

Conferencing Tips

1. Study your itinerary before you arrive like you're going to be tested on it, because if you don't steer your conference experience, it will steer you. This means knowing who's who, the whens and the wheres. You can't give too much attention to detail in this process.

2. **Meander and explore** before and after sessions. Don't get stuck in one spot or keep the same company with the same people the whole time. Be a free agent. Eat with people you don't know. This is how "serendipity" occurs. You never know what unexpected coincidences and backgrounds you have in common.

3. Be an early bird. Some of the best and definitive sessions are offered at the start of the day. Don't miss them because you can't get out of bed.

4. Have a **business card** and share it with abandon. It makes networking so much easier, faster and seamless. Our university sells these by the hundred for \$16.50. See here (<http://www.printing.illinois.edu/services/document-services/business-cards/student>). Also, sign up for <http://about.me/home/>, a free site for networking. Consider including it as part of your signature in your e-mails.

5. Attend sessions selectively. Any more than three in any given day is too many (and sometimes three is too many). You don't get extra credit for attending everything.

6. Take breaks like you're getting paid to do so. Too much stimulation, too many ideas and too much chatting can be draining. Find a space where you can center yourself and your energy when necessary.

7. **Smile, be warm, approachable and curious** about others. This is basic. A large part of conferences is getting to know other people. Make it easy for others to want to get to know you. Also, know how to speak about yourself without pomp or exaggerated humility. Speak to everyone as though s/he is a peer, after all, you're hoping s/he will be.

8. Take an opportunity to get a feel for the city, venue and your surroundings. I visited a gelateria where I tried white chocolate raspberry gelato and I met a Senegalese doorman who saved me \$22 in parking fees, provided me with free bottled water, cookies and candy and introduced to my first whispering arch, all because I engaged him when he said hello.

9. Carry cash in small bills and coins to pay for parking. You never know what quick or long stops you'll want to make or where.

10. Learn to politely excuse yourself. Talking at length with every person you meet won't prove beneficial or useful. Learn to be polite and firm in making your get-aways.