

Unconference Cheat Sheet

What is an unconference session?

The unconference sessions provide an opportunity for the community to share ideas and discuss problems at a deeper level than we could on just the main stage of the conference.

Who can run an unconference session?

Anyone can suggest and lead a session on a topic, which could be a group discussion on a particular problem, a show-and-tell, Q&A, or anything in between.

What is the format of an unconference session?

There is no stage in an unconference and sessions instead focus on community interaction.

Some examples of session formats include:

- Group discussion - Pick a topic and talk about it
- Show and tell - Show off your latest project, a new tool, or anything else you are excited about
- Q&A - Offer a chance to participants to ask questions and learn about your topic

Because sessions are meant to be small and inclusive, standard presentations are difficult to lead a session with. You cannot rely on slides, because you will not have a screen to present with.

I want to run an unconference session!

Post a summary of your topic on a post-it note in an empty spot on the unconference schedule. When it's time for the session, arrive a few minutes early to introduce yourself to anyone who is attending your session. Once the group has gathered, introduce your topic and get the discussion going.

Keep in mind the following tips (inspired by the "Open Space Technology" infographic):

1. Whoever comes is the right people - You can get great results with 5 people or 50 people, and sometimes it's better to have a smaller, but more engaged group in your session.
2. Whenever it starts is the right time - People might come and go during the session and that's ok! If you are worried about lack of attendance, see tip #1.
3. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened - Even though the session starts out with a topic, keep an open mind to the discussions that occur, you might end up with a totally different outcome.
4. When it's over, it's over - Even though there are time slots to help organize the sessions, you can finish early or continue the discussion elsewhere after the session.

I want to attend an unconference session!

- Check out the board to see which sessions are scheduled.
- Head to that table and have a seat. You can also join mid-session!
- Feel free to just listen or add your voice to the discussion.
- Don't be afraid to change sessions mid-slot! Just make sure that you bow out politely.