

Welcome!

- Welcome to the world of furries! You're in for a fun-filled, jam packed three days, and Welcome to the wonderful world of furry conventions, sometimes known as 'furmeets'. We'll just call them 'cons' for short throughout this guide. You're in for a magical weekend of fun when you come to a con, but to get the most out of your experience, it's good to know a few things before you leave home. Some of you are probably ready to get out there and have fun, but some of you may be a little bit apprehensive about attending your first con. It's only natural, but don't worry, because you really don't have anything to fear.

A Note From the Author

- I attended my first con in 2004, and by the end of the first day I was completely hooked. By the end of my second con, I had PCD – Post Con Depression - a condition that affects any fur when he or she has to finally crawl away from a con when everyone else has left and there's nothing more to do but reminisce and start planning for the next con. I began putting this document together because I realized that there was so much I wish I had known before I went to that first con. I hope that in sharing this information, I'll be able to help newcomers to furry cons have the best possible experience at their very first con. And even if you've been to a few cons, you might still want to read through here to see if there are any ideas you haven't heard of before.

Legal Disclaimer – Read This Now!

- And now, the standard legal disclaimer: Everything presented here is just personal opinion based on the author's experiences. Any use of the information provided in this document is completely at your own risk, and the author makes no warranty as to the fitness or appropriateness of anything presented here in any situation that you may encounter. By accessing and reading this document, you agree to hold the author and any editors of this document completely and totally harmless for any and all liabilities, claims, demands, or injury that should result from the use of the information in this document.
- Remember that the rules and regulations of any furry con will always override anything I have suggested in this document. While much of the information provided here will apply to some degree to most cons, all cons tend to have their own unique style and atmosphere - no two are exactly alike. So, don't just assume that what you read here will apply everywhere – be sure to carefully read over the rules and guidelines provided by the specific con you are going to attend.
- In plain English: enjoy all of the tips, but using them is always at your own risk!

So, What is a Furry Convention or Furmeet?

- A Furry Convention (Furry Con) or Furmeet is simply a chance to have a good time celebrating our shared interest in furry characters – that is, anthropomorphic animal characters. It's a chance to meet new and old furry friends and a chance for many to share their furry artistic works. Indeed, there is no end to the furry art at any con, and you'll find furry artwork in just about every conceivable medium, including both visual arts and performance arts. There are also lots of fun activities at any con designed to bring furs together and help them to get to know other furs.

Furry Jargon – Words and Their Definitions

- anthro
 - An anthropomorphic animal character (see 'furry')
- artist's alley
 - An area at a con where furry artists can display and sell their artwork. This differs from a 'dealer's den' in that anyone selling in an 'artist's alley' should (in most cases) only be selling personally created works
- con badge
 - The identification card that you will need to get into the restricted areas of a con. This is not to be confused with a personal badge, which is also used to identify you, but is not tied to a specific con. Personal badges are often done by furry artists, and usually have a visual representation of the fur's personal fursona and furry name.
- con book
 - A printed guide to the con that lists out the schedule and rules, but also features cool furry artwork and furry stories.
- con suite / hospitality suite

- A room at the con's hotel where furs can gather together casually and find complimentary food and drink. In some cons, this room may only be available to attendees who have purchased a certain level of con membership
- dealer's den
 - An area at a con where furry related merchandise can be bought and sold. This differs from a 'artist's alley' in that dealers do not have to have made the items they are selling, but they do have to collect and remit sales tax. Because of local tax law issues, not every con will have a dealer's den, but nearly every con will have an artist's alley
- fur
 - A person who is a member of the furry fandom. Most furs have a 'furry name' that they go by when they are with other furs, which is usually reflective of the fur's personal fursona
- fursona
 - The specific animal character personality of a fur, which is typically based on an animal with which the fur feels some kind of special connection. Most furs have one fursona that represents them anywhere they go, but a few may have multiple fursonas. A fur's 'furry name' is typically directly connected to the fur's personal fursona
- fursuit
 - A mascot-style animal character costume, often designed or customized by the wearer to reflect his/her personal fursona
- fursuiter
 - One who entertains or just hangs out and has fun while wearing fursuit
- furry
 - An anthropomorphic animal character
- headless lounge
 - A room at the con where fursuiters can go to change into and out of their costumes without being visible to non-fursuiters at the con. Also serves as a rest area for cooling off between appearances. Large fans and ice water are staples of this room
- panel
 - A session that is something of a cross between a workshop and a presentation. Usually there is not enough time to do many truly hands-on workshops at a con, so cons will run panels that primarily feature discussions and demonstrations
- pawpet
 - An anthropomorphic animal puppet character
- pawpeteer
 - A fur who does puppetry performances with pawpet characters
- room party
 - A private party held in a hotel room. Keep in mind that these are not official parts of the con, and that they will not be subject to the rules and restrictions of the con. Attend at your own risk
- scalie
 - A reptilian anthropomorphic animal character
- scratch
 - A friendly greeting of gently raking one's fingers down the back of another fur, especially a fursuiter. If you're not sure that someone would like a scratch, ask first
- track
 - A series of panels and activities centered around a specific furry theme

Safety is Rule Number One!

- Every convention will have it's own set of rules that attendees must adhere to, but you can expect virtually all cons to have the following basic rules:
 - At most conventions, everything must adhere to a PG-13 rating. Not everyone is interested or comfortable with the more mature side of the fandom, and most cons allow in furs who are under eighteen. If you want to discuss or share items that would be considered R or X rated, you should do so off-site or in the privacy of your hotel room, although some cons may have some sanctioned adult panel sessions in the late-night hours.
 - Cons do their best to promote an atmosphere of tolerance – a lot of the world doesn't understand furries, and cons are meant to be one place where furries can be comfortable being themselves, within certain limits. Cons will not tolerate the harassment of anyone for any reason, period. If you see someone being harassed or if anyone harasses you, please let the con's security staff know

immediately. Unfortunately, cons cannot control the other guests of the hotel when you are outside the convention space, but they can control con attendees and can and will expel anyone who is causing problems for other attendees.

- o Displays of affection should be kept to a minimal level while in convention spaces. Chaste kissing and hugging are typically okay, and scratching is okay as long as the recipient of the scratch doesn't mind. If you want to go farther than this, please take it to your room.
- o Virtually all cons allow you to dress up in your fursuits or furry costume pieces (ears, tails, paws, etc.) Cons almost always allow you to carry puppets and plushes around with you throughout the convention spaces. Consider this a privilege, and be respectful of the other guests of the hotel – if someone clearly doesn't want to be entertained by your puppet or fursuit character, politely back away and give them their space.
- o Remember the PG-13 rule, and if you have a costume that is anatomically correct, it must be properly clothed if you want to wear it at the convention. Also, collars are typically okay on costumes or by themselves as long as they are worn in good taste.

Packing and Pre-Con Tips

- You can expect to have a great time at any furry con that you go to, but to have an exceptionally good time, it helps to do a little planning and special packing before you leave home.
- Register early, both for the con and for a hotel room. Con hotels are often popular tourist destinations, so they will fill up fast. Another good reason to register early is the discounts you receive, both on con registration and on your hotel room. Those early discounts will not be available when you arrive at the con, and if you wait until then to try to get a room, you probably won't get one.
- In case it's not obvious, it's perfectly acceptable for you to bring your favorite puppets, plushes, ears, tails, fursuits, etc. to a con. In fact, you're encouraged to bring anything along those lines that will help you express your furry self better. Just remember that anything you take into the con areas will have to comply with the con's decency rating, which is usually PG or PG-13.
- If you are a fursuiter, a pawpeter, an improv comic, a musician, or other kind of performer or performer wannabe, consider coming up with a short three to five minute act that you could enter into the con's variety show. While some furs like to challenge themselves to come up with something at the very last minute, most of the good acts are ones that have been rehearsed well before the con ever begins.
- Mealtime can also be a challenge, especially if you want to stay on a budget, as hotels are not known for offering inexpensive dining options. You can always hike or drive to the nearest fast-food restaurant, but that takes up valuable con time. My recommendation: if you have an in-room refrigerator, run down to a sandwich shop and get a couple of foot-long sub sandwiches to keep in your fridge. Stock your fridge with plenty of drinks, bring chips and cookies, and you can have every lunch and even some of your dinners right there in your room. And, because subs are easy to carry, you can always bring your lunch down to the con area if you end up in a real time crunch. Of course, I do recommend that you eat one dinner somewhere outside the hotel, just because it's good to get away from the hotel at least once during the con.
- Bring plenty of cash - the majority of artists in an Artist's Alley and many dealers in the Dealer's Den will only accept cash or possibly a check, but almost never credit cards. Charity auctions, another staple of cons, also usually require cash, though that will vary based on the charity involved. While most hotels do have ATMs, they usually charge an arm and a leg in service fees (not to mention the ones your own bank will tack on), and finding a branch of your own bank near a con hotel can usually be challenging at best.

General Tips for Having a Good Time at a Furry Convention

- Don't be afraid to ask questions - the con staff is there to help keep the con running smoothly, and they'd much rather you ask questions than to make a wrong assumption. Just don't pester them too much - they work very hard and often get very little sleep during the days of the con. If you don't mind lending a paw, inquire about volunteer opportunities - if you're willing to help, the staff is quite likely to find something for you to do.
- Treat the conference like you would a theme park – study the schedule as soon as you get it and plan your weekend out. Don't forget that if you choose to participate in a variety show, there will usually be a mandatory rehearsal that you'll need to fit into your schedule. You also want to leave time to just hang out in the con areas for socializing, as well as time to visit the artist's alley and/or dealer's den. If you have a good game plan, you be able to squeeze as much fun out of the weekend as possible.
- While there are breaks set aside for lunch and dinner, you'd be surprised how much time it takes to get out to a restaurant and back to the hotel. Lunch breaks are often only an hour, so consider keeping some food in your room to keep from having to leave the hotel. Also get to know where the con's hospitality suite is

and keep tabs on what they offer there – sometimes a few snack items and a little luncheon meat can tide you over nicely until dinner.

- If your room is really far up in the hotel, you are going to very quickly get sick of riding the elevator by Sunday night. If you have a car at the con, save yourself a few elevator trips by storing some of your stuff in your car during the day. For example, if you are walking off-site to eat or riding in someone else's car, stop by your own car and lock your extra stuff up there, rather than going all the way up to your room and back down (and then having to go back up and down again when you get back).
- It's a good idea to carry a notepad and several pens or pencils with you. If you are an artistic fur, the many sights of a con will likely inspire you and you'll want to make sketches. If you are a writer, you might get some neat ideas for stories. In any case, you are sure to meet new friends and will want to write down email addresses, phone numbers, and instant messenger IDs. You'll also inevitably attend some panels and want to take notes, and you may even want to leave notes for other furs.
- Don't forget your cameras, but be courteous with your picture taking. It's perfectly acceptable to take pictures and videos in the public areas of a con and at most con activities, but if someone asks you not to take pictures or video, please respect that person's wishes. Also, remember that cameras are generally not allowed in any headless lounge or any other area where fursuiters have their heads off. Never photograph a headless fursuiter unless you have the person's explicit permission.
- On behalf of the staff and other attendees of every furry con, one final request: please take a bath at least once during the con. Everyone will be greatly appreciative, okay

On Interacting With Fursuiters

- Fursuiters are a common and really fun part of any furry con. They can be a lot of fun to watch and even interact with. Remembering a few basic tips will help you to have a good time with them and allow you to help them enjoy their time out in costume:
 - o Remember that fursuiters may not be able to see very well, especially things that are not right in front of them. Be cautious of coming up on a suiter from behind or the sides, as they might not know you are there.
 - o Not all suiters talk – if a fursuiter doesn't seem to want to answer your questions, it's probably because s/he's playing a silent character and not because s/he's ignoring you. Just play along and wait for a time when the person is out of suit to talk to him/her.
 - o Help a suiter out – hold a door open, step to the side in tight spaces, etc. It's not easy getting around in a full-body costume, so every little act of kindness really makes a difference.
 - o Suiters love to be photographed, but never photograph any suiter who's taken his/her head, gloves, etc. off, unless you have specific permission from the suiter. This usually shouldn't happen outside of the headless lounge, but it sometimes does.
 - o The Headless Lounge is intended to be a break and gathering area for the fursuiters. You're welcome to go in there if you have an interest in fursuiting and want to get to know more about fursuits and fursuiters, but please don't use the room as a general hang-out spot or try to do any non-fursuiting activities in there. Also, as a rule of thumb, do not take pictures in the lounge.
 - o If anyone starts hassling a fursuiter, go right away and get someone on the con's staff to help out. Don't just assume that someone else is going to go for help, and don't try to get involved in a situation – let con staff or hotel staff handle any altercations. If a suiter gets hurt in your presence, don't be afraid to talk to the person – ask them if they need help and do what you can to assist.

Typical Furry Convention Events

- These are some of the events and activities you will find at a con. Not every con will have every activity, and the nature of each activity will vary from con to con, but this should give you a basic idea of what to expect.
 - o Opening Ceremonies
 - This is one of the first events of a con, and is a chance for the con staff to introduce themselves and welcome everyone to the con. Be sure to come to this session to find out about any last minute changes or updates that might not be in the con book.
 - o Artists Alley / Dealers Den
 - These are places to buy or sell furry artwork and merchandise. Remember that artists can only sell their own works, while dealers can resell merchandise obtained from other sources, but dealers have to collect and remit sales taxes. If you're looking for something furry to take home with you, these are the places to go.
 - o Art Gallery

- Some cons will host a showing of art work done by noteworthy furry artists. Some items may be up for bidding - others may be available for immediate sale - even others may be for viewing only. Items are usually marked as to whether the money raised goes to the artist, to a charity, or is split some way between the two.
- Panel Sessions
 - These are information sessions where you can learn about various aspects of the furry fandom. Usually these are organized into tracks based on topic, which can include Fursuiting, Pawpetry, Writing, Drawing, Spirituality / Species Backgrounds, and General Furry Topics. A few panels may have hands-on elements, but most are going to be presentations, group discussions, or technique demonstrations.
- Charity Auction / Presentation
 - Most cons support a local animal rescue organization. Furs are, after all, animal lovers and most furs will do anything they can to help animals in need. While any fur can make a direct monetary donation to the con's charity, the con will typically auction off furry artwork and merchandise, with all of the money raised going straight to the charity. Bring cash if you want to bid on something, and be prepared to pay for your winnings immediately following the auction. In some cases, there may be a presentation before the auction featuring live animals brought in by the animal rescue organization, but this will vary from con to con.
- Video / Animation Rooms
 - Some cons will have rooms set up where you can sit back and enjoy great furry movies or classic furry TV programs. Schedules are sometimes posted (more often for movies than for TV programs), but can be subject to change
- Gaming Rooms
 - Furs love games, and many cons will have a one or more gaming rooms. For the newbie, games come in two flavors, computer games and traditional games, and usually these are found in separate rooms. The computer gaming room will usually have networked computers for playing online multiplayer games, while the traditional gaming room might have anything from poker to board games to pen and paper based role playing games.
- Variety Show
 - Almost every con has a variety show opportunity, and this is a time for you to show everyone what your hidden talent is. Just about anything goes that fits within the con's decency rating (typically PG or PG-13), and it is quite common to see fursuiters and pawpeteers doing acts. Expect a three to five minute time limit per act, and expect to possibly get pulled off stage if your act is really bad (this depends on the format of the show). If you want to participate, plan on attending one or two mandatory rehearsal sessions where you will have to run through your act and provide information on timing, musical accompaniment, and anything you will need to have on stage when it's your turn to perform.
 - For a tips on doing a variety show act, check out the Conventions section of the Fursuiting FAQ: www.fursuit.org/wiki/doku.php?id=fursuit:conventions:masquerades_variety_shows
- Fursuit Games
 - Have you ever wondered what its like to play classic childhood games while wearing a fursuit? Well, this is your chance, and if you don't have a fursuit it's just as fun to come out and watch the fursuiters try to compete. One important tip for the fursuiters: it's really not about winning or losing in fursuit games - it's all about having fun. It's far better to focus on being a good, fun, likable character at the games than to worry about trying to win every event. Remember, no one likes a sore loser!
- Fursuit Parade
 - This is when as many fursuiters as possible get together and then march through the con spaces and other public parts of the hotel. It's a chance to see more fursuits than ever, and really, who doesn't like a parade? When the parading is over, it's time for the main group fursuit photo opportunity of the con.
- Improv Comedy
 - Furs love comedy, and no con would be complete without at least one comedy show. If you are a budding comic, there might even be a chance to get into the act
- Dances
 - These usually start up around 10 or 11 PM, and run until the wee hours of the morning. Fursuiters are almost always welcome at the dances, and its actually rather fun to watch people who only think they can dance get out on the dance floor (yes, I'll admit that I pretty much fall into this category myself - I would never go dancing without wearing my fursuit.)

- Concert(s)
 - Many cons will feature an evening concert with a popular furry band. Seating may be limited so be sure to get there early!
- Closing Ceremonies / Feedback
 - This is one of the last events of a con, and a chance for the con staff to find out what you think of the con. Do try to come if you possibly can, and if you have constructive comments or suggestions, don't be afraid to share them with the con staff.