

**Preparation is necessary for focus.**

**Focus is key for getting the most out of your virtual conference.**

### *Focus on Details*

- ☐ Familiarize yourself with the conference website. Find the following (print if you prefer):
  - Conference schedule
  - How to log on
  - Tech support information – find email, phone, chat options (if available)
- ☐ Some conferences include access to a FB or other online group. Join the conversation.

### *Focus on Learning*

- ☐ Create a PERSONAL digital or physical notebook. Include the following:
  - Many conferences provide a digital or printable guide/program/notebook. Print or download and add to your personal notebook.
  - Conference schedule (cut and paste from the website if necessary).
  - Create a few folders/documents ahead of time. A few examples:
    - Great Quotes
    - Takeaways
    - Websites to Find Later
    - Contacts/New Friends
  - Create an “emergency” document listing ways to contact tech (or other) support.

### *Focus on Tech*

- ☐ Plan for power failure:
  - Charge your phone, laptop, tablet—if you’re able to access the conference on the device, make sure it has full charge just in case your main device fails.
  - Know how to reset your WiFi.
  - If your phone has hotspot capability, know how to use it.
  - Gather pens/pencils and paper as backup.
- ☐ Minimize distractions:
  - Turn off/mute notifications from apps and text.
  - If possible, turn off phone ringer or use Do Not Disturb.
- ☐ Learn about the conference platform:
  - If the conference involves Zoom and you’re unfamiliar, Google “Zoom participant tutorial.”
  - If the conference platform has a chat option, learn how to use it.
  - If you don’t see something, SCROLL (sometimes chat options are at the bottom).

## *Focus on Environment*

- ☐ If possible, claim a room with a door (a closet counts). The following are helpful:
  - Comfortable seating
  - Good lighting (if you'll be on camera, be sure no windows/lights are behind you)
  - Noise-cancelling headphones
  - Box of your favorite snacks
  - Your favorite hydration option

## *Focus on Focus*

(Our PEOPLE and PETS can be our biggest distractions.)

- ☐ Prior to the conference, inform—and remind—the following people you'll have limited (or zero) availability:
  - Anyone living in your house/dependent on you
  - Friends likely to freak out if you don't answer a text
  - Employer/colleagues
- ☐ If possible, take time off work for the entire conference.
- ☐ If possible, arrange care for dependents and pets (barter with a family member or friend who can prepare a hangry-toddler-PBJ or provide a bark-preventing snuggle).

## *Focus on Communication*

- ☐ Explain (to housemates or anyone who might interrupt you):
  - Reasons this conference is important to you
  - That you're paying for every minute, and interruptions cost money
  - Expectations of being undisturbed (barring fire, flood, or blood)
- ☐ Inform sentient housemates, "If the door is closed, I'm in session. Please don't knock."
- ☐ Use more creative communication when necessary:
  - Place a lamp outside the door. "Pretend we're a TV studio. If the light's on, I'm on camera. Don't knock or open the door."
  - Make a kidding-notkidding sign for your door: "If you're loud while I'm on Zoom, YOU'LL be grounded to your room."
- ☐ Post the conference schedule on your door with any breaks highlighted, so people know when it's okay to interrupt (or when you'll be finished for the day).

## *Focus on Follow-up*

- ☐ Connect via email or social media with any contacts you made
  - Send thank-you emails to anyone who helped you, particularly faculty
  - If you interacted with someone, include a reminder of your conversation
  - Include the name of the event/conference in your communication
- ☐ If the conference/event has an ongoing online group, stay involved in the conversation
- ☐ Check out groups like ACFW, Word Weavers, AWSA, and 540 Writers Community
- ☐ Sign up for the 540 Writers Community newsletter at **540Writers.com** to access ongoing, free writer education ☺