

## How to avoid predatory conferences

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### Predatory

/ˈprɛd əˌtɔː i/

*adjective*

1. preying upon others for food  
“predatory snake species”
2. exploiting others out of greed or for personal gain  
“the company’s predatory practices”

Presenting at a prestigious conference is a good way to share your research and raise your profile in the academic community. But there is a growing problem to look out for—predatory conferences. Much like [predatory journals](#), predatory conferences seek to obtain research funds while providing little of value in return. These conferences lack rigorous academic standards and are typically poorly organized. Attending a predatory conference is a waste of research funds, and organizing one can harm your reputation.

In this article, we give an overview of legitimate and predatory conferences, followed by warning signs that a conference or conference organizer might be predatory.

### Academic conferences

Now that the Internet enables near-instant communication among researchers around the world, why do academics still travel to conferences? There are three primary reasons: (1) networking, (2) collaboration, and (3) discovery of work by others in your field. A good conference will offer a mix of opportunities for all three of these.

Papers published in journals provide a permanent record of research results, whereas conference presentations, posters, and proceedings tend to provide a snapshot of research as it is happening. Legitimate conferences provide value by providing a venue to present your research, attend talks, view posters, and interact with colleagues. High-quality conferences will feature distinguished speakers and, typically, peer-reviewed proceedings. You can be confident that the scope of the conference will be a good fit for the presenters and attendees.

### What are predatory conferences?

Unfortunately, some conferences do not fulfill the purposes of academic conferences as described above or mislead attendees about details such as peer review, the for-profit status of the organizers, or the expected number of attendees. These are called predatory conferences.

Some unscrupulous companies put together “conferences” that provide little value to attendees while seeking to extract as much money as possible. These conferences are often held in resort towns, charge high registration fees, and try to entice professors to use research funds to attend.

Predatory conferences cut corners by failing to provide the proper editorial oversight, for example, by skipping the promised peer review. Some will tout big-name speakers who are not actually involved in the conference. Others will [falsely claim](#) that the conference is affiliated with a legitimate academic society to attract attendees.



Attending a predatory conference could waste your time and energy, not to mention thousands of dollars in registration fees and travel expenses. Below, we list a few points to keep in mind to avoid becoming a victim.

## Warning signs

- Conference invitations sent by unsolicited email (i.e., spam)
- A poorly made website (e.g., grammar and spelling errors)
- No contact information provided
- A no-refund policy for registration fees
- Conference is not listed on the website of an academic society or publisher that is claimed as a sponsor
- Overly broad scope (to attract as many attendees as possible)
- The organizer organizes numerous conferences in many different fields held at the same time in the same or nearby venues (to maximize revenue)
- The conference has never been held before
- Too little time between the submission deadline and the conference for proper peer review

Of course, any one of these signs alone does not necessarily mean a conference is predatory. For example, some legitimate conferences invite attendees by email. If you see a combination of these signs, however, extra caution is warranted. If you're not sure whether a conference is legitimate, you can try checking through the warning signs above, asking a colleague or mentor for advice, or contacting us to help.

## Summary

Your time, research results, and funding are valuable, and you want to be sure they are not wasted at a low-quality conference held for the benefit of the organizer rather than the attendees. In this article, we've given a brief introduction to predatory conference and some warning signs to look out for. If you'd like more information about predatory conferences, please see [this recent Japan Times article](#) about predatory conferences in Japan.

If you have concerns about a specific conference you're planning to attend or journal you're considering for publication, please [contact us](#). We'd be happy to offer an opinion based on the broad spectrum of conferences and journals we see. Also, if you've been ensnared by a predatory journal or conference, we can often help by providing steps to ensure your research and funding are protected.