**\*\*\* BRING A SWEATER CONFERENCES ARE COLD \*\*\***

**Welcome to your first (or 5th) conference. This checklist is meant to provide a scaffold for you to get the most out of a conference. Use this as an excuse. You want to meet somebody but you’re too scared? Go up and say “I have to introduce myself to you because you are somebody whose work I admire, and I am following a conference scavenger hunt.” I don’t care, just meet them!**

**The overall list:**

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| **10** | Posters visited where you engaged the presenters, especially lonely looking younger researchers at what is perhaps their first conference! Be supportive of younger scientists! |
| **9** | Talks attended that are related to your research in some way (Methods? Organism? Question?) |
| **8** | New science friends at similar career stages that you exchanged contact info with – your network is not just who you know who is famous now- it’s who you will become famous WITH in the future! |
| **7** | Times you took a 15-minute break, or a 30-minute midday nap, or engaged in another form of self-care. Conferences are MARATHONS. You cannot go to every single session, all talks, all lunches, all dinners, all drinks…. Make sure you TAKE BREAKS!  |
| **6** | People you knew by reputation and introduced yourself to- be brave and make connections! |
| **5** | Talks attended in TOTALLY RANDOM topics/sessions with no overlap with your current science |
| **4** | Conference activities outside sessions attended (workshops, etc.) |
| **3** | Potential scientific mentors identified and met |
| **2** | Days when you went to the earliest session of the day- someday you’ll be stuck in this timeslot! |
| **1** | Question aloud to the room after a talk |

**Read through the questions ahead of the conference, and then go talk/poster shopping once you get the program. I will tell you if there are specific talks I REALLY want you to see; otherwise, I expect you to run around independently and pursue YOUR interests.**

**Fill out the items below:**

* I went to **10** posters!

Did you connect with anybody awesome? Add them to **8** or **6** or **3**! Jot down notes here:

How did it feel to go up to a young scientist’s poster who looked all alone? What question did you ask that was inviting? Do you think you made a difference to that student’s conference experience?

What are three things you noticed about poster design that you want to incorporate in the future?

What are three things you noticed about poster design that you want to avoid in the future?

* I attended **9** talks that were relevant to my research!

What cool new ideas did you find? Please record as “ostracods may be the secret to unlocking the universe (Talk S-15, Smith et al., University of Mars)”

Did you change your mind or opinion about anything as a result of a talk?

What elements of communicating science to the “in-crowd” (people who know the foundation of your work already) did you think were really effective?

* I connected with **8** (or more!) people who are at a similar career stage to me!

SEE LAST PAGES

* I took care of myself at least **7** ways and didn’t collapse into a heap on the last day!

When did you first start feeling mental fatigue?

How about physical fatigue? (Yeah, how’s your back? How’s your neck? Did you sleep?)

Did taking a break from a session or a few talks make a difference to your ability to focus?

Did you drink enough water? NO, YOU DIDN’T. REHYDRATE YOURSELF.

Did you experience any pressure to drink alcohol during the conference? Tell me about when that happened, and how you felt about it.

* I got to meet these **6** amazing people!

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* I went to these **5** off-the-wall talks

What talks did you pick?

What was the craziest thing you learned?

What was something a speaker did that invited you in to a topic that you didn’t have a background in?

What was something a speaker did that made you feel awkward/uncomfortable because you couldn’t really follow their talk?

* I went to these **4** activities/workshops/meetings

What did you do?

What was some helpful advice you got?

Which one sounded exciting but ended up being boring?

What cool new ideas do you have to share?

* I met these **3** potential scientific mentors or role models

SEE LAST PAGES, and:

What did you find inspiring about them?

What KIND of mentor do you think they could become for you?

How will you stay connected to them moving forward?

* I made it to **2** early morning sessions

How much did this suck?

How sad did the speaker look?

* I asked at least **1** question out loud and the floor did not, in fact, fall from beneath me!

What happened?

**Conference Followup Cheatsheet:**

After the conference, you’re going to want to send followup emails to all the people you just connected to. This accomplishes a few things: 1) it reminds them that you met and that you exist; 2) it gives them a concrete searchable item in their inbox, so when you email them again in a few months they have a way to remind themselves who on earth you are; 3) it invites them to stay in touch with you! Most of the time, you’ll get a polite “so nice to meet you too, best of luck in the future, X”, but you’d be surprised how years later somebody will remember you who YOU don’t remember meeting!

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| **Name:** John Smith |
| **University/Position:** Postdoc @ University of Mars |
| **Professionally, we discussed:** Martian atmospheric conditions as a model for climate change |
| **Personally, we discussed:** He has a French bulldog and we are both terrified of spiders. |

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