that some will only stay for their talk. Check with the conference organiser when speakers will be arriving, and try to stay at the same hotel, if possible. “Often organisers identify invited speakers and scientific organisers with a different badge, so look out for that,” adds Davison. To make it easier for those you meet to remember you, consider taking a business card with a photo or a link to your blog.

Be aware that some fellow delegates may not be as comfortable networking because their working environment has a more rigid hierarchy.

For students such events are a chance to explore potential career opportunities in a more casual setting than a formal interview, but you still need to be prepared for meeting senior scientists. “Doing research ahead of time can really bring down stress levels,” says NAGPS’s McCary. Reading up on the scientist’s work will also equip you with the necessary knowledge to allow subtle self-promotion: “You can slide in some comments that show you would be an addition to their lab.”

Whatever your networking strategy, be assured that your fellow scientists are there to talk to you. “Our speakers are there specifically to help attendees get the most out of the event,” says Darren Hughes, a scientific officer in the Wellcome Trust’s conferences and courses team. “They’re extremely approachable — participants shouldn’t feel intimidated.”

**Powerful presentations**

If you’re preparing a poster for a conference, make sure you check the size and orientation of the poster board you’ll be given when you get there. When thinking about design and layout, take inspiration from other events you attend. “Look around and see what appeals to you and what you think works,” says McCary. During the poster session, try to be proactive and approach people looking at your work. For oral presentations, good timekeeping is essential. “Make sure you know how long you are expected to speak for, and how much of the allotted time is for Q&As,” says Davison. “Take into consideration that the programme has been developed with care.” Pace your presentation beforehand in front of colleagues, and consider making provision for an early stop point so that you...