

What is a Convention?

A convention is a large gathering of people who share something in common. They are usually held on the weekends in a large building, due to a high number of people attending. Conventions can have any sort of theme to them, from being work or organization-based to being based on a shared interest. The rules/expectations/events mentioned in this resource are based on conventions themed around comics, anime, manga, and video games. Different conventions will have different rules, events, and expectations, usually listed on their website.

What Happens at a Convention?

There are many events that can happen at a convention, and not every convention will have every type of event. Every event is optional to attend, so you can just go to what interests you. Below is a list of different types of rooms/events you may see at a convention now:

Panels: The bulk of a convention's schedule will be made up of panels led by people who send their ideas in ahead of time and get approved by convention staff. Most panels usually last about an hour and are held in smaller rooms around the building. Panels can be set up like a lecture or class, where you learn about a subject. They can be a game, where people volunteer to play and win a prize. Panels can also be live shows, where people perform for the audience and/or answer questions for them. Some panels are showings of shows or movies. Some panels will ask for your ID to make sure you are 18 years or older. These types of panels will discuss adult themes and will be marked as such on the convention schedule.

Dances: Some conventions will have big dances that will last multiple hours. Some of these events will have a dress code and an age requirement if alcohol is served. They may be called something else if they are themed. A rave will be late at night and have loud music with many lights. A ball will have a stricter dress code and feature more classical music. These things will always be listed on the convention's website.

Masquerade: Some conventions have a big event for cosplayers to be judged and receive awards for their work. The judges with some sort of costume experience will judge the cosplayers on their costume, wigs, makeup, and any other work they've put in. There are usually two types of masquerades: ones based solely on judging the costume, and ones where cosplayers perform as the characters they are dressed as. For the latter, judges will also score the cosplayer(s) on their performance quality. To participate in a masquerade, you have to sign up in advance of the convention and follow the rules they have listed. If you're chosen to participate, you'll have to attend rehearsals before the event. You can also watch the cosplayers from the audience. A more casual version of the event sometimes occurs in the convention hall, where cosplayers who've signed up stand in a line and get judged on their costumes. Sign-ups for this happen at the convention, and you'll have a time where you're expected to be ready.

What Happens at a Convention? (continued)

Vendor Hall/Artist Alley: This is where a large gathering of sellers put up goods for people to buy. Artist Alley is usually independent artists sharing their artwork, crafts, or other homemade goods. The Vendor Hall is where merchandise is sold. They can be in separate rooms, or they can be in the same room.

Game Room: This is a room where people can play board games and/or video games. You'll be expected to treat all the games and equipment with respect, and make sure to share with others. Sometimes there will be contests based on different games, like Super Smash Brothers or Magic the Gathering.

Karaoke: Some conventions will have karaoke set-up for people to perform. While they may have a song selection available, you may have to bring a USB or CD with an instrumental track if you want to perform a specific song. Some conventions have a contest, where you'll have to sign up in advance and will have a specific time you are expected to perform.

Signings: If a convention has a famous guest coming (like an actor, musician, or artist), they may hold one or multiple signings. For these, you'll line up and wait to shortly meet the guest while they sign something for you. You'll need to bring money to pay for the autograph and/or picture if you have one taken, and if you want to bring something special for them to sign, you'll have to make sure it is allowed.

Library: Sometimes there will be a room where you can read manga, books, and comics. You won't be allowed to leave the room with them, and you'll need to be quiet and respectful.

Showing/Gallery: Some conventions have displays where different items will be shown. They can be anything such as props, movies, art from an animation, and costumes that have won awards.

Photo Booth: Sometimes a photographer will set up a booth for people to sign up and have their photos taken. You will most likely have to pay to have your pictures taken.

Meet-Ups: Sometimes people will designate a place and time to gather if you have a similar interest. This can be a good place to see costumes of characters from the interest, take pictures, and make friends. These can be officially scheduled by the convention or informally scheduled on social media. If you attend a meet-up, try not to block the halls or doorways and be respectful of others at the convention.

Why Do Some People Dress Up?

Some people like to dress up as characters at conventions. This is called **cosplay**. You can cosplay from a show, a movie, a book, a game, or even an original character. Cosplays at conventions have certain rules they have to follow, which are on the convention website. Staff will check them at the door if they see something suspicious, and staff throughout the convention are positioned to make sure they continue to follow the rules. **You do not have to cosplay to attend a convention.** You should only cosplay if you have the money to spend and will be comfortable in the costume. There is no wrong way to cosplay: If you want to buy a costume, or only wear parts that you are comfortable in, or alter an outfit to make you more comfortable, that's okay! You only have to make your outfit if you plan on being judged at a Masquerade.

What Should I Bring To a Convention?

There are many things you will need to bring to a convention, such as:

- If you signed up early to attend and have a ticket or proof of purchase, you'll need to bring that with you. You'll be asked to show it at the entrance booth. You'll also be asked to show your ID, so have that ready as well.
- If you are a certain age, you may have to have an adult attend with you or sign a form on your behalf. Have this ready ahead of time.
- You'll need to bring money with you to pay for your attendance, anything you buy, and for food and drink. Some places will only accept cash, so keep that in mind.
- Once you've signed in at the entrance, you'll be given a badge. **Do not lose this badge**, as it is how they keep track of people who have paid to be there. If you lose your badge, immediately go to a staff member or the entrance hall.
- Bring any medication or fidget toys you may need. Conventions can get crowded, and you may have to stand in long lines.
- Make sure to bring your phone and a charger.
- It's good to bring a water bottle and/or snacks. While some conventions have water coolers around, others don't have them. If you need a drink and/or food, you'll have to pay for them.
- If you're wearing a costume, bring things in case something tears or breaks (like a sewing kit or glue). If you're wearing makeup, bring things to reapply in case you smudge your makeup. If you suspect you'll be uncomfortable in something later, bring a change of clothes and/or shoes.
- You may want to bring some other supplies, like bandages, pain medicine, and deodorant.



What Should I Bring To a Convention? (continued)

- You may want to take safety precautions, especially if you are going by yourself and/or late at night, such as bringing a whistle or potentially asking a staff member or a group of friends you meet, to walk with you towards your car. While 99% of the time conventions are safe and fun, it is always good to be prepared in case something happens when you're leaving. If you are in the convention building, you should find a staff member first if you feel unsafe.
- Some conventions list things you should bring on their website, so look there if you need any more suggestions. They will also list things you cannot bring, so make sure to follow those rules. If you bring things that aren't allowed you'll be asked to leave and may not be allowed back in.



What Rules Do Conventions Have?

While all conventions rules are different, there are general rules to keep people safe, happy, and healthy. A convention will always have their personal rules on their website, so review those before you attend and contact them with any questions you have. Some general rules of conventions are:

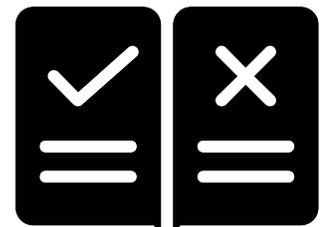
- Don't bring drugs or alcohol. This doesn't apply to medicine you are prescribed, but recreational drugs. Smoking is usually not allowed in the convention building.
- There will be a certain dress code, like having to wear shoes and have certain body parts covered. If you're wearing a costume, make sure it follows these rules.
- No weapons will be allowed. If your costume has a prop weapon, it will have to follow certain rules or staff will confiscate it.
- Do not take photos of anyone without their consent. This applies to the general subject(s) of the photo, and not people in the background. If you keep taking pictures of people, staff may ask you to leave. You may not be allowed to take photos in certain places, like in the vendor halls.
- Don't be obnoxiously loud and keep your hands to yourself. If you are a distraction or making others uncomfortable, staff may ask you to leave, and you may not be allowed to come back.
- If you lose something, feel unsafe, or have a general question, feel free to ask a staff member. They will be wearing a shirt that designates them as staff, and they will be happy to help you.
- If you are worried about accommodations or accessibility, it is best to contact the event organizers before the convention. They will be able to answer any questions you have, and you may help change the convention for the better!

What Rules Do Conventions Have?

The following aren't always official rules but are general guidelines that people will expect/prefer you follow:

- Please make sure you are clean when you attend a convention. Wear deodorant, reapply it as needed, and don't wear strong perfume/cologne. Make sure you shower or bathe before attending.
- You can ask people to take their picture if you like their costume. If they say no, you have to respect that. Do not take any pictures of people secretly or wait around someone hoping they change their mind. Do not take any inappropriate pictures.
- When you do take a picture, don't stand in the middle of the hall or a doorway. Try to take the picture quickly.
- You can also say hi to people and try to make friends. If they are doing something and/or aren't interested, you have to respect that. Don't follow anyone around. If you make people uncomfortable staff may ask you to leave and you may not be allowed to come back.
- If you need to sit down or take a break, try to find a spot to the side of the hall. Don't sit in the middle of a hallway or where people walk.
- Don't make fun of anyone, and don't be mean or rude. If you see something strange or out of the ordinary, try to ignore it. You can talk about it with someone you trust after you leave. Only tell a staff member about something if it makes you feel unsafe, or someone isn't following a rule.
- If you are sick, please wear a mask. Some conventions will require you to wear a mask if you're sick, even requiring certain types of masks. If you are really sick, you may want to stay home. It can be sad to not attend a convention, but it is better for everyone there if you do so.
- Have fun! Conventions are a great place to meet others with similar interests, play games, and see shows and performances.

How Do Conventions Get Started and Planned?



A convention can be started for many reasons, but usually it is put together by an organization, club, or group of people. Organizers will rent a building(s), organize events, and run social media in anticipation of the convention. Some conventions are smaller than others, and some will have different activities and guests depending on the theme and budget. It takes a long time to schedule and organize, so conventions usually only happen once a year.