



# YOUR GUIDE TO SUCCESSFULLY ATTENDING A CONFERENCE

# FUTURE

THE **NATIONAL CONFERENCE** FOR  
THE FUTURE OF FAMILY MEDICINE





**Attending FUTURE**—or any conference, for that matter—is an incredible opportunity to grow your skill set, make valuable connections and gain inspiration from specialty leaders.

With so much riding on this one event, it’s natural to feel overwhelmed.

This guide will take you through the steps to make your first (and second and third...) conference a success. With proper planning, you can make the most of this important experience.



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# PRECONFERENCE PREP

Researching a conference before attending is crucial. It helps ensure a successful and fulfilling experience. Check out these key touchpoints:



## ☐ **Review the Schedule**

Identify sessions, speakers and networking events you don't want to miss.



## ☐ **Peruse the Expo Hall**

Note which residency programs and organizations you want to meet.



## ☐ **Review FAQs**

Get all your questions answered on our FAQ webpage.



## ☐ **Check in with Your Peers**

Need a dinner companion or running buddy? Chat with other attendees via [GroupMe](#).



## ☐ **Make Reservations**

Take advantage of your trip to Kansas City by making restaurant reservations or saving info for museums, shops and other local haunts you want to hit up.

# IDENTIFY YOUR GOALS

Maximize your conference experience by determining what you want to achieve on-site in advance.

Make your goals **SMART**—**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant and **T**ime-bound. Instead of "network with professionals," you could "connect with at least five residency programs in the Expo Hall."

Have a larger goal? Break it down into smaller ones. For example, if your goal is to find your ideal residency program, identify specific programs you want to meet in the Expo Hall and save Match sessions in our app.

That said, keep an open mind to unexpected opportunities. While goal setting is important, that last-minute schedule change could lead to a breakthrough.



# PACKING LIST

Make sure you bring all your essentials for a smooth and successful conference. Here's a list to get you started:



## ☐ **ID and Badge**

Ensure a smooth check-in and access to the conference.



## ☐ **Note-taking Tools**

Think pens, highlighters, notebooks, etc.



## ☐ **Tech**

Your phone, laptop and/or tablet, chargers



## ☐ **Attire for All Occasions**

Comfortable clothes for sessions, business casual for events, masquerade for Celebration



## ☐ **Personal Care Items**

Hand sanitizer, gum, pain relievers, lip balm—anything you might need for minor discomforts

# NETWORKING STRATEGIES

Conferences are an excellent time to build lasting connections and enhance your skill set. Make the most of your interactions with these strategies:

- **Prepare an elevator pitch.** Jot down how you'll introduce yourself, what your future goals are, and what you're interested in learning.
- **Approach and engage with fellow attendees.** While this can be intimidating, it's a valuable opportunity to learn from others.
- **Break the ice.** Discussing mutual interests can foster deeper connections and facilitate more meaningful conversations.
- **Listen actively.** Avoid interrupting or dominating the conversation. Ask questions and provide feedback to demonstrate your engagement.
- **Participate in group discussions.** Actively contribute, share insights, and ask questions. These smaller group interactions can lead to more in-depth conversations and connections.
- **Respect time constraints.** If someone seems busy or engaged in another conversation, don't interrupt. Look for a time to connect later.
- **Nervous?** That's totally normal! Networking is about building relationships, so be yourself, show genuine interest in others and approach conversations with an open mind. With practice and experience, you'll become more comfortable and confident.

# MAXIMIZE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

You're already well-versed in learning strategies, but a conference is a good time to brush up on your note-taking skills and think creatively about your schedule. You never know what great idea or unlikely session might strike a chord with you.

- **Choose sessions strategically.** Review the conference schedule in advance and save sessions that resonate with your interests and goals.
- **Diversify your schedule.** Explore a mix of session types and formats, such as keynote speeches, panel discussions, workshops and interactive sessions. Variety can provide different perspectives and learning experiences.
- **Try various note-taking techniques:**
  - o Traditional: Sequential and linear
  - o Mind Maps: Start with a central topic and branch out with related subtopics. Use colors, symbols and images to make connections between different ideas.
  - o Cornell Method: Divide the page into three sections—a narrow left-hand column, a wider right-hand column and a bottom section. In the main right-hand column, jot down key points and ideas. Use the left-hand column for cues or prompts summarizing the main points and the bottom section to translate the session or write down questions and reflections.
  - o Concept Maps: Like Mind Maps, these are focused on organizing complex relationships between ideas or concepts. Use labels or brief descriptions to identify those relationships.
  - o Sketching: Create visual representations of concepts, processes or relationships discussed during sessions.
- **Use highlighters or colored pens/pencils.** Use color to emphasize key points in your notes.
- **Draw diagrams, charts or graphs.** Annotate them with additional details or explanations.
- **Record important segments of the sessions to refer to later.** Ask permission to record first.
- **Use sticky tabs.** Mark important sections or key pages in your notebook or program guide.



# MANAGING CONFERENCE BURNOUT

It's normal to feel overwhelmed during a conference. Utilize these strategies for a productive and enjoyable conference.

- **Create a personalized schedule.** Attending every session and event is impossible. Prioritize things that align with your goals and interests. Focus on quality over quantity.
- **Allow buffer time between sessions.** Take time to digest information and prepare for the next session. Explore the Expo Hall or engage in informal networking.
- **Avoid information overload.** If you try to capture every piece of information in a session, you'll miss other important points. Prioritize what's relevant and worthy of being noted. Review your notes at the end of each day to reinforce learning.
- **Allow for spontaneous interactions, impromptu sessions or unexpected encounters.** These can provide unique and valuable experiences.
- **Take care of yourself.** Get enough sleep, eat full meals and take time to enjoy your time at FUTURE.

## PREP FOR RESIDENCY VISITS

What should you expect when you visit a program's booth? At each one, you'll see the friendly faces of program representatives. Reps are typically current staff, residents and faculty, including program directors. These are the same people you'll meet during interviews, but these interactions are much more casual.

It's not unusual to chat with a program for 30 minutes or stop by multiple times. Just allow yourself enough time to have meaningful conversations with the programs that interest you.

Looking to make a good impression? Bring a positive attitude and curiosity.

### 3 steps to get you ready:



Think about what you want out of a residency program.



Jot down the questions you need to ask to find your perfect fit.



List out the programs you want to meet using the Expo Hall map.

# POST-CONFERENCE FOLLOW-UP

The post-conference phase is just as important as the conference itself. Solidify your learning, build on connections, and leverage your conference experience for professional development.

- **Note takeaways.** Review and organize your notes from the conference. Consolidate key insights, action items and any additional thoughts or reflections. This will help reinforce your learning and make it easier to reference later.
- **Socialize it.** Consider sharing your conference experience with your colleagues, team members or professional networks through social media. Create a post, story, reel and/or blog post highlighting your most valuable takeaways.
- **Be sure to follow up.** Nurture connections via email or LinkedIn and explore opportunities for future collaboration.

