

The Newcomer's ABC

Or, A Guide To Discworld Conventions

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We have created this guide because we want to make sure that you, as someone new to Discworld conventions, feel welcome. Travelling to your first convention, not knowing anyone else and not knowing what to expect, can be scary. We've all been there, but we know it's worth it.

What is the Discworld convention?

At its simplest level, a Discworld convention is a gathering of people who enjoy the writings of Terry Pratchett and anything related to the Discworld.

Each convention might have a theme. Nullus Anxietas IV was "Soul Music", Nullus Anxietas VI was "The Discworld Grand Tour" Nullus Anxietas 7 was "Going Postal" and this time for Nullus Anxietas 7a the theme is 'Citie of A Thousande Surprises'. Some of the events may tie in with the main theme, but you can expect anything Discworld-related!

A range of events and activities are offered over the convention weekend, and attending or participating in these is up to you – generally there's more than one thing on at a time, so a) you will hopefully find something you want to see or do, but b) you might have to miss out on something in order to attend something else.

So you've taken the plunge and bought your ticket. Well done! That's a great first step. Read on to find out lots of useful information!



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ACCOMMODATION

Book accommodation at the hotel, or nearby. Staying at the venue is recommended, because it means being able to enjoy evening activities with no late nights driving/taxi-ing/bussing home. The venue hotel is the [Stamford Plaza Sydney Airport](#).

Work out how you're getting to the convention. Book flights, work out the best bus to catch or how much a taxi will cost, or think about driving. The Stamford Sydney Airport is an 11-minute walk from the #309 bus stop on Botany Rad and a 13-minute walk from Mascot Train Station (on the T8 Airport line). The hotel offers an Airport Transfer [Shuttle Bus](#). If you're going to use public transport, you will need an Opal card (see TRANSPORT).

ACCESSIBILITY

If you have any accessibility concerns, please let our Membership Officer know through the form on our website at ausdwcon.org/contact-us or via email (members@ausdwcon.org) if that is easier for you.

A Facebook group at [Nullus Anxietas Blue Dot Accessibility Group](#) has been set up to talk about accessibility in the months leading up to and during the convention. This is also where people who are blind or have low vision will be able to access information pinned up on the physical noticeboard during the Con.

The Nullus Anxietas website also has an Accessibility page for our website, located at ausdwcon.org/help-resources/accessibility, so be sure to check that out.

ARRIVALS

Many attendees – especially those travelling from far away – will show up on the Thursday night before the official start of the convention. It's a chance to relax, get settled, and maybe catch up with friends from previous conventions or people they've met in our Facebook groups. Nothing formal is organised, but you may find lots of people in the hotel who are there for the weekend. Often, they are identifiable by their convention t-shirts from previous years. Feel free to introduce yourself and say hi.

When you arrive at the venue, check in to the hotel or other accommodation you've arranged

On Friday morning, the committee and volunteers are busy with final setup. The convention begins around lunchtime, although some people will only arrive in time for the opening ceremony on Friday evening, or even later.

From mid-morning Friday, there should be clear signs at the venue pointing you to the **convention registration area**. Tell the people there who you are and you will get your convention bag. This will include several vital items. (See CONVENTION BAG.)

BOARD GAMES

Did you know there are several Discworld board games available? Want to learn how to play them or even some other great modern board and card games? Come along to the games room where we'll have a wide selection for you to play, along with a few scheduled learn-to-play sessions.

CHARITY AUCTION

Generally, Discworld conventions support a few charities, with money raised through selling various Discworld collectors' items. [This is where to go](#) if you want a signed book, a prop from one of the movies or something equally Discworldian.

Some items may be sold in a silent auction (where you write down your bid beforehand, rather than the auctioneer calling out for bids), and you can bid on these items at Ops well in advance of the actual auction event.

CHILDREN

Can you bring your children to the convention? Absolutely! We do try to be family friendly, but be aware that the occasional outburst of the Hedgehog song may not be suitable for sensitive young ears. Check out the family ticket in the shop to save that little extra bit of money. However, much as we all love children, you will be required to supervise them throughout the convention. If they were your children when you arrived, they are still your children for the duration of the convention. That is fair isn't it?

CLOSING CEREMONY

The closing ceremony on the Sunday afternoon is the last event on the programme and is a chance for us to say thanks to all the hardworking volunteers – from the gophers all the way up to the executive committee. Please come along to show your appreciation for the work that's gone into making the convention happen.

CONVENTION BAG

At Registration, you will receive a Convention Bag which includes a bunch of necessary and cool things.

- *Convention badge*
This is your identity at the convention. Without it you will not be allowed to attend sessions or events. **Wear it at all times.**
- *Convention Book*
This souvenir book contains information about the guests of honour, the committee, the activities planned, plus other interesting articles. You do need to read the Book, and you need to do it as soon as you get your hands on it! (See CONVENTION BOOK)
- *“Final” Timetable of Events and Activities*¹
This might be the most useful item in the pack. It will be the most up-to-date schedule of the events planned.
- *Map*
We generally rename the convention rooms and areas with Discworldly names, so the map is handy for when you are looking for that event you really do not want to miss! There should also be signs up helping you find your way around, and you can always ask a committee member or other convention attendee for help. If you have any accessibility concerns, please let our Membership Officer know before the convention, through [this form on our website](#) or via email (members@ausdwcon.org) if that is easier for you. (See ACCESSIBILITY)
- *Klatch entry ticket (see KLATCH)*
Fill in this form and return to OPS for your chance to participate in a small-group discussion with one of our VIP's!
- *Other bits and pieces*
There are usually a few extra goodies in your convention bag. There may even be an exciting convention activity! Be sure to look through the bag as soon as you've registered so you don't miss out.

CONVENTION BOOK

Not only is this book a go-to for information about convention sessions and activities, it also contains interviews, artwork, articles, stories and many other fascinating trivium concerning the Disc and Fourecks. You might want to get an autograph from a VIP, or use one of the articles as a conversation starter when meeting new people! Make sure you **read** your Convention Book and keep it handy so you can refer back to it later.

COSTUMES

To costume or not to costume... that is the question.

Many Discworld fans like to dress up as their favourite Terry Pratchett / Discworld character at the convention. Costumes are totally voluntary – you are very welcome to participate if you feel like it, or fit right in with the many who like to wear jeans and a t-shirt.

If you do want to dress up, we encourage you to do so. Your costume can be a fantastic way to meet people and a great conversation starter. Some costumes are simple² (a torn shirt, some makeup and a protest sign: instant Reg Shoe), some are amazing demonstrations of skill and artifice (Mr Shine, him *diamond!*).

Some people have a different costume for each day, or some wear the same character every day. Some just wear a costume to the Gala Dinner or to enter in the [Maskerade](#) or [XXXXFactor](#) . There is also a chance you could win the People's Choice of Best Costume at the Con, just for wearing your costume, nothing to enter for this one.

Plan your costume and start making it now!

Please note!! “Cosplay is not Consent” : anyone in a costume is no doubt super-proud of the outfits they've whipped up to wear to the con, but that doesn't mean they want to be plastered all over social media. If you'd like to take a photo of someone in costume, or have a selfie with them, make sure you ask first! (See ETIQUETTE.) That said, if you see an outfit that's particularly amazing or clever, the wearer will probably be happy to accept your compliments, and may even share their methods with you.

DEALERS ROOM

There is usually a dealers' room where you can buy books and other Discworld-related merchandise, or sometimes gifts and curios handmade by other fans. It's not like the big pop culture expos where the dealers take up most of the space – we typically have about half a dozen dealers. The Convention Book has information on the dealers attending the convention, their location at the convention and the times they will be open for business. (Note: The Dealer's Room may have a different name connected to the theme of the Convention.)

1 The timetable is in endless flux, even during the convention itself, so 'final' may be a strong word. But it's as final as you'll get printed on a bit of paper ☺

2 Although don't go *too* simple – We know that barbarian heroes or Nac Mac Feegles don't wear much more than a loincloth or a kilt, but for the sake of the hotel staff and other guests, please wear a little bit more.

ETIQUETTE

Nullus Anxietas 7a welcomes people from all over Roundworld. You are welcome here regardless of race, height, worship methods or sleeping arrangements. You will encounter people with diverse likes and interests. Get in there and soak up something new. We show respect to all.

FOOD

The convention doesn't supply you with any food, except at the Gala Dinner (ticketed at an extra cost). So remember to eat! The Stamford Plaza Hotel has a buffet breakfast, and also a super-handy pre-order lunch service – there will be some more information about this in your Convention Bag. There are also a couple of restaurants on site at the hotel, you can check out the menu's [here](#).

There may or may not be space on the schedule around mealtimes, but it is easy to get so caught up in everything that you suddenly find the next big event is starting and you're hungry. Bring snacks with you if you think you might forget.

The hotel also has places where you can buy food, but they may not necessarily be quick or cheap. Locally, there are supermarkets and cafe's within walking distance (Mascot Station has several eating options and a Woolworths, plus Botany Road has an IGA and many shops and cafe's.)

Also, please remember to raise any dietary requirements when you purchase food – while we will pass on information you supply to the gala dinner organisers, we cannot be responsible for food consumed during the convention.

FOLK SINGING

Terry Pratchett was a fan of folk songs and Australia's own Martin Pearson brings some of the books' songs to life. If you haven't yet heard 100+ people sing along to Nanny Ogg's Hedgehog Song, you soon will!

GALA DINNER

On the Saturday night, there will be a chance for you to frock up or put on your best suit (or Discworld costume) for [a lovely evening of food and entertainment](#). This catered event does cost extra (tickets will be available on the website, are limited and must be purchased in advance).

If you don't come to the Gala Dinner, there will be alternate events so you will still be able to have fun with other convention attendees.

To avoid missing out, consider buying tickets to the Gala Dinner and post-convention tours as soon as they become available through the website.

GUESTS

There will be some guests of honour (also known as VIP's) invited to the convention, and it's possible you may have never heard of them. However, rest assured they are people who have worked closely with Terry Pratchett or his work over the years, and they all have wonderful stories to tell. There will be information on the website and in the Convention Book to let you know who these people are and what they have done for the Discworld community. Unlike at other pop culture conventions, the guests will usually spend their time behaving just like other attendees, going to events or participating in activities, wandering around, and lounging in the bar. Do not be afraid to talk to them, to introduce yourself, or offer to buy them a drink. There is no charge for signings or photographs, and although there might be scheduled signing times, most will be happy to sign stuff for you outside those times, provided you ask nicely.

Of course, please remember to treat our guests with respect. Some of them have travelled a long way to be at the convention, and may wish to enjoy parts of the convention as a fan, just like you. Just remember to be polite and pick your moment (requesting autographs in the bathroom might not be considered the best approach!)

KLATCHES

Klatches are small, intimate group chats with guests of honour. They are listed in the programme but numbers are limited. In your convention bag will be tickets to the Klatches; you will need to submit your ticket to Ops and you will have a chance to attend them by random draw. The draws will be announced just prior to each Klatch by way of a list posted at the door of the Klatch location.

MASKERADE, XXXX FACTOR and PROP COMPETITION

The [Maskerade](#) is a chance for those who do choose to wear a costume to show off! It is a costume parade where judges will award prizes based on the quality of the costume.

There is also a talent quest (known as the [XXXX Factor](#)) where you can perform a little skit or song (keep it short!) to see who can make the audience laugh/groan/cry the most.

To participate in any of the Maskerade or XXXX Factor categories, please sign up on the [website](#) beforehand, or at Ops by the Friday evening.

If crafting is more your thing, you might consider bringing your infernal device to the [Prop Competition](#).

MEETING PEOPLE (OLD FRIENDS AND NEW)

Some fans are talkative and outgoing, while others prefer quiet and a good book – which can make parts of the convention a little scary for them. There may seem to be cliques³ and in-crowds⁴, but we are generally a friendly bunch ready to welcome Discworld fans into a group. Your Convention Book can be a great icebreaker – there's plenty of conversation starters in there!

You can find out about regional fan clubs at ausdwcon.org/fan-clubs or meet people in our Facebook group at facebook.com/groups/ausdwcon2021

MERCHANDISE

Consider buying t-shirts and other convention merchandise, once they become available through the website. Most of these will be pre-orders that you can pick up at the convention.

NEWBIE'S GUIDE LIVE

This is a quick run-through of a lot of the things covered in this guide. It is a good way to see how to have as much fun as possible, a great place to ask questions, and is highly recommended for people who are attending their first-ever Discworld Convention. You'll also be able to get your questions answered by real live people who might even know the answers right away!

OPS (OPERATIONS)

Ops is the hub of operations for the con. Come to Ops for information on events, first aid, lost property, costume weapons checks and more.

- Submitting Klatch tickets
- Submitting raffle forms
- Bidding on the silent auction
- If you are lost, or have lost your con buddy/child/duck
- Weapons checks
- Volunteering
- First Aid
- Questions on just about anything, but let's not get too metaphysical, okay?

Basically, if there's anything you don't know, or a situation where you don't know what to do... **Go to Ops.**

OPENING CEREMONY

The opening ceremony takes place on the Friday afternoon/evening and is an entertaining way for the committee to welcome everyone to the convention. Special welcome is given to the guests of honour (and Sir Terry's hat), and you'll be given a briefing about what to expect, safety issues and so on.

PROGRAMME of Events and Activities

The '[Programme of Events](#)' is basically the timetable of events over the course of the convention. A Discworld convention has a large volume of events and activities running at all times - usually four or five things at once! And although you won't be able to see everything (unless you're a history monk) there's so much to experience. The convention normally begins around lunchtime on Friday and finishes late afternoon on Sunday. There are often multiple events happening at the same time, although major events will not have anything scheduled against them. Events vary from serious discussions to the downright silly. There will be panel discussions, video presentations, Q&A sessions, crafting sessions, board games, silly games, music, dancing, trivia – and we know there will be something on the timetable that even we've never heard of before!

Some timetable items are traditional and will almost certainly be included – read your Convention Book to find out more about the events being offered at the convention.

THE BAR

This is always a good place to chat with other Discworld fans, share stories and enjoy a refreshing beverage. You may run into some of the VIP guests, and they may appreciate you offering to buy them a drink! You may also run into some of the convention organisers, who would also really appreciate you offering to buy them a drink.

³ Most of the 'cliques' will actually just be people who clicked at a previous convention and want to catch up.

⁴ We like to think the committee is the in-crowd, but we are often busy and usually exhausted, so we might not always be able to stop for a chat.

QUESTIONS

Talk with other attendees or the committee about any queries you might have. We have a Facebook group at facebook.com/groups/ausdwcon2021 for everyone to chat, or you can submit queries to the committee via our website, ausdwcon.org.

Subscribe to the newsletter (via the website) to get email updates approximately once a month, perhaps more frequently closer to the convention.

Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or [Twitter](#) for shorter, more immediate updates.

QUIZ

There is usually a quiz with Discworld and Roundworld questions, often held on the Friday afternoon. This is a good opportunity to meet new people (by finding a table and saying “can I join you?”) while racking your brains for that tiny titbit of knowledge. Treat it like a trivia night, and just have fun.

THE 5-2-1 RULE

This applies to all conventions, not just Discworld ones. It means that every day, you should ensure you get:

- At least 5 hours of sleep
- At least 2 full meals
- At least 1 shower

Some people follow 7-3-1 or other variants, and that’s up to you as an individual, but although you might think it’s fun to stay up all night or you’re too busy to remember meals, for your sake and for the sake of everyone around you, take care of yourself, get some sleep, eat some food, and wash away the sweat and grime of the day.

SLANG

Over the years, the Australian Discworld Conventions have developed a bit of our own lingo (some borrowed from the UK Discworld Conventions) and it can be a little confusing to a newcomer. Most are covered in this guide, but here are a few more:

- **Blue Dot:** This is a scheme which allows people who may have accessibility requirements early entry or a choice of seating for some of our events.
- **Con:** Short for convention.
- **Nullus Anxietas:** The name chosen for the main Australian Discworld Conventions. Taken from *The Last Continent* where it’s the motto of Bugarup University. It’s (fake) Latin for “No Worries!”
- **NA7a:** Shorthand for “Nullus Anxietas 7a” (We don’t use the number that falls between 7 and 9, remember!)

TRANSPORT

Opal is the public transport ticket system for Sydney. In order to get around by tram, train, ferry and bus you need an Opal card. Depending on [which card you need](#), there are a number of ways to get an Opal card. Adult and Child/Youth Opal cards are available over the counter from [Opal retailers](#), including convenience stores and newsagents, while concession cards must be applied for online. If you are flying into Sydney for the convention, an easy option is to purchase an Opal card at the Airport Train Station.

There is no charge for an Opal card, however the minimum value is \$10 for an Adult Opal card and \$5 for a Child/Youth Opal card. You can use the minimum value to pay your fare for travel on public transport within the Opal network.

You can also use [contactless payments](#) as an alternative to travelling with an Adult Opal card. You can also purchase [Opal single trip tickets](#), however prices are more expensive than using an Opal card and some stations, stops and wharves do not sell them. You will need to touch on with your Opal every time you enter a bus, train or tram and touch off when you leave. This ensures you are charged the right amount.

Plan your Sydney public transport trips using the online [Trip Planner](#) or download one of the handy [trip planning apps](#) on your smartphone. If you have some transport-related Accessibility questions, have a look at the [Accessible Travel](#) page.

WATCH, THE

“The Watch” refers to the Convention Security. These are dedicated volunteers who are assigned to “serve and protect” all attendees of the convention. They are there to make sure Klatches are uninterrupted, to escort our VIP’s and generally keep the peace. Although they are very helpful and friendly, they are usually ‘on mission’, so if you have questions please go to Ops rather than asking any of the Watch staff.

WEAPONS

Unfortunately, our little patch of Roundworld does not grant you the right to bear arms. ALL WEAPONS MUST BE CHECKED IN AT OPS. If you are in costume and carrying any kind of weapon or weapon-looking item (yep, even that plastic scythe!) you MUST report to Ops IMMEDIATELY. There you will be given a sticker to place on your weapon and a note will be made of it. If we deem the weapon to be offensive (even to trolls) we will ask you to leave it with us at Ops (you may reclaim it later, or take it back to your hotel room if you would prefer). PLEASE don't violate this code. It is for everyone's safety and enjoyment. Remember that regular Roundworld denizens (the kind that don't know about The Disc, poor things) will also be in the venue and we don't want to scare them.⁵

WEREWOLF

This fun social deduction party game is always a big hit at conventions. Don't worry if you've never played before, the rules are fairly simple and whoever is moderating the game will explain them to new players. In addition to scheduled Werewolf games, it's likely that unofficial games will take place – generally late at night!

VOLUNTEERS & VOLUNTEERING

The conventions are run entirely by volunteers. While all the big jobs will have been allocated long before you get there, helpers (or gophers) are still needed during the convention itself. The term “gophers” comes from the phrase “can you go for...” and they are highly valued by committee members and convention attendees.

Volunteer to help out in some capacity. There are many jobs to do before the convention, as well as several during the weekend itself. See ausdwcon.org/volunteer for more information. Volunteering can also gain unexpected benefits!⁶

WHERE DID EVERYONE GO?

There might be times when it can seem like everyone has just disappeared. If this happens, you might be missing a really popular event. Check the timetable or go to Ops. (Possibly, it's 3am and you didn't notice. Time to apply THE 5-2-1 RULE!)

Congratulations on making it through the Newcomer's ABC!

Please consider:

- Visiting the website at ausdwcon.org regularly, as information will be added as we edge closer to the convention.
- Subscribing to the newsletter (via the website) to get updates via email.
- Following us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or [Twitter](#) for more frequent updates.
- Joining the [Facebook group](#) to chat with other attendees.
- Finding out more about your local [fan club](#) so you can meet other fans before heading to the convention.

⁵ Well, not too much, anyway.

⁶ We can't tell you what they are, though. Because they're unexpected.