

## Attending EPA: Advice for Students

### Seven reasons why you should attend EPA:

1. to see, hear and meet the people who have written papers you have read
2. to find out what is current in psychology
3. to network and build relationships with other researchers in the field
4. to tell people what you are doing and to find out what they are doing
5. to identify potential graduate or postdoctoral advisors
6. to learn what works and what doesn't in a presentation
7. to see your own research in a new light

### What you need to do:

#### Before the meeting

1. Read the program and highlight the sessions and talks you want to attend
2. Email one or two researchers who will be speaking, introduce yourself and let them know you'll be attending their presentations and saying hello at the meeting
3. Read one of their recent publications
4. Plan what you will say about your own research and practice on friends and your advisor. Think about how to frame your work to convey how interesting it is. Remember to talk first about the *goals* of your research, and only then about the *techniques* you are using. You have to convince others that the work is worth hearing about before they will be willing to listen to the technical details.
5. Make sure your wardrobe is professional. Pack clothes you would normally wear in a business setting (for women—dress or pants suit; for men—long pants and tie). Do not wear flip-flops, sneakers, or the type of high fashion shoes you might wear to go out. Remember, as a professional, you want attention to be on what you are saying not on what you are wearing.

#### At the meeting

6. Register early, if possible. There can be long lines at the registration desk and if it is possible to avoid them, you will have more time to attend the actual conference sessions.
7. Go to talks, write down your questions, and ask one at the end of the talk (if you are feeling brave) or in private with the speaker after the session ends.
8. Go to the posters and meet the presenters. Most will be students but very often their advisors will be on hand. Ask the student presenter to lead you through the poster, listen carefully and questions will naturally arise. You're now networking with future colleagues, reviewers and potential referees!
9. Schmooze. This usually means standing in hallways talking to colleagues but you can do this at the poster sessions and in the elevators. Sometimes you can get your advisor to introduce you to that 'famous' person but sometimes you just have to pluck up the courage and take the initiative to start a conversation. It is okay to join a group and just listen to their conversation. Sometimes

they'll acknowledge you, sometimes they won't. But it's worth trying to get involved in these conversations when possible. Of course, the best way to get involved is to ask a question: it flatters people and makes them respond to you. And you learn something.

10. Trying to have meals with folks is a really good way to meet them. Some people you know probably know other folks; make sure to remind them to bring you along if they set something up.
11. Talk about your own work. (Beware the trap of knowing your work so well that it doesn't sound interesting, or that you can't tease apart the interesting big issues from the details!) You'll learn a lot from talking about your work — seeing what confuses people and receiving their ideas and suggestions, for example — but remember that no one likes to be in a conversation in which they only listen.
12. Help others: make introductions and tell others of related work or people they should talk to. Not only is this the right thing to do, but others will remember and will do the same for you.
13. Act professionally at all times. When you are in the conference hotel, behave in a mature manner, as you never know who you will run into while wandering the corridors or riding the elevators. Remember, as a professional, you want attention to be on what you are saying not on what you are doing. Display your name tag prominently so people can see who you are and the school you attend.

### **After the meeting**

14. Follow up new contacts with an email reminding them of your discussion and your interest in their work, and if appropriate their interest in what you are doing.
15. If there wasn't time to ask your questions or if you have more, send the speaker an email and begin a dialogue. Be selective and don't start something you do not have time to maintain.
16. Let us know at EPA what worked for you and what might be improved. Constructive feedback is very helpful and we'd love to hear from you! Email: [epaexec@gmail.com](mailto:epaexec@gmail.com)

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The following sources were used to compile this guide for students attending EPA:

<http://www.icse-conferences.org/2002/advice/notkin.html> (David Notkin, University of Washington)

<http://www.cs.washington.edu/homes/mernst/advice/conference-attendance.html> (Michael Ernst, University of Washington)

<http://www.psichi.org/conventions/attendees.aspx> (Susan Krauss Whitbourne, University of Massachusetts Amherst)

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