



GOING TO A CONFERENCE

DR. JENNIFER LOVELL'S TIPS

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Pre-Conference

1. Make **travel** arrangements and plans for where you will stay in advance (~2 months if possible). To save money, consider staying with friends/family or at a hostel. You can also plan to stay with other students and split the cost of a room or airbnb.
2. **Register** for the conference early to get better registration fee. If you are the first author, then you can get free registration if you are an APAGS member (for APA convention). You can also look for volunteer opportunities to get reduced fee. Register as a student.
3. Review the program booklet or app so you can **plan your schedule** ahead of time. Search for keywords, topics, and people you want to see speak. Mark your calendar so you know the important events to attend.
4. Go shopping for **professional clothes** if you do not have some already. Look at expected temperatures in the region and plan accordingly. Purchase comfortable shoes to wear for the conference because you will be walking a lot! **Business casual**.

Pre-Conference Continued...

5. If you are traveling to a new city/state, then identify at least one **fun activity or place** you would like to experience while there! Conferences can be exhausting, and you will need a break at some point. Talk to people who have visited the city and get suggestions on top things to do. Look on Trip Advisor or other websites. It is helpful to have an idea of the fun thing you want to do before you arrive, but it can be flexible based on what friends want to do too. Use this opportunity to expand your cultural horizons and life experiences.
 6. Prepare a 30 second “[elevator pitch](#)” describing **who you are and your career goals**. This will be useful for when you are networking with people at the conference. Think about what you have to offer and what your primary interests are. You will not be selling yourself to everyone you meet, but having an idea of how to present yourself is incredibly helpful for decreasing nervousness. Practice, practice, practice. If you have a **business/networking card**, then bring it. This is not necessary, but it can make networking easier. You can also choose to pre-write your name, affiliation, and email on some note cards to share. You can also choose to share contact info via phone. Update your LinkedIn account.
 7. **Prepare for your presentation!** If you are doing a poster, then have a 2 min explanation of the project prepared. People will often approach the poster and say “tell me about your study”...and you need to be ready with a canned response. **Print poster** well in advance (paper or fabric, figure out how you will carry to conference). If you are presenting a paper or symposium, then practice presentation with collaborators. This can be done a few weeks before presentation, but better if prepared early. Print information you want to have with you about the study. Print handouts.
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During the Conference

Conferences can be inspiring and exhausting. Here are some tips that help me stay energized during the conference:

1. When traveling via air, **carry-on luggage**. Avoid checking your bag. You do not want to lose your bag for the conference. Some people choose to wear conference clothes on the plane. I don't, but I also do not wear pajamas on the plane because I OFTEN see other professionals headed to the conference (especially APA). My moto is to look presentable and stay comfortable.
 2. Bring **breakfast**. When I stay at a hotel/hostel I usually bring some oatmeal + chia seeds to make with the hot water from the coffee maker in the morning. This allows me to eat quickly before leaving. You can also bring other non-perishable breakfast options, tea, etc.
 3. Bring **snacks**! Pack some nuts, granola bars, or apples/fruit in your bag for the day. Sometimes you attend a symposium over the lunch period, and you do NOT want to go without eating. You need to refuel multiple times during the day. You can either buy these items from a grocery store when you arrive at your destination, or you can travel with them. They sometimes have food/coffee on site, but it is often overpriced with long lines. You can also scout out lunch spots near convention hall.
 4. Wear **comfortable clothes**. Wear shoes you can stand in for long periods of time. Wear clothes you do not need to fidget with. Wear professional clothes so you do not feel underdressed. Also, bring pen/paper or tablet to take notes
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During the Conference Continued...

5. Take **breaks** when you need to. Go for a walk outside, go to the bathroom, stretch, etc. Socializing and resting is okay!
 6. **Network** with people at the conference. Meet people, introduce yourself, ask questions, and create relationships. Attend student-focused events and mentoring events. Keep an eye out for opportunities to meet people from graduate schools you are interested in (students and faculty). Ask for their business card, write descriptive info on card after conversation to help remind you who they are and what you want to follow up with them about.
 7. **Limit use of alcohol/substances.** Remember you are always “on” from the time you board the plane/check in to your hotel until you get back home. If you are 21+ and decide to drink alcohol at a social hour, then be sure to limit yourself. Sometimes dehydration + anxiety + poor sleep + substances = unprofessional behavior. Be professional at all times!
 8. At the end of each day spend some time **journaling** about the following:
 - a. The most exciting things you learned
 - b. Concerns or lingering questions
 - c. People you met, contact information, descriptive information, and what you need to follow up about
 - d. How the information you learned fits within the bigger picture of your personal/professional development
 9. Try to get good **sleep**. Sometimes it is hard to sleep in a new place. Bring an eye mask, ear plugs, and/or sleep aid (e.g., Melatonin). Set multiple alarms to make sure you get up on time to get to the conference. If traveling to another time zone, consider the impact of jet lag and start adjusting your sleep schedule ahead of time. Plan with roommates to determine who needs to start getting ready first (when sharing a bathroom).
 10. Remember to **smile and enjoy** the conference experience! Practice mindfulness, meditation, and take breaks when needed. Take deep breaths.
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Post-Conference

1. Send emails to follow up with people you met within a few days following conference.
 2. Write additional tips/reminders for future conferences.
 3. Share highlights of your experience with friends, family, and mentors.
 4. Rest and relax!
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