

# First time to a WSCA convention? This is for you!

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## **MEMBERSHIP**

### **Should I become a member of WSCA?**

Yes! WSCA is the largest and most active regional association for people in the communication discipline. WSCA has about 1000 members including educators, practitioners, and students who work and reside in many states, not only in the western United States, and other countries. WSCA seeks to enhance the research, teaching, and service of its members.

If you are planning to attend the convention, you will save money by preregistering. Also, members of WSCA pay less.

WSCA has multiple membership levels including Student, Regular, and Life.

Also available is the option of receiving the three other regional associations' journals, in addition to our *Western Journal of Communication* and *Communication Reports*, which adds up to 16 journals per year.

### **How do I become a member of WSCA?**

You can use one of three methods. First you can become a member online. Simply go to [www.westcomm.org](http://www.westcomm.org) and follow the steps that are outlined on our secure server. You can pay for membership online with a credit card.

Second, you can go online to [www.westcomm.org](http://www.westcomm.org) and print out the form provided. Complete the form and submit it through regular mail to the Executive Director.

Third, an application form for membership is also included in the membership mailing sent out in October of every year.

## **ADVANCE PREPARATION**

### **What do I need to do before the convention?**

You probably will want to make an airline reservation or other transportation arrangements, make a hotel reservation, and pre-register for the convention.

### **Do you have any tips on how to get started?**

#### **Airlines**

Many of our members use Internet travel sites to find the best deals for airfare. Sites include Hotwire.com, Cheaptickets.com, Travelocity.com, Priceline.com, Orbitz.com, and so forth.

#### **Hotels**

WSCA contracts with convention hotels that are large enough to host the many panels and meetings scheduled and provide the best possible guest room rates for its members. In addition, we look for hotels that are conveniently located, environmentally friendly, and comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. It is important for you to stay in the convention hotel so we fulfill our room contract and are not charged a penalty.

Many people choose to share rooms to lower costs; the price of a hotel room is the same no matter if you have one person or four in the room.

## **Preregistration**

We send out preregistration packets to members in late fall. You can either mail the preregistration form back to us by the deadline, or you can preregister for the convention by going online to [www.westcomm.org](http://www.westcomm.org)

If you wait to register at the convention, you will pay a significantly higher registration fee and spend time waiting in line.

## **CONVENTION HOTELS**

### **What amenities can I expect at the WSCA convention hotels?**

Our convention hotels usually have guest room amenities that include a coffee maker and complimentary coffee, color cable with in-room movies & video games, in-room safe, hair dryer, iron and ironing board, video checkout, and 24-hour room service. Additional hotel services usually include an exercise and fitness center, a business center, and a laundry valet.

### **Do the convention hotels offer concierge services?**

Yes, convention hotels offer concierge services including arranging assistance outside the hotel for rental cars, tours, dining reservations, and other events. You can call them from your room or speak with them in person. They serve at no extra charge.

## **PRACTICAL MATTERS**

### **Can my partner or family members accompany me to the convention?**

Absolutely! WSCA, for many members, is a family affair. The WSCA convention has many social aspects in addition to its fine intellectual tradition. Your family can attend the panel that includes your presentation without registering; just explain to the usher who they are. However, if they would like to attend other presentations, meetings, etc., they'll need to register for at least one day.

### **What should I pack?**

Dress at the convention is business or business casual. Depending upon your evening plans, you might want to pack jeans or a more formal outfit.

### **What is the best way to get from the airport to the convention hotels?**

Information about transportation can be found on the Local Host's web site, linked from [www.westcomm.org](http://www.westcomm.org). Most cities have a shuttle service from the airport to and from major hotels; it usually costs something but is less expensive than taking a taxi. If you are traveling with a group, you may want to share a cab, which usually takes a maximum of four people. Public transportation also is available.

### **What is considered professional behavior at the convention?**

As with any professional activity, you should conduct yourself in a professional manner. Drinking socially is appropriate, but embarrassing yourself and your institution by drinking too much is not. The Western convention is a friendly place; walk up and introduce yourself to people, but be considerate of

what they are doing (e.g., talking with someone else). During a presentation, you should not talk with others in the audience. If you have questions about a presentation, talk with the presenter following her/his presentation.

## **ORGANIZING YOUR TIME AT THE CONVENTION**

### **When should I plan to arrive and depart the convention?**

To take full advantage of the convention, you should arrive Friday evening or Saturday and depart on Tuesday afternoon. A pre-conference and several workshops occur on Saturday, so you might want to arrive on Friday to take advantage of them. Information about this year's pre-conference and workshops comes in the preregistration packet and can be found on the WSCA web site ([www.westcomm.org](http://www.westcomm.org)).

### **How should I organize my time at the convention?**

Veterans of the WSCA convention maximize their time by figuring out a schedule in advance. You can search the convention program online at [www.westcomm.org](http://www.westcomm.org) before you go. By using keywords, Interest Group, and individual's names, you can find presentations and business meetings you would like to attend. One helpful way to manage your time is by using a day-planner and filling in times for events of interest. Here are some helpful hints.

- First priority: Know when you're scheduled to present! You should find this out as soon as possible, as your trip planning may be scheduled around your presentation.
- Choose the presentations you would like to attend. These choices can be based on topics of interest to you, friends or faculty who are presenting, or even presenters you would like to meet (a presentation provides a great opportunity to begin a conversation with them). Many presenters also will have papers you might like receive.
- Choose the meetings you would like to attend. Meetings of the Interest Groups and the Legislative Assembly are open for any WSCA member to attend. If you signed up for an Interest Group when you joined WSCA, you can become an active participant in its meeting, a perfect way to experience WSCA membership as well as a valuable opportunity to meet people and create professional relationships.
- Don't forget to save some time for fun! WSCA offers several social events as part of the overall convention experience. A Newcomers' Reception is scheduled on Saturday afternoon, which is a good place to meet with friends or to make new ones. Following the Newcomers' Reception is the convention Kick Off and Welcome Reception. And there's a hoppin' Sock Hop on Sunday night for you to relax, mingle, and shake your stuff on the dance floor!
- Have fun outside the convention as well! Set aside some time to explore the year's convention location. Many attractions, regional cuisine (you might want to schedule some time to eat), historical tours, shopping, and other events will compete for your time.
- Consider where the events are located. Consider how long it will take to move from one event to another. If you are out and about in the city, be sure you are able to get back in time for convention events of interest (not to mention your own presentation).

### **Does WSCA offer any special events for Newcomers?**

Yes—definitely! You are central to WSCA, and we are happy to welcome you to the Association and the convention. On Saturday afternoon, a special Newcomers' Reception is held just for you. You will meet leaders in the discipline, learn about the structure of the organization, and have time to network with others who are new to WSCA.

## **Should I attend the business meetings that are listed in the program?**

Yes! Interest Group business meetings are optional but offer many advantages. One advantage is the input you'll have in disciplinary issues and directions. You'll have the opportunity to elect leaders and discuss new directions in your research area. Business meetings offer both leadership and networking opportunities. If you would like to become active in WSCA, volunteering to serve your Interest Group can help you in that direction. You will be able to meet other scholars and teachers who share your research interests and gain opportunities to work with them. Finally, these meetings offer you the chance to meet people on a social level.

## **Are the several sessions offered for the entire membership?**

On Saturday there is a Welcome Reception followed by the Kick Off event. On Sunday there usually is a brunch immediately before the Keynote Speech. On Monday, there is the Convention Luncheon at which we celebrate WSCA by introducing our leaders, giving awards, and previewing the next year's convention location.

## **How can I get more involved?**

Even before you go to the convention, you can plan to be involved. You may offer to be of assistance to your own academic department, which might be doing a special program, project, or party and could use your help.

If opportunities occur during meetings or programs, volunteer! When you apply for WSCA membership, be sure to choose at least three Interest Groups with which to affiliate. Once you have made those affiliations, you'll be placed on their lists so you'll receive information of interest to you. Attend your Interest Groups' business meetings and volunteer to be a reader (to read and evaluate papers that are submitted for inclusion for the next convention) or volunteer for other roles.

## **Why are the University Parties not included in the program? Am I invited?**

Many schools host parties at the convention, generally on Sunday or Monday evenings. While the parties are not part of the WSCA-sponsored events, WSCA does "sublet" space for them. The parties began many years ago as "invitation only," but the rules have relaxed, and today many people go to multiple parties—with or without an invitation. There is also the Welcome Reception Saturday evening for everyone to attend.

## **PRESENTATIONS and PAPERS**

### **I am presenting my first paper. Do you have any advice?**

Prepare a presentation that follows all the rules of good speech making. Plan an introduction and conclusion. Organize the body of your talk, and provide internal organizing mechanisms so people can follow you easily. Do not speak beyond the allotted time. Do not read your paper or outline—speak extemporaneously. Cover all of your study or report, but do so briefly. In this instance, less is clearly more!

## **Should I bring multiple copies of my paper?**

If you are presenting, you have several options for distributing your paper.

1. You might bring a one-page summary of the paper with the title, abstract, and contact information for those who would like the complete paper e-mailed to them.
2. You might bring copies of the complete paper to give to those who request them at the presentation.
3. If you run out of your one-page summary or complete papers, have a list for those interested to sign up with their names and e-mail addresses.

## **How can I best secure copies of others' papers?**

Presenters should put the summaries or complete papers on the table in front of them for you to pick up before or after the panel. If you see no summary, complete paper, or sign-up list, ask the presenter if you may start a list.

## **MEETING OTHERS**

### **How can I network with others?**

Having an opportunity to meet people in the communication discipline is one of the key purposes of the convention. Many of us remember our first conventions as those where we met important scholars and textbook authors. If you see someone whose work you admire, or you simply want to meet her or him, you can either have someone you know introduce you or you can introduce yourself. Walking up to someone and introducing yourself is very appropriate.

## **BEYOND THE CONVENTION**

### **How can I learn more about the convention city?**

Each host city is unique with lively nights and a wide variety of activities. The best way to find out about what that city has to offer is to visit its web site for the Convention and Visitor's Bureau and check out the Local Host web site linked to [www.westcomm.org](http://www.westcomm.org).

### **How can I learn more about local restaurants?**

You can learn about dining possibilities online, in tourist magazines that will be available in your hotel room, through the hotel concierge, and from local information available in the registration area.

### **What are the rules for tipping in restaurants and other places?**

Tipping is the norm in this country, and diners are expected to tip 15% of the bill at a minimum. At conventions, you frequently go out to eat with a group of people. Ask for separate checks, but if the restaurant will only give you one check, be sure the wait staff is tipped appropriately for the total bill. Sometimes in figuring out who owes how much, someone in the group may forget their part of the tip, so make sure everyone leaves what they should.

Bellhops and other hotel employees expect to be tipped, and the customary amount is \$1 per bag. If you use valet parking, the customary fee is \$2 or \$3. If someone hails a cab for you, the normal tip is \$2.

## How can I find commonly something I forgot/ran out of?

Most hotel lobby shops carry the common items most needed by travelers and guests. If you need a pharmacy or supermarket, ask the hotel concierge.

## What do I do in case of a medical emergency?

Call the hotel operator or hotel security. WSCA hotels have emergency procedures that will help you.

## FUNDING

### The cost of the convention is often an issue for graduate students and new professors. What funding is available?

A few tips:

- Ask what is available at your school. Often times funding opportunities are missed because people don't know they are available. Ask your department chair about possible funding opportunities at your school. Other branches of your school's administration may also have funds for scholarly presentations. "Use-it-or-lose-it" funding sources that need to be utilized by the end of a fiscal period may provide unexpected opportunities for full or partial convention funding.
- Look for other funding opportunities. Some funding opportunities may be offered once per year per recipient. If you plan to attend more than one convention in a fiscal period, request funding for the convention that maximizes the amount received.
- Submit papers for the convention. Funding for conventions is often restricted to those whose presentations have been accepted at the convention. By submitting more than one paper, or submitting papers to less competitive Interest Groups, you increase the likelihood of having your paper approved and gaining funding for the convention.
- Stay within your funding budget. Be aware of your expenses, and try not to spend what you can't afford beyond your funding.
- Keep your receipts! Funding is sometimes retroactive and may require receipts for compensation. Be sure to keep all of your receipts, including parking and cab fare (request a receipt from the driver). If you travel by car, be sure to keep track of the number of miles driven for the convention trip.

## SAFETY

### Will I be safe in the convention city?

While traveling to WSCA conventions and visiting different cities is designed to be educational and pleasurable, you want to be sure to keep your memories positive by avoiding being a victim of crime. Here are some helpful hints to having a positive and safe trip to the convention and surrounding areas. Remember, if you ever feel you are in a threatening situation, call 911 immediately. If you cannot call, have someone (like an employee at a nearby business) call for you.

#### **In your hotel / At the convention**

- Only leave valuables in your hotel room in the safe deposit box. If there isn't a safe deposit box in the room, keep valuables in the hotel safe deposit box.
- If someone comes to your room saying they are with the hotel, verify with the front desk before

allowing them in.

- An easy way to identify someone as being with the WSCA convention is by her or his name badge, given to him or her at registration.
- Be very cautious about inviting any new friends to your hotel room.
- Report suspicious activity outside of your room or in the halls to hotel management.

### **With your car**

- Don't leave luggage or packages in your car. Avoiding leaving valuables where people can see them in your parked car.
- Don't park in dark or deserted areas. When possible, spend the few extra dollars to park in the hotel lot or another lot with an attendant.

### **When shopping and dining**

- Always keep your purse or wallet under your direct control. They can easily be picked up if placed on the floor in the bathroom or left hanging on the back of your chair.
- Keep a picture ID and a major credit card separate from your wallet or purse. This way if you lose your wallet or purse, you won't be stranded.
- Keep your number of packages to a minimum when walking down the street.

### **When walking**

- Walk with confidence. Walk briskly and with someone, especially after dark.
- Keep to well-lighted streets with pedestrian traffic.
- Stay visible and walk facing traffic.
- Avoid isolated areas.
- Avoid wearing loose valuable jewelry, and never fight a purse-snatcher.
- Do not stop for strangers who try to ask you questions or engage you in conversation. Ignore them, and keep walking.
- If you need help or directions, find a business and ask an employee for assistance.

### **When out having fun**

- Do not go off, on foot or in a car, with someone you just met. Avoid being mugged by walking away from strangers who try to take you off the beaten path to show you "where the action is."
- Don't take strangers with you to nightclubs or back to your hotel room.
- Be alert to distractions. It could be a pickpocket team.
- Party responsibly.

**We hope this information is helpful as you make your plans.  
See you at the convention!**