



Tips for Atlanta23 Attendees

Are you attending the [2023 NSTA National Conference on Science Education in Atlanta, March 22-25](#)? At this point, you should be [registering](#), making arrangements for lodging and transportation, and thinking about your lesson plans for the substitute (if you haven't done so already).

If this is the first time you've attended the national conference, it can be overwhelming at first. Here are some suggestions to consider before you go, updated from last year:

- Consider attending the first-timers session on Thursday morning. This year, past NSTA Presidents will be hosting the "NSTA First Timers Orientation Session" on Thursday, March 23, 7:15–7:45 AM in the Georgia World Congress Center, Room B402. It's worth the time—you'll get a primer on how to effectively navigate the conference and the opportunity to build your network by meeting fellow attendees.
- Add the [NSTA Conference page](#) to your bookmarks or favorites.
- Decide what you'd like to focus on at the conference: What information do you need about the *Next Generation Science Standards*? What content, practices, or crosscutting concepts do you want to know more about? What topics do your students struggle with? Are you looking for new digital resources, textbooks, or equipment? Get suggestions from your colleagues, too. Ask your students what you should learn more about (related to science, of course!).
- Then go to the conference website and use the [Session Browser/Scheduler](#) to look at the session descriptions. You can print out a personal schedule or add the session information to your personal Agenda. Pick a few sessions for each timeslot, in case the rooms are full. There are two conference venues (the Georgia World Congress Center and Omni Atlanta Hotel at CNN Center), so allow travel time between sessions. Please note, we will make a one-time transfer of your schedule to the App on March 15. After this date, any sessions/events added via the website will not be reflected in the App. You will need to make any changes to add/remove sessions in the App.

- On March 15, download the NSTA conference app to your smartphone or tablet. The app is available from the App Store or Google Play. Search sessions to build a schedule that integrates with your calendar; access maps of the convention center, hotels, and exhibit hall, share the play-by-play with social media, complete session evaluations, and more.
- Preview the [Conference Transcript](#) section on the conference site to access online session evaluations and tools to track your professional development. This is a great way to show your administrators which sessions you attended.

What to Take?

- An *empty bag*—preferably one with wheels—if you know you can't resist picking up any brochures, handouts, and session materials you encounter (resistance can be futile), although many presenters and vendors are now posting their handouts online.
- If you don't have any *business cards*, get some or make your own. Be sure to include your e-mail address, twitter name, and what and where you teach. These are great to hand out when you're networking with other teachers, presenters, and exhibitors.
- A *camera* is handy to take pictures of equipment, displays, speakers, and new friends.
- Have an *envelope* or other system for keeping receipts and other documents. Expenses not reimbursed by your school might be tax deductible (check with your accountant).
- *Chargers and adapters* for your electronic devices.
- Above all, take comfortable walking shoes!

At the Conference

- Picking up your badge and other conference materials is your first step. Registration is located in the Georgia



World Congress Center, Level 1 Hall B2. The hours are:

- Wednesday, March 22 | 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM
 - Thursday, March 23 | 7:00 AM - 5:00 PM
 - Friday, March 24 | 7:00 AM - 5:00 PM
 - Saturday, March 25 | 7:30 AM - 4:00 PM
- Take some time to finalize your daily schedules. I like to put a small reminder in my badge holder with the session names, times, and locations. You can also stash a few of your business cards in your badge holder, making it easier to hand them out to new contacts. Keep your smartphone handy (and charged) if you've created a calendar on it.
 - Feeling social? NSTA would love you to join our online community and share your experiences. If you tweet, blog, post on Instagram, etc., we encourage you to tag NSTA so that we see it and can share too. The conference hashtag is #NSTA23.
 - Evaluate your sessions online to document your professional progress. They'll be automatically added to your transcript. (Navigate to the [session browser](#) and find the session you attended. There is a link to add your evaluations.)
 - Unless you've signed up (and paid for) a special event, the sessions are first-come, first-served. So get to the sessions early. Sometimes the smaller rooms fill up quickly. Have a back-up session in mind in case the room is full.
 - Divide and conquer if you're attending with friends or colleagues. You can only be at one place at a time, so coordinate with other teachers on what to attend and how to share notes and materials from sessions.
 - Consider taking some snacks and a refillable water bottle. The concessions are often crowded at the noon hour and there is no formal lunch break at the conference. Take your lunch to a session if it's one you don't want to miss! The presenter won't mind.
 - The exhibit area is a science wonderland, with samples, brochures, posters, and promotional giveaways. But whatever you collect, you'll have to get home somehow. I know teachers who take an empty bag (see above under things to take) they can check on the way home (or you can ship things home via a delivery service).
 - Stop by the Georgia Science Teacher Assoc (GSTA) **booth 102** at registration staffed by local teachers who can fill you in on the many science education and cultural opportunities in Atlanta. If you're new to the area, take some time to explore some of the important historical and cultural sites for the NSTA special events www.nsta.org/atlanta23/events. We have a great opportunity to explore the Atlanta zoo. Find out more by clicking on this [link](#)
 - Keep a log or journal of the sessions you attended, people you met, and new ideas. Update your homepage, Facebook, tweets, or class Wiki/blog with a summary of what you are learning at the conference.
 - Update your [conference transcript](#).
 - Put your cell phone on mute during sessions. But do feel free to live tweet, Instagram, etc. Just please do so quietly.
 - Introduce yourself to teachers at the sessions or events. You'll meet lots of interesting people and make many new personal connections. Although it's important to keep up with your colleagues and classes back home via texts/tweets/email, take the opportunity to actually talk to the teachers in line with you or sitting next to you at a session. The value of a face-to-face conference is meeting and interacting with real people, and teachers are the most interesting people of all.
 - Attend a session or two on a topic you know nothing about. It's a good way to learn something new.
- ## Back Home
- Share your experiences with your students. Use some of the promotional items you collected as prizes or gifts.
 - Organize and file your notes and handouts. Share the materials and what you learned with your colleagues.
 - Send a note of appreciation to the administrator who approved your attendance at the conference.
 - Write a brief article for the school or district newsletter, if appropriate.
 - Access your transcript online to add to your professional portfolio.
 - Get ready for next year!