Maximize your Conference Travel

Before you go:

1. Talk with your mentor and set goals
   a. what do I want to learn?
      i. Professional development topic
      ii. Research findings
      iii. About advanced degree programs
   b. who do I want to meet?
      i. Researcher
      ii. Keynote speaker
      iii. Prospective mentor
      iv. Prospective employer
      v. Others in my discipline

2. Analyze the conference agenda
   a. What sessions do I want to attend?
   b. What speakers do I want to hear?
   c. When are breaks and other opportunities for networking?

3. Review the maps & make notes
   a. How far is my room from main conference center?
   b. If it is a multi-site conference, will I need transportation during the day?
   c. Exactly where are the different meeting rooms I need?
   d. If lunch is not provided, what are my eating options?
   e. Where are the restrooms?
   f. Where are the poster sessions? Vendor displays?
   g. Where are the break areas for networking?

What to take with you

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Portfolio holder or some type of carry case:</th>
<th>Recommended supplies:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 5 copies of CV/resume plus e-copy</td>
<td>• Water bottle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Presenting? 15+ copies of abstract</td>
<td>• Hankie or Kleenex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Business cards</td>
<td>• Breath mints or disposal toothbrush (for after lunch)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Two pens</td>
<td>• Envelope for expense receipts</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Marked up copy of prelim program</td>
<td>• Envelope for collected business cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Map of conference center</td>
<td>• Method for recharging mobile device(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Method to take notes (tablet, paper, etc.)</td>
<td>• Sandwich bag &amp; push pin (Tip: Hang your business cards near the bottom of your poster when you need to take a break!)</td>
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There’s a cure for those who hate small talk: It’s called listening. It’s true. People like to talk about themselves, give advice and share their interests. All you need to do is ask a few questions and they’ll start talking! But to make a good impression, you need to show a sincere interest in what the other person has to say. Don’t look at your phone. Smile. Nod. Have good eye contact. Generally the person will reciprocate by asking you a question. Let the conversation flow naturally. If the person dominates the conversation, or it’s time to move on, simply say “Sorry, I need to run. It was a pleasure meeting you. May I please have your business card?” Shake hands before you depart. Make notes on the back of the card about your conversation. Connect via LinkedIn.

Here are a few examples of easy conversation starters:

During Travel, at an Airport

- I see you are from XYZ. Did you drive or fly?
- Your university is quite a distance from here. How was your trip?
- I’ve heard of [your university] before. Where in the state is it located?

Arriving at a Hotel or Convention Center

- Have you been to this hotel before? Any advice for getting around?
- Have you been here before? Any recommendations for dinner?
- By chance, do you know where the fitness center is located? What do they offer?

Between Sessions or at an Elevator

- What did you think of the keynote speaker?
- What sessions are you attending this afternoon?
- I’m thinking about the session on xyz. What do you know about the speaker?

Tip: Work toward your Goals!

- My research is closely related to yours. May I join your table at lunch to ask you a few questions?
- I’ll be applying to grad school next year. What can you tell me about your program?
- I am seeking opportunities for summer research or internships. What suggestions do you have?
- I am weighing my career options and wonder if a postdoc appointment will make me more competitive on the job market. What are your feelings on this?