

Seven Habits of Highly Effective Convention Attendees

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Planning your first attendance at a large national convention? The experience is unquestionably exciting. However, without a little advanced preparation, excitement can rapidly turn to over stimulation. People can only tolerate so much sensory input, and conventions have visual and auditory stimulation in spades. To top it off, there's little time to adjust to the level of activity. To ensure that enjoyment trumps exhaustion, following these tips.

Review the Schedule Early

Identifying which presentations you most want to attend will help save time when you arrive at the convention. For added convenience, the APS Web site offers convention scheduling, where you can search topics and develop your own itinerary. Ultimately, you don't want to spend too much time at the convention with your nose buried in the program book.

Be Decisive

Follow the sage advice of Yogi Berra (appropriate for a convention in New York City!): "When you come to a fork in the road, take it." If two or more desirable events are scheduled simultaneously, don't spend too much time dithering over which to attend. Just pick one and go. If it's not quite what you expected, quietly leave the room and go to the other event.

Expand Hour Horizons

A significant benefit to a national convention, particularly an APS meeting, is the multidisciplinary nature of the research presented. Break out of your specialization to attend talks in areas that pique your interest but in which you do not have much exposure. A good psychological scientist is aware of trends in many areas, not just his or her own specialty.

Network

Attending a convention is much more than learning about the hottest research. Meeting people outside of your research lab, program, and school is one of the convention's greatest benefits. Networking is made easier through student events sponsored by the Student Caucus. In particular, the Student Orientation Kickoff and Student Social are developed specifically to encourage networking among students.

Take Selective Notes

A small reporter's notebook and pen are all you need. Forget about laboriously taking notes like you might in the classroom. You can always research the topic later. Limit your notetaking to ideas or questions sparked by presentations. This may prompt ideas for future study or reveal possible relationships to your own research.

Dress Appropriately

Convention apparel is diverse — ranging from blue jeans to suits — but business casual is the order of the day. Also keep in mind that the temperature in meeting rooms can vary, but it tends to be on the cool

side. Bring a sweater or jacket so that you can adjust to the room's temperature and focus on the presentation. Additionally, be kind to your feet; wear comfortable shoes that will withstand trekking from one meeting room to another.

Take Care of the Basics

With so much convention activity, taking care of yourself is easy to overlook. Use the hotel gym, eat sensibly, and get enough sleep. This may require scheduling meal breaks or a brief nap.

See you at the convention!