



FIT'NG

Fetal, Infant, & Toddler Neuroimaging Group

Trainee Committee presents:

2024 Conference Guide

Travel Tips, a Guide to Baltimore, & Conference Advice



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International Travel Guide

For the most up-to-date guidance from FIT'NG, please visit: [2024 Conference | fitng.org](https://2024.Conference.fitng.org)

NOTE: If you do not currently reside in the United States, make sure you have a current passport that is valid for the conference dates. There may be specific requirements for your passport expiration date, so if your passport is due to expire shortly after the conference, please check to see if it needs to be renewed before applying for a visa. **Make sure to apply as soon as possible!**

Visas

****FIT'NG will provide a letter for this if needed****

Check here if you need a visa to enter US: [Visa Wizard](#)

If you do need a visa, it can take time to process incoming requests, so make sure to start the process as early as possible.

There are several steps to apply for a visa. The order of these steps and how you complete them may vary by the U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Please consult the instructions on the U.S. Embassy or Consulate website: USEmbassy.gov

- Be sure to use the official website above rather than a third-party website which may charge additional fees.

Short-stay (Non-Immigrant) Visa types:

You can read about the different visa types here: [Visitor Visa](#)

- **Business B1**
This visa can be used to attend a scientific, educational, professional, or business convention or conference. Note that this visa does not cover study purpose activities.
- **Tourism B2**
This visa can be used by persons traveling to the United States temporarily for tourism, pleasure or visiting family/friends.

Business B1 is the appropriate visa to ask for in order to attend a conference, however if you want to stay a bit longer as a tourist, you may want to get informed to know if you need to “also” ask for a B2 visa. Be aware that a B2 visa alone is not appropriate to attend the conference, and you will be most likely questioned at the airport upon entering the US and might be rejected to enter.

Visa application fee

The application fee is \$185, however if your visa is approved, you may also need to pay a visa issuance fee, if applicable to your nationality.

Note: The fee amount may vary depending on nationality.

Letter of support

Letters of invite can be provided to international delegates who may require a letter for Visa application. Please note, it is recommended to apply as soon as possible due to backlogs processing visas. Please email to request a letter [here](#).

Flights and traveling to/from the airport

Nearby airports and transportation options:

- **By plane:**
 - Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport (BWI) is the main airport, which is located 9 miles from Baltimore. This will be the most convenient option.
 - Other airports nearby include Dulles International Airport (IAD) (~65 miles) and Reagan Washington Airport (DCA) (~50 miles).
- **By train:**
 - The main train station in Baltimore is called Pennsylvania Station, which is a stop on the Amtrak train line. The station is less than 2 miles from Inner Harbor.
- **By car:**
 - Baltimore is less than four hours from New York City, two hours from Philadelphia and one hour from Washington, D.C. by car. Several major highways are easily accessible from the city, including I-95 and I-83 for drivers heading north and south.
- Additional details available at [Destination | fitng.org](http://Destination_fitng.org)

Tips for booking flights:

- Delta will let you rebook if the flight price drops
- Flight tracking sites:
 - Google flight price tracker - set up an alert! [Google Flights - Find Cheap Flight Options & Track Prices](#)
 - Skyscanner: [Skyscanner](#)
 - Airfarewatchdog: [Airfarewatchdog](#)
- Some general tips for booking flights:
 - Aim to book at least 2 months in advance
 - International flight costs may continue to increase over the summer. Best to set up alerts now!
- Safety consideration: Laws related to the safety and privacy of LGBTQIA+ folks can differ by state in the US. As you plan your travel path (applicable for layovers or additional travel), please be aware that other states may not have the same laws in place. The status of various policies and laws can be tracked here: [Movement Advancement Project | Snapshot: LGBTQ Equality by State](#).

Finding accommodations

- Conference hotel: [The Royal Sonesta Harbor Court Baltimore](#)
 - **RATES:**
 - Standard King: \$249.00 + 17.5% tax.
 - Double Queen: \$249.00 + 17.5% tax
 - [Conference booking link](#)
 - Rooms are available in the room block at the Royal Sonesta Harbor Court through **August 18, 2024 or until rooms are sold out.**
- To save on accommodations (and perhaps make a new friend!), there is an option to share your contact information with other FIT'NG attendees looking for a roommate for the conference. Learn more and sign up here: [Room share form](#)
- Other nearby hotels:
 - [Hyatt Regency Baltimore Inner Harbor](#) (0.2 miles)
 - [Sheraton Inner Harbor hotel](#) (0.2 miles)
 - [Renaissance Baltimore Harborplace](#) (0.3 miles)
- AirBnB and Vrbo are popular methods for finding affordable accommodations, if your institution allows these services: <https://www.airbnb.com/> and <https://vrbo.com>
 - **Tips for booking on AirBnB** : While AirBnB does vet the hosts, the system isn't perfect and some listings end up not working out for one reason or another. In our experience, cancellations or issues can be mitigated with the following:
 - Book from a SuperHost - this is indicated in the host's profile. Superhosts have a track record of good ratings from their guests and are therefore typically seasoned hosts and less likely to cancel your listing or misrepresent the accommodations. They often go the extra mile and provide guides or concierge-like service to their guests.
 - Read the reviews - Travelers are typically good about noting anything about their stay that did not match the listing (or was a pleasant surprise)
 - Book with a friend - If you know folks attending the conference, sharing the cost to book an entire place can be a nice way to get more for your money (e.g., a whole apartment for 3 split three ways is often cheaper than a single room in a house and comes with more amenities)

General note: Always check with your institution for guidance and policies surrounding travel and accommodation bookings.

A Guide to Baltimore

Food and Drink

- If you ask for water at a restaurant, it is usually tap water and is free.
- You do need to tip in restaurants when you sit down to eat. 15-25% is expected. You do not need to tip for takeout (like coffee) or self-service, even though this option might appear on the register. Many shops that pay regular wages added the option to provide a tip during COVID as a way to say thank you to the employees working through the pandemic and never removed it.
- If you plan to drink alcoholic beverages at a restaurant, be sure to bring a government-issued ID. The drinking age is 21 in the US.

Restaurant Recommendations

- Enjoy seafood at these Inner Harbor restaurants:
 - [Blackwall Hitch](#)
 - [McCormick & Schmick's Seafood & Steaks](#)
 - [Phillips Seafood](#)
 - [Mason's Famous Lobster Rolls](#)
 - [The Oceanaire Seafood Room](#)
- Other restaurants nearby:
 - [Apropoe's](#) (In conference center)
 - [Harbor East Deli](#) (0.1 miles)
 - [Maximón](#) (0.1 miles)
 - [Charleston Restaurant](#) (0.2 miles)
 - [Lebanese Taverna](#) (0.2 miles)
 - [Miss Shirley's Cafe](#) (0.3 miles)
 - [La Scala](#) (0.3 miles)
 - [The Halal Guys](#) (0.5 miles)
 - [Shake Shack Inner Harbor](#) (0.5 miles)
 - [Slainte Irish Pub and Restaurant](#) (0.7 miles)
- Coffee & ice cream:
 - [Bon Fresco](#) (0.3 miles)
 - [Matriarch Harborplace Coffee House](#) (0.6 miles)

Things to Do

- Explore the [Baltimore Harbor](#) (10 minute walk from hotel)
 - Visit the [National Aquarium](#)
 - Want more science? Visit the [Maryland Science Center](#)

- Take a [water taxi or paddle boat](#)
- Go hiking at [Gunpowder Falls](#) (~23 miles/~30 min by car)
- Visit [Sagamore Distillery](#) (2 miles/~10 min by car) or the [Boordy Vineyards](#) (~23 miles/~30 min by car)
- Visit Washington, DC - The capital of the USA
 - Explore the [National Mall](#) (~40 miles/~53 min by car)
 - Visit the [Smithsonian Museums](#) (free entry and there's a museum for any interest)
 - Walk around Georgetown on M street/by the water (~42 miles/~1 hr 3 min by car // parking is expensive here)

Getting Around

- By Foot
 - The conference is located in the Baltimore Inner Harbour where there are lots of great restaurants, shops and tourist attractions which are easily accessible by foot!
- By Car
 - Getting to the Baltimore Inner Harbour or visiting tourist attractions beyond the Baltimore Inner Harbour is easiest by car
 - Rideshare services such as Uber and Lyft are a great choice!
 - Rental cars are available at the airport. If you choose to rent a car, make sure to note the following:
 - Be sure to book a rental car in advance to ensure one is available when you arrive
 - Some institutions have preferred rental car companies or discounts – check in with your institution before booking!
 - Insurance on rental cars is more expensive for drivers under 26 years old, so if you have the option of someone over 26 driving the rental car, this will save you money.
 - Consider where you will park if you choose to rent a car. Parking is available at the conference hotel and costs \$29 per day. Book your spot here: [Royal Sonesta Harbor Court Parking | SpotHero](#)
- Public Transport
 - There are lots of public transport options available in Baltimore, find out more here: [How To Use Baltimore's Public Transportation](#)

General tips

- You can exchange currency at the airport or an ATM if desired (but there are likely fees). Most places will accept credit cards, but be sure to check to see if there are additional transaction costs from your credit card company. Also be sure to let your credit card company know if you will be traveling internationally!

Conference Tips

Health considerations

- **If you feel unwell at all, stay home or in your hotel room!**
- Mask wearing is optional based on your personal preference
- Respect the choices of others who may prefer not to shake hands
- General good hygiene practices are encouraged 😊:
 - Wash your hands often and / or use hand sanitizer
 - Avoid touching your face, especially after touching high-contact surfaces like door knobs, chairs, and tables

Accommodations

If you require any accommodations for the conference (audio, visual, etc.), you will be able to indicate them on the registration form.

Planning your schedule

Some conferences have overlapping sessions and nearly all have packed schedules. Even with all the exciting science, it can be exhausting! Here are some general conference recommendations to make sure you get what you want out of each day:

- At least a week before you travel, take a look at the full program.
 - Decide which talks or events you most want to go to. Make sure to plan around these.
 - Check where each event is being held.
 - Most conferences are within one building, but that isn't always the case. Make sure to plan travel time in between locations.
 - Plan out when you'll eat
 - We recommend bringing snacks in case the conference snacks or meals don't align with your needs; different conferences may or may not have food options. Bars or trail mix work well for this.
 - Leave gaps in your planned schedule
 - Make sure to leave down time to explore the city, chat with people you meet, and/or decompress.
- Make sure to say hi to the people you want to meet (see the Networking section for more)
 - Sometimes speakers only attend the conference for the day they are presenting. If there is a specific person you want to meet, you can email them ahead of time and ask if you could chat while you are both at the conference.
 - If you want to say hi to a speaker or ask them a question but don't have a need to get a whole coffee/meal with them, go to the Q&A portion of their talk to make sure you catch them on the day they are there.
 - Make sure to find time to check-in with your mentor / mentee if you have one.

What to expect from each session type

Keynote

- A longer talk (30-45 minutes) given by an established researcher in the field.
- Keynote speakers are invited by the conference planning committee.
- Keynote sessions are typically structured as first an introduction to the speaker, including their impact on the field, followed by the keynote presentation and ending with a Q&A.

Oral Sessions

- Short (10-20 minute) talks curated under a particular theme.
- The format usually includes Q&A either right after each talk, at the end of the block, or both. Oral sessions are often moderated by an expert in that field.
- Oral sessions are typically submitted for consideration before poster abstracts.
- Each talk usually covers a single study or line of research (often before official publication) and are great for learning about the latest cutting-edge work.

Flash Talks

- Short (5-8 minute) presentations presented one at a time over the block. Flash talks are typically invited from the poster submissions and often take place right before the poster session.
- Flash talk sessions are great ways to get a broad sense of the research being presented at the poster session as well as to meet potential collaborators, mentors, or trainees.

Think Tank

- The Think Tank session is an opportunity for conference attendees to have a discussion in small groups around a particular theme or topic. You will be asked to indicate your preferences for a topic prior to the conference.
- This is a great networking opportunity to talk to other researchers thinking through similar challenges in the field.

Poster Session

- Poster sessions are typically held simultaneously in a large room or hall. Poster presenters stand next to their posters while attendees walk around and stop at posters at their leisure.
- Poster presenters typically prepare a short overview of their work to walk attendees through their poster.
- These sessions are excellent for networking not only with other scientists in your discipline, but also with the other attendees. Faculty looking for postdocs or graduate students often attend these sessions to meet potential trainees.

Trainee Social

- The trainee social is an informal event specifically for trainees (postdocs, grad students, research assistants, undergrads). This is a chance to unwind and meet other trainees in your field.

Networking

Approaching potential mentors

- If you have firm plans to apply to work with them: Email them ahead of the conference and ask 1) if they will be attending and 2) if you could schedule a time to chat with them while you are both there. If there are breaks built into the schedule, you could suggest getting coffee then or at their convenience. Let them know why you are interested in their work and of your interest in working with them in the future. Be sure to attach your CV to this email.
- If you have soft plans to apply to work with them: Whether or not to email them ahead of time will depend on what you are looking to get out of meeting with them. Is there a reason to connect now versus when your plans are more firm? For example, is there a paper you are working on and would like their insight or a grant you are considering applying to that would allow you to work with them?

If you **do** have a specific reason to meet now, follow the advice in the first bullet and email ahead of time. That way you can have dedicated time to connect with the potential mentor. If you **don't** have a reason for connecting now apart from convenience/opportunity, it may be better to wait to say hi until you run into them at the conference.

- All other situations: Keep an eye out for the person you'd like to connect with during breaks or socials. If you see them, introduce yourself! Let them know what you like about their work and that you'd love to work with them sometime in the future. If you are giving a presentation, you can invite them to it.

FIT'NG Mentor/Mentee Matching Programme

- Fast-track finding your first mentor in Baltimore with the FIT'NG Trainee Committee's Mentor/Mentee matching programme! Simply tell us which topics you would like mentorship on and we will match you with a more senior scientist eager to inspire the next generation.
- Please fill out this form by **August 31st** to participate:
 - [FIT'NG 2024 Mentor/Mentee Matching Form](#)
- Mentors and mentees will be matched based on interests with the goal of helping folks expand their professional network. **Mentors and mentees will be matched 2 weeks before the conference.** Mentees will send mentors their availability to meet in person at the conference.

Conference Socials

Socials are a great opportunity to more organically network. Depending on who is hosting the social (the conference versus a specific committee), socials usually get broad attendance across members. If you are a more introverted person, we have some tips below to help keep from getting overwhelmed:

- **Ask your mentor/colleagues to introduce you to specific people.** If you have a hard time gauging when it's okay to interrupt conversations, it can be helpful to lean on someone who already knows the other people there. Especially if there is a specific person you'd like to meet, it's helpful to have a mutual acquaintance break the ice for you.
- **Ask people about their research.** If nothing else, this usually gets a conversation going. People are usually excited to talk about their work with others who are interested. Try to find connections with what you are doing or are interested in and let that guide the conversation.
- **Try to introduce yourself to a few people you have never met.** Challenge yourself to introduce yourself to a specific number to make sure you are getting the most out of the opportunity. Intercepting people as they go to and from the refreshments area can be good opportunities to start new conversations. Similarly if you see someone not actively in a conversation, then you can take that opportunity to introduce yourself.
- **If you are a trainee, ask for advice.** In general, folks like to give advice, so this is usually another safe bet for a conversation starter.

Social Media

- FIT'NG has multiple social media accounts for you to follow:
 - X (formerly Twitter): @FIT_NGIn → and use our conference hashtag, [#FITNG2024](#)
 - Bluesky: @fitngin.bsky.social
 - Mastodon: mastodon.social/@FIT_NGIn
- These social media accounts will be used throughout the conference, so we encourage you to stay engaged!
 - Here are some references for why and how to use Science X (Twitter):
 - [The Wiley Network](#)
 - [Scientists, do you want to succeed on Twitter? Here's how many followers you need | Science](#)
 - [How to use Twitter to further your research career](#)
 - Post photos and quotes from sessions or events that you enjoy!
 - **Be very careful about not posting novel data or conclusions! Aim for photos of the title or introductory slides. We want to make sure folks feel very comfortable sharing their innovative work.
 - Ask questions about new research, who's attending, even making dinner plans!

Career stage-specific tips

For Undergraduates

- **Go to sessions that sound interesting**, regardless of how close the topic is to your research. Conferences are some of the best places to get a sense of the actual scope of your field. Sometimes you can learn about topics or techniques that you may not have considered possible before. Highly recommend going to as many sessions as you can and soaking it all up.
- **Introduce yourself to new people** and ask them about their work and job. Folks of every career stage are usually happy to talk to undergrads, especially about their work and plans for after graduation, so don't be afraid to introduce yourself to new people and strike up a conversation. If you aren't sure what to talk about, asking about their research is usually a good conversation opener.
- **Seek out potential mentors.** Planning to apply to grad school? Be sure to keep an eye out for faculty doing research you find exciting and introduce yourself if you can. Make sure you take a notebook (or phone) with you to write down names and email addresses as appropriate.
- **Take full advantage of the trainee-focused sessions.** Even if the sessions seem aimed at other career stages, it is usually still insightful for undergraduates to attend.

For Post-Baccs/Post-grads

- **Seek out potential mentors.** Planning to apply to grad school? See if any mentors you'd consider working with will be at the conference and email them ahead of time to schedule time to chat with them. If you aren't sure if they will be there, you can always ask in an email. Example emails are at the end of the document.
- **Talk to grad students and postdocs from labs you are considering applying to.** If you are in the planning, application, or interviewing stage of the grad school application cycle, it is good to take advantage of opportunities to connect with folks already working with faculty you are considering applying to. Conferences are excellent opportunities to ask about 1) what the faculty's mentorship style is, 2) what kind of support/guidance they give during projects, and anything else. Grad students and postdocs are usually enthusiastic to talk to prospective students.

For Grad Students & Postdocs

- **Introduce yourself to other trainees with overlapping interests.** Conferences are a great way to network horizontally- you can swap resources, make friends, and connect with folks in labs you may want to work with in the future.
- **Thinking of continuing in academia?** If you are considering continuing in academia, make sure you network with potential mentors for the next stage of your career. Keep an eye for labs presenting work similar to where you want your program of research to go and don't be afraid to strike up conversations with or email people from those labs.

- **Thinking of moving on to industry or another non-academic job?** There are often industry folks attending either as presenters or representing sponsors or vendors. Vendors typically have a table with someone there throughout the day, so it's easy to ask that person if 1) their company typically hires folks with your training background and 2) there is someone you could reach out to regarding recruitment opportunities. Either they will be able to chat, or they can direct you to the right person.
- **Promote your work:** Make sure to invite folks to your talk/poster! You can do this over social media as well as in person while networking. If there are specific faculty who you are interested in working with at the conference, extending a personal invitation (in person or over email) is recommended.

Sample email templates for reaching out ahead of a conference

Remember, keep it short and be specific! Academics get a lot of emails, so the easier it is to respond to, the more likely it is you will get a response. If they don't answer, that's okay, you can still introduce yourself at the conference.

Emailing a potential mentor for the next stage of your career

Dear Dr. *[last name(s)]*,

My name is *[your name]* and I am currently a *[position]* with *[current mentor]* at *[place]* and in the process of applying to *[next job]*. I am a huge fan of your work in *[insert specific information about their line or research]*. Would you be accepting *[next job]* positions in *[time for when you would like to start next job]*?

I will be at the FIT'NG meeting in Baltimore. If you are also attending, I would love to chat with you in person. Please let me know either way.

I've attached my CV here in case that's useful. Please let me know if you need any other information.

Thank you!
[your name]

Emailing a potential mentor/colleague for a specific grant or project

Dear Dr. *[last name(s)]*,

My name is *[your name]* and I am currently a *[position]* with *[current mentor]* at *[place]*. I am a huge fan of your work in *[insert specific information about their line or research]*.

I am reaching out to you because I am working on a *[grant/paper/study]* on *[description]* that I would appreciate your expertise, if you have time and are interested. Please let me know what you think, or if you'd like additional information.

I will be at the FIT'NG meeting in Baltimore. If you are also attending, I would love to chat with you in person. Please let me know either way.

Thank you!
[your name]