

Convention Strategies

Is this going to be your first convention? There will be all sorts of things going on, and it will be easy to get side-tracked and miss all sorts of other things that you may kick yourself for missing later. Each convention host club has their own way of doing things, but here's a basic, step-by-step plan for making the most out of your week-long convention odyssey.

1) If you arrive early (Sunday), before registration begins, start room-hopping immediately. There should be a list of which rooms collectors are in in the registration area. This is a good way to get acquainted with other collectors and to pick up a lot of great covers. *Etiquette: you may take one of each cover that's been set out in the room.*

2) Registration (sign-in and payment) for the convention used to begin on Wednesday, but so many people have been showing up earlier that in recent conventions registration has started on Monday. So, first thing to do is register, pay for the luncheons and/or banquet that you plan on attending, and pick up all your registration materials, including your convention bag of covers. You may also be able to buy an extra bag or two. Be sure to pick one of the empty plastic bags that will be available so you will have something to put all your covers in later.

3) Hit the Freebie Tables as soon as they open. This is not only a terrific way to pick up lots of covers, but you'll be sitting across from other collectors, so you can also pick up lots of useful information, as well as get to know everyone. The Freebie Tables are open off and on throughout the convention, depending on what other activities are taking place simultaneously. If your bag fills up, dump it in your room and head back for more. *Etiquette: you can take one of each cover you can use, so don't just sweep the table top into your bag!*

4) There will also be other things going on, such as a variety of games designed to raise money, but you have a further opportunity to obtain

covers.

5) The Display Room will probably open on Wednesday. The displays on exhibit will give you a good idea of the varieties, types, categories, and treasures of the hobby. If displays are going to be something you'll be interested in doing eventually, you'll be able to see first-hand what it's all about. *Etiquette: don't touch any of the displays.*

6) Also starting Wednesday and going for the rest of the week are the auctions...the largest in the hobby. Even if you're not interested in buying, you should sit in on at least one to get a feel for what goes on. Before each auction starts, you should browse the auction lot tables and see what's going up for bid. There is always lots of old and harder to get material. Auction prices are notoriously high, but every once and awhile you can come away with a bargain, depending on who's in the audience and how badly they want that lot.

7) I believe the auctions on the early days have been moved from the evenings so there can be more room-hopping, which has been on a catch-as-catch-can basis. So, go room-hopping all through the week. I keep a "master list" of rooms and check them off as I visit them, so I don't mistakenly hit the same ones twice.

8) During the week, there will also be a variety of regional and specialty club meetings (i.e., Girlie Club, Casino Club, Jewel Club, Denver Strikers, etc.). Drop in and find out what these clubs are all about; they'd love to see you there.

9) Try to attend the business meeting. That's where all the committee chairpersons give their reports, important topics are thrashed out, and plans are made for the future.

10) Wrapping everything up is the Awards Banquet on the last night. Food, raffles, lots of awards...it's formal dress (so dress accordingly), and it tends to drag on, but it is the climatic event of the convention. Another good way to establish contacts and see who's who in the hobby.