

8 TIPS FOR NAVIGATING YOUR FIRST GATLINBURG CONFERENCE

Created by the Early Stage Investigator and Preconference Program Committee

1 | YOU DON'T HAVE TO KNOW EVERYONE

Conferences can make it feel like **everyone around you already knows each other**. It's okay to feel that way (trust us, we've all been there!), but **don't let it stop you from introducing yourself**.

2 | CREATE AN ELEVATOR PITCH

You don't need to have your entire career trajectory planned out to introduce yourself. **Your pitch will grow with you!** Share what you feel is relevant based on where you are at.

Example:

"Hi, I'm [name] and I am a [student/early-career professional] at [University/Organization], working with [advisor name]. I'm interested in [research topic]."



3 | CONNECT WITH PEOPLE ACROSS CAREER STAGES & PATHS



Some of the best conversations and collaborations can begin with people whose paths look completely different from your own. **Need a place to start? Join us Tuesday, October 6th, for the preconference career panel!**



4 | REVIEW THE PROGRAM IN ADVANCE

Use the **Gatlinburg Conference app** to find sessions to attend and people you may want to meet. **Bookmark sessions to create a personalized schedule** and easily navigate the conference.



my.yapp.us/GATCON26

5 | TAKE NOTES ON PRESENTATIONS & MORE

Create a dedicated notes page for the conference. **Jot down talk titles and authors** for easy follow-up, along with **ideas, resources, and questions** sparked by what you learn.

6 | ATTEND THE POSTER SESSIONS

Poster sessions are a great opportunity to network, **but they can get busy!** Mark the posters you're interested in ahead of time so you can easily find and prioritize them during the session.

Quiet hours are offered for viewing posters at your own pace. See the schedule for specific times.

Pro tip: Scan QR codes on posters to view online versions, references, and contact information!



7 | DON'T BE AFRAID TO CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

Chatting between sessions is great, but **don't be afraid to keep the conversation going!** If you meet someone whose work or career interests you, ask if they'd have time to grab coffee, lunch, or dinner during the conference.



8 | REMEMBER: YOU BELONG HERE

You don't need a Ph.D., a long list of publications, or years of experience to be part of the conversation. We all share the goal of supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and your work and perspectives belong here. **Be curious, make connections, and enjoy being part of the Gatlinburg family!**