**4:00** Break

**4:15** Stoic Practice Panel Discussion

**KEYNOTE** **5:00** A Lifetime of Stoic Practice  
*Dr. William Irvine*

**6:00** Potluck Dinner

# Stoicon-X New England 2021 Flyer

## STOICON-X NEW ENGLAND 2021



### The New England Stoics October 17

In-Person and Online  
12 PM - 6 PM ET  
Newton, MA & Zoom



### Keynotes



Is there such a thing  
as Stoic 'humility'?

#### Dr. Sarah Byers

Professor of Philosophy at  
Boston College. Author of  
*Perception, Sensibility, and  
Moral Motivation in Augus-  
tine: A Stoic-Platonic Syn-  
thesis.*



A Lifetime of  
Stoic Practice

#### Dr. William Irvine

Professor of Philosophy at  
Wright State University. Au-  
thor of *A Guide to the Good  
Life*, and *The Stoic Challenge*.



Self Carriage for the  
Practicing Stoic

#### Nona Maiorano

New England Stoics Lead-  
er and organizer of our  
Women's Philosopher's  
Café. Freelance Dressage  
Instructor. Mentor to wom-  
en.

### DETAILS

In-Person: \$15 early bird before Oct 6. \$20 after Oct. 6.

Online: \$10 before Oct. 6. \$15 after Oct. 6.

Location and Zoom link provided after registration.

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