



5 Things To Do Before a Conference

1. Connect online.

Follow the conference hashtag on social media and connect with other attendees pre-conference. Introducing yourself and connecting with people before you arrive helps calm your nerves and gets you more excited for the event.

2. Download the conference app.

Look at the schedule before you go and map out sessions and events you want to attend. It will feel less overwhelming than if you wait until you get there.

3. Prepare yourself for on-site registration.

When you arrive at a conference, the first thing you'll typically do is head to the registration desk. Put the registration hours and location in your smartphone calendar so you're not scrambling for that information on-site.

4. Grab your business cards.

Business cards are still invaluable when meeting new people, especially at conferences. Consider printing your business cards on matte, rather than glossy, paper, making it easier for people to write on them. It's helpful to write reminders about the person on their business card because you will forget everyone's name and connection later.

5. Look up the conference location on Google Maps.

This gives you the bearings for your "neighborhood." Look up a local drugstore, supermarket or coffee shop within walking distance from your hotel, as well as potential lunch and dinner spots.

9 Things to Take to a Conference

1. Business cards

Every year a few people forget their business cards. So make yourself a packing list and don't forget them!

2. Sharpie markers

Sharpies are for when you need to write on your badge—your Twitter handle, a preferred nickname, your city, whatever you want.

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3. Buttons or pins

At most conferences, you'll be given a lanyard for your badge. Pinning several buttons on your lanyard shows off your personality and can be a great conversation starter.

4. Food

Conferences don't always provide breakfast, and they may only provide unhealthy snacks, so oatmeal packets, granola bars or your own coffee or tea packs can help prevent hunger and keep you healthy.

5. A reusable water bottle

We often forget to drink enough water when we're out of our regular routine. And let's not kill the environment by using endless plastic bottles.

6. Comfortable shoes

Even in a conference that's only in one hotel, you'll do a lot of walking and standing around—and on hard floors. And walking seven blocks away to a yummy restaurant for lunch can be killer on your feet. (Bonus: Bring slippers for your hotel room at night.)

7. An external phone battery charger

There are never enough outlets in hotel conference rooms, and everyone is vying for them with their phone charger cord. You may be using your phone a lot more than you normally do, especially if you tweet throughout the conference. Invest in a charger—and when you let other people borrow it, you'll make instant friends.

8. A notebook

Bring a dedicated notebook to keep notes from sessions. Consider reserving a hardback journal for only conferences, so after a few years you'll have only session tips and strategies in that one book.

9. A list of conversation starters

Conferences can be overwhelming for everyone—even extroverts. Preparation can help with your nerves. Create a list of 3–5 questions to ask fellow attendees. Write them down on a card or in your phone so you can glance at them throughout the conference to reassure and remind yourself. They can be as simple as:

- Have you been here before?
- What's been your favorite session so far?
- Why did you come to this conference?
- Where are you from?

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