

How to Navigate the GSA Annual Meeting

So you're at your first conference: how to cope with the wealth of information and options.

Welcome to your first GSA Annual Scientific Meeting! This is one of the largest gerontological research conferences in the country, with a treasure trove of presentations, paper sessions, symposia, and other learning and networking experiences! The first question that experienced conference goers often get from those who have never been is: there are so many things to do, how do I do them all? The resounding answer is: YOU DON'T! Thus, we will present in the first article of this tutorial some ideas for how best to organize your time to maximize your experience.

First, before you even step into the hotel—about a month before—read the preliminary program. By doing so, you can identify presenters with whom you share interests and could set up a time to meet. You can use the directory in the members-only section of the GSA website (www.geron.org) to get their contact information and schedule a meeting for while you are at the conference. Trying to set up a meeting during the conference can be exceedingly difficult, as many scholars' schedules fill up well before the conference begins.

Second, attend the Saturday morning ESPO Breakfast and Community Meeting. This is a perfect venue to learn how to become involved in GSA and to network with fellow ESPO members.

Third, you only can attend so many symposia before your mind goes blank. Therefore, ensure that you take some time for yourself during each day, whether through exercise, a walk, or coffee with friends in the middle of the afternoon. The primary feedback we get from emerging scholars after their first conference is that they wish they didn't attend so many symposia on the first two days because they were unable to concentrate by day three; as one student put it, "my brain feels so full I can't think anymore!"

Fourth, take time to visit the Exhibit Hall. This serves several purposes. One, it will allow you to decompress a bit from symposia. Two, there is often free food, coffee/tea, and a wi fi hotspot. Three, you can obtain a cornucopia of research and educational resources from exhibitors. Lastly, you may meet new people or presenters that you saw in earlier sessions but were unable to talk with, thereby giving you a perfect opportunity to network.

Fifth, attending oral presentations and symposia might seem "all the rage," but more often the poster sessions, particularly those in your interest area, provide an opportunity to interact with new and established scholars in your field. They also allow you to obtain a greater variety of information; between four and five oral presentations usually are given in a symposium session whereas you can see about 15 posters and network with the authors in the same time period at a poster session!

Sixth, attend the ESPO Wine and Cheese social and get there early! GSA fellows are present at this event and can provide mentorship and networking opportunities. They often are quite ready to chat and meet new scholars after a day of board meetings and/or presentations!

Finally, ESPO has worked with GSA to create an ESPO lounge where you can talk with ESPO officers about their conference experiences and about how to become involved, or just sit, relax, and meet fellow ESPO members. Also, it's a great place to meet that scholar with whom you set up a meeting!

Room Sharing

You can search for a roommate by posting requests on the ESPO Facebook page to find other ESPO members looking to minimize costs.

Networking at the GSA Annual Scientific Meeting

While the GSA Annual Scientific Meeting provides important updates and cutting-edge research symposia, one of the greatest benefits of the meeting is networking with both established and new researchers and clinicians in the field of gerontology. Although you may not be able to set up meetings or have long face-to-face interactions with everyone you hope, you still have the opportunity to create strong professional relationships.

A couple of tips for networking:

1. BRING PLENTY OF BUSINESS CARDS!!! It doesn't matter if you use an official university card or make some using your printer. This is one of the best

ESPO Member Lounge

Open Saturday, November 20 – Monday, November 22 from 8:00am – 5:00pm. Come enjoy a quiet place to relax and network with other ESPO members.



ways to meet other colleagues and follow-up with them, whether about possible fellowship opportunities, collaboration, or just to receive more information about a study.

2. Don't be afraid to approach an attendee of the conference, whether after a symposia, while they are standing in the hall, etc. You would be surprised at how open established scholars of GSA are towards up-and-coming scholars. In fact, some well renowned scholars even have asked how they can be more efficient and effective at meeting newer scholars.

3. Stated above, but reinforced here, attend the ESPO Wine and Cheese social. Beyond the excellent vintages offered for your enjoyment, this is a fantastic place to meet GSA fellows. All fellows of GSA are invited to this event, and many do take time to join us. In fact, the fellows that come to the social are going out of their way to come especially because they want to meet and interact with emerging scholars!

ESPO Conference Events

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 20TH

New Member Meet & Greet

7:00am-8:00am, location TBD

GSA Fellows Mentoring Program

7:00am-8:30am, location TBD

ESPO Breakfast & Community Meeting

8:00am-10:00am, location TBD

ESPO Presidential Symposium (*The Struggle Between Personal & Professional Identity: Transitioning from Student to Emerging Scholar & Professional*)

12:30pm-2:00pm, location TBD

ESPO Wine & Cheese

7:00pm-8:30pm, location TBD



Online Itinerary Planner

Make the most of your time with GSA's Interactive Itinerary Planner! All of the conference sessions can be found in the online itinerary planner, which can be accessed at www.geron.org/2010. You can search conference sessions by speaker, title, date, time, topic area, presenters' last names, and keywords. This is a great way to plan your time at the conference and make sure you attend the sessions you want to attend.

Volunteer Program

Volunteers are needed for GSA's 63rd Annual Scientific Meeting. Volunteers will receive complimentary meeting registration in exchange for eight hours of work assisting at the registration desk, answering attendees' questions, and supporting GSA Staff and the Local Arrangements Committee. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Jamie Millard: jmillard@tulane.edu.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 21ST

ESPO-Sponsored Health Sciences (HS)

Symposium (*Emerging Scholars in Health & Aging Research*)

8:00am-9:30am, location TBD

ESPO-Sponsored Social Research, Policy &

Practice (SRPP) Symposium (*Programmatic Approaches to Healthy Aging & Community Living*)

1:30pm-3:00pm, location TBD

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 22ND

Campus Ambassadors Meeting

7:00am-8:00am, location TBD

ESPO-Sponsored Behavioral and Social

Sciences (BSS) Symposium (*Correlates of Functional Disability in Older Adults: Implications for Minority Populations*)

9:30am-11:00am, location TBD

ESPO-Sponsored Biological Sciences (BS)

Symposium (*Human Biogerontological Research: Results From ESPO Researchers*)

12:00pm-1:30pm, location TBD