

How to Work a Scientific Meeting

Large conferences can be daunting. There is always something interesting happening, and you may wonder how to attend all the sessions and special functions and meet everyone that you would like to. This guide will help you get the most out of a scientific meeting.

Prepare ahead of time

- Review schedule ahead of time and mark sessions of interest; decide which session to attend if there are time conflicts
- Highlight names of people you want to meet and determine if you know anyone who may know them (your advisor, senior colleague, etc.); if not, decide on the best approach
- Bring business cards!
- Prepare short “commercial” about your research
 - Be prepared with a 30 second summary of what you are working on. You will also want to have a longer “commercial” for people who ask for more information.

During the conference

- Check schedule to ensure that there have been no changes in time or location
- During a session, sit up front so that you can easily ask questions and be recognized by the speaker (dozing during a presentation IS noticed by the speaker and sends a negative message about you to them)
- Between sessions, seek out those you wish to meet and plan to meet later for a lengthier discussion
- Talk about new directions in the field
- Take notes on back of business cards you receive
 - At the end of a long conference, you likely won’t remember later why you wanted to follow up with everyone whose card you have.

After it is over

- Follow up with the connections you made
- Contact presenters whose sessions you were not able to attend to ask for notes