Making the Most of Your IAFP Annual Meeting: Tips for Students and First-Timers

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Scientific conferences can be overwhelming, especially for individuals attending for their first time. With all of the opportunities for learning, networking, and socializing available at IAFP 2012, how can anyone make sense of it all?
Overview

• Committees and professional development groups
• Social hours
• Informal networking
• Choosing which symposia to attend
Committees and PDGs

- Participating in a PDG meeting is a great way to meet people
- PDG’s are the lifeblood of IAFP
- Student PDG
- Young Professionals PDG
Social hours

- If you drink alcohol, it’s best to do so in moderation.
- Mingling tips
  - People love to talk about themselves
  - Prepare a few talking points in case someone asks you about yourself. Or your research.
Social hours

- Practice a one sentence and a 3-5 sentence summary of your work. Especially if you someone who gets nervous when meeting new people.
- Having a "script" to fall back on will help get you through those first few seconds of handshakes.
- Print up some business cards. **Yes, even as a grad student.**
Informal networking

- Some times the real action is in the hallways
- When someone gives you their business card because they want something sent to them, neatly print what they want on the back of the card before filing it away (trust me).
Informal networking

- Practice the networking dance
Practice the networking dance

- “Looks like I need a refill”
- “Excuse me, I see an old friend and I need to say hello”
- “It’s been great chatting, but if you will excuse me”
Informal networking

- If you're alone at a social hour, take the initiative!
- Almost everyone is friendly, and it's easier to break the ice than you think.
- Dress “conference appropriate”.
- You can't lose a job prospect from being a bit formally dressed, but you can from being too informal.
Which sessions to attend?

- **Symposia**
  - Good for high level overview and good speakers
- **Technical talks**
  - Easy way to get quick updates on a topic
- **Poster sessions**
  - Great opportunity for one-on-one discussions
Which sessions to attend?

- Plan go to at least one session that is on a topic you are interested in, but don't know a lot about.
- Consider using the session planner
  - [https://iafp.confex.com/iafp/2012/schedule/index.cgi](https://iafp.confex.com/iafp/2012/schedule/index.cgi)
- Watch for our iPhone app
  - Currently in review in the app store
Session engagement

- It’s ok to session hop!
  - It’s why the times are synchronized
- It’s ok to sit up front!
  - That is usually where the seats are
- It’s ok to walk out half way through a talk
  - Especially if it’s bad talk or the speaker is over time
- Ask a question!
- Make a plan with your advisor... or not.
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Comments and questions

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