

A Guide to Proposing StokerCon Panels

Greetings and welcome to this brief guide on proposing panels for StokerCon. Whether you are brand new to panels, a veteran of conferences, or somewhere in the middle, we hope this guide provides some insight into proposing engaging panels, and also helps clarify what the programming committee might be looking for when reviewing proposals.

Please keep in mind there are always more people interested in doing panels than we have room for; however, the committee is taking steps to ensure panel seats will bring new voices to the table, as well as those who are more experienced.

Panels are generally separated into four categories, so it might help to keep these tracks in mind. Please find the general categories below, with some past examples of panels:

- **Horror History & Culture**
 - Past Examples: Military Service in Horror, A Decade of Black Women in Horror, Embodying Horror: Representations of the Body in Fiction, Take Their Hands: Ancestry as Source, A Century of Weird Tales
- **The Business of Writing (and Publishing)**
 - Past Examples: Let Me Tell You About My Research, Contracts for Creatives, Scripting Fear: Adapting Horror for the Screen, Worth a Thousand Scary Words: Cover Art, Illustration, & Book Design
- **The Horror Genre**
 - Past Examples: Purrfect Terror: Cats in Horror, Exploring the Canon of Queer Horror, Algorithmic Possession: Confronting Big Tech on the Page, Fear on the Frontier: Western Horror
- **Spotlight Programming**
 - Past Examples: Guest of Honor interviews and panels, Board Meeting, special programming, mentorship panels

Also, remember to make sure your **Sched profile** is active and public. First timers, Sched is where the programming and other important conference information will be housed.

You can edit your preferred name in Sched, your bio, and other information, but making sure the profile is visible helps organizers know who is attending the conference as we get panels scheduled.

Tips for Proposing Panels

- Whether you are brand new to panels, very experienced with them, or somewhere in between, it's extremely helpful to the StokerCon Programming Committee for you to fill out the survey form completely. On the survey, fill out both your bio and the area to describe your credentials and expertise on topics. This helps to let us know what you have experience in, and also what topics you would want to discuss on potential panels.
 - Don't assume we will know who you are and what you write. Utilize those spaces on the survey so we can better understand what you would enjoy discussing on panels.
- **The more specific, the better!**
 - For instance, rather than proposing something like "women in horror" – what about women in horror do you want to talk about or listen to a discussion on? How can the topic encourage real conversation and go beyond the surface-level?
- Here are some past examples where general topics were turned into a more guided conversation:
 - "Monstrous Mothers and the Women Who Write Them" (the specific angle of this panel was focused and cohesive, and also helped spawn the "Fathers and Fatherhood in Horror" panel).
 - Exploring the gothic is another popular category. Since we have such limited time, narrowing down broad categories to more guided ideas helps create a stronger conversation. For example, in 2025, we

explored “Southern Gothic in the Contemporary South” and “Industrial Gothic: Horror in the Industrial and Post-Industrial Age”.

- **Bring topics that engage and encourage discussion!**

- The best panels energize everyone in the room (not just the panelists). Consider topics that engage in current horror community concerns, and topics that discuss the impact of social and political events with horror. Don’t be afraid to propose panels that ask challenging questions, break new ground, and encourage thought and investment between the panelists and audience.

- **Can I propose something that has been done before?**

- Some topics are going to continually be popular staples of the genre. For example, we almost always have a gothic horror and cosmic horror panel, so we definitely want to keep exploring all the beloved categories and subjects within horror. We’d love to see some fresh ideas on evergreen topics. You are encouraged to bring new perspectives and examinations on specific elements of these subgenres and tropes.
 - Example: Instead of “Vampires in Horror”, we could expand it with something like “Dracula in the Twenty-First Century: Modern Vampire Retellings” or another topic that builds on previous panels.

- **If you have panelists in mind for a topic, please suggest them!** Even if you aren’t sure if they are attending the conference, we can check on availability and interest.

- Given the length of time for panels, most panels will be kept to around 4-5 panelists, plus the moderator.
- If you are looking for more inspiration, or want to think of panels that could build on previous ones, you can view some past programming below:

- [2025](#)
- [2024](#)
- [2023](#)