

PAX notes

Everyone wants PAX to be fun. We are going to have a good time, look at video games, play games, and meet people. There are pitfalls that can detract from your PAX experience. Below are lessons from people who have encountered some sort of issue that made life less fun than it should be while at PAX. As always, use good judgment. Note that this was written with Pax East in mind. We assume that most (if not all)¹ of it will be useful for the other PAXs (and many other conventions).

Date for Pax East 2025: May 8-11 (damn it's late this year)
PAX West is Labor Day Weekend.

Pre-PAX

Things to get done before PAX starts at 10am on Thursday:

Planning and Scheduling

Have your badges in advance: Planning to meet people at the show to pick up or drop off badges sounds like a great idea. In reality it is a pain in the ass. Phone reception at the show is spotty, the crowds are dense and you can miss someone who is less than twenty feet away due to the press of the crowd. And gods forbid someone is late to the convention hall and the person with the passes has to exit the building to meet up with the person who doesn't have their badge. Spend the money and ship the badges to each person/group in advance so there is less confusion at the gates.

It has been advised to take a full photo of your badges in advance, with the serial numbers. If badges are stolen there is a better chance of getting replacements or catching thieves with the stolen badges (YMMV). Do not share these photos unless needed.

Badges are good for one day (Thursday, Friday, etc) or for the full four days. You cannot get partial event or two day badges.. You can exit and reenter as many times as you want during that day. Just remember that anytime you reenter you have to deal with the security checkpoints.

Medical checkup: If you have medical concerns about attending a large loud convention (noise, nutrition, food allergies, medications, hay fever, hydration, conshock, cheat codes, alien incursion, wall hacks, ninjas, etc) consult your doctor in advance to see what if any actions you should take to ensure your health is protected and maintained². If possible, carefully schedule any heavy medication in the

¹ We openly admit we have no idea about the parking, hotels or local food in the Seattle, Melbourne or Philadelphia regions. You're on your own for that one.

² The comments here are based on previous experiences the writers have had at PAX. While these notes have served the writers well in the past; you (the reader) are expected to evaluate this document yourself and decide for yourself how to implement it in a way that serves your needs. The writers of this document shall not take responsibility for your actions. You are expected to be a responsible adult that is capable of understanding the responsibilities and consequences of the choices regarding your own health and legal status (including consulting with healthcare and legal professionals as needed). If you are not an adult: get your parent(s) or legal guardian to

week leading up to PAX (vaccines, Depo-Provera, Chemotherapy, various infused science fiction shit). In cases of a potential scheduling conflict: talk to your doctor to see if you can adjust your treatment schedule while staying compliant. Any drug that will knock you down a couple rungs for a few days counts toward this. We are not advocating ignoring doctor's orders so you can go to PAX.

Note on disabilities: If you have a disability, PAX does have Medical Passes to assist. Contact: pax_questions@paxsite.com directly so they can help you out. You need to already have standard badges before you apply for Medical Passes³.

Review the schedule⁴ and maps to block out items of interest, major meals and rest points: If you are going for a single day- Chart out specific things you want to attend while you are there; be it games, panels or shows. You don't get a mulligan if you miss something.

If you are going for multiple or the full four days- Scope out which things are high priority (one time events, games, tournaments, demos, etc) and which items you want to fit in whenever you have the time. Use part of Thursday as recon for the rest of the weekend so you can adjust your plan to accommodate unanticipated items you encounter.

Decide early if you are interested in the evening activities (panels, games, concerts) and how to schedule meals around them. Food vendors in the hall close at 6pm.

The schedule has been entered into google sheets for easy reference. You can review it to help set up your own schedule⁵ (This has been updated for Pax East 2019-the 2020 schedule is not up yet).

PAX

Now you're on your way.

Transportation and parking

Weather notes: Boston weather in April normally ranges between 50°-60°. End of February is close to 40. Temperature ranges of 30°-60° is not unheard of. Rain is normal for april. Sleet and snow this time of year is not normal, but can happen.

If you are flying into the Boston area: Take the T or a taxi into the city and your hotel. Renting a car is not worth the trouble (unless you have other business in the region that you must drive to).

review this document and make any final decisions that are required. If you are over 18 and not a responsible adult: In the eyes of the law you are an adult and responsible for your own actions. The "I don't want to grow up and someone else should be responsible for me" argument lost its weight when you turned 18.

³ <http://east.paxsite.com/safety-accessibility#safety-accessibility>

⁴ <http://east.paxsite.com/schedule>

⁵ https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/164vLpxX5DjkPGPOnVCRq6BLVMJ7_9O_bBEFQ6ntqHH0/edit#gid=1205277544 thanks to /u/FreyaRaine on Reddit

If you're attending the entire weekend and driving into the area: If possible drive in on Wednesday night and park the car for the weekend. Don't move the car until you leave Sunday. Pay for the extra day at the hotel and get a good night's sleep before PAX.

Taking the T: If you live in the greater Boston area or are staying in a hotel with T access, ride the T to the BCEC.

Ride the T to South Station⁶. From there ride the Silver Line (don't laugh) from South Station to World Trade Center⁷. Round trip on the T will cost about \$6 on Charlie Tickets. The Silver Line will be used heavily that weekend so don't expect the Silver Line to be empty like a normal weekend. You will thank yourself at the end of the day and the weekend by avoiding walking that can be served by mass transit.

If you are going to be at PAX for all four days, look into getting a one week T pass. You can pick them up at most T stations and the price is heavily discounted from paying for single ride tickets every day.

The Commuter Rail: All of the lines for the south shore come into South Station. So you can take the commuter rail straight right into South Station and walk to the BCEC from there. Trip length and departure times are subject to the MBTA. The advantage is you don't have to drive, but your schedule is limited to the commuter line schedule.

The south shore lines include: Worcester, Needham, Forge 495, Wickford, Middleborough, Kingston, Greenbush.

If you are coming in on the North Shore, you will have to get off at North station and then take the T (green or orange) to Downtown Crossing and then ride the Red line to South Station..

Driving in to the BCEC: We only recommend driving to the BCEC if you are day tripping or plan on leaving the Boston area immediately after PAX (ie Sunday night).

If you plan on driving into the city for PAX (day tripping), allow plenty of extra time in the drive in. The expressways will back up during the inbound commute (Thursday and Friday). The roads immediately around the BCEC and the Seaport District are a bit scrambled and will gridlock. Getting lost is less an option and more of a rite of passage. If you want to enter the convention hall right at 10am, plan on parking the car by 9am. Allow for extra time for traffic snarls, bad parking and the unexpected.

The formal address of the BCEC is: 415 Summer St, Boston, MA 02210. Google maps, Mapquest, Bing, etc will all bring you to the front door. Access to the BCEC parking is at the stoplight in front of the BCEC. While the BCEC does have onsite parking, once it is full everybody else will be diverted (ie: you are on your own).

⁶ For exact route planning: MBTA.com or maps.google.com

⁷ The ride from South Station to World Trade Center will save about 1.5 miles of walking for the round trip.

On street parking: On street parking in Seaport is metered on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Boston Police are not afraid to ticket your car after the meter has run out. A standard parking ticket (meter violation) is \$25. If you get dinged for something else (double parking, illegal parking, fire hydrant, etc) it is going to cost you more. You will probably get ticketed multiple times if the meter inspector makes it back to your car and you haven't fed the meter. Sunday parking in seaport is not metered. Don't be surprised if every spot is taken by 10am. If you are banking on a free/convenient parking spot; be ready to arrive very early to secure it. Last reported: the Seaport parking meters are \$1.50/hour, so you are going to spend \$10-\$20 in meter fees per day.

Garage Parking: There are no free garages or lots in walking distance to the BCEC. Review the parking options in advance⁸: Parking in and around the BCEC charges different amounts. Each garage or lot has slightly different policies: Early bird specials, departure times, rate changes for staying past the departure time, overnight parking availability, etc. Shuttle service to the BCEC is common but not guaranteed. Some lots in the area are restricted/reserved access and marked as such; park in those at your own risk. If you are dead set on parking as close as possible to the BCEC, plan on arriving on site at least an hour before the show opens.

People have had good luck at the Channel Center Parking (near the complex) and taking the convention shuttles to the hall.

Seaport parking runs around \$25/day and downtown parking (Downtown Boston) will cost \$40/day for parking. Overnight charges are extra. Some sites charge "event" rates in cases of high demand (Red Sox games, PAX, Bruins, Celtics). Event pricing is significantly steeper.

Other off site weekend parking: It is possible to stash a car at a low cost garage elsewhere (off a remote T station such as Riverside or Alewife, in a pinch Wellington on the orange line will also fit this bill)⁹. While the costs are significantly reduced, it is inconvenient to go back and get something out of it later. Carefully plan ahead and bring everything you will need so you don't need to go back to the car until you are leaving for the weekend. Confirm in advance that the garage allows for overnight and multi-day parking.

Parking Apps and websites: There are several parking apps and websites that can either be used to hunt for free parking or reserve parking in advance. The two most suggested have been:

SPOTHERO - Website and app for reserving guaranteed parking.

PARKOPEDIA - Website and app for finding parking garages and on street parking. This website reports prices and when metered parking is in force.

⁸Parking Around the Convention Hall: The convention center used to provide a map of local parking. It has been pulled in the last year (2023).

⁹ MBTA overnight parking: <https://www.mbta.com/parking/overnight-parking>

Hotel Shuttles: PAX runs shuttles each year to many of the local hotels. In the morning they deliver to the convention hall only, during the day they go both ways. At night the shuttles only deliver people to the hotels and not to the convention hall, so plan your trips accordingly.

Hotels that have been on the shuttle routes: Boston Harbor Hotel, Courtyard Downtown Tremont, Doubletree Downtown, Hyatt Regency, Intercontinental, Marriott Copley, Midtown, Moxy, Omni Parker House, Park Plaza, Revere Hotel, Revolution.

The up to date shuttle lists are normally announced 2-4 weeks in advance of PAX.

Housing/Hotel Notes

Pax is a multiday affair and that means finding a place to sleep for the night¹⁰. The closest hotel is the Westin, closely followed by the Omni, Element, Seaport, Yotel, Marriot and several others in the Seaport. The Westin is literally attached to the BCEC and Omni is directly across the street. The other hotels in the seaport are a 10-15 minute walk. Hotels in downtown are at least fifteen minutes away (and you are walking quickly). Anything further out (Copley, Fenway, Cambridge, etc) and will probably require taking the T and will be at least 20-40 minutes.

Amenities vary wildly between hotels and the costs will reflect this. Since hotel costs will be your largest single expense, decide in advance what your priorities are: closeness to PAX and if you are going to use any of the amenities that the hotel offers. Paying extra for a hotel that has a michelin star, 24/7 concierge service, olympic swimming pool, weight room, hot tub and a sommelier doesn't do any good if all you really want is a bed for the night.

Check in advance on the two most important amenities: WiFi and Parking.

Most hotels offer Wi-Fi. Most of the offered wifi is free and the hotels are not shy advertising that fact. But confirm this in advance. The hotel website should be able to clarify this easily.

Garage parking at the hotel: Some hotels include the cost of garage parking in the hotel room, some do not. Confirm this in advance so you don't get a nasty two hundred dollar surprise when you find out there is a parking fee of fifty dollars a day. This may or may not be detailed on the hotel website, so you may have to make a call to the hotel reservations department or the front desk to confirm this. This warning mostly applies to hotels in the downtown and seaport areas. If you park farther out (Somerville, Newton, etc) there is less risk of getting hit with a garage park charge.

¹⁰ Unlike other gaming conventions where the building is open continuously (We're looking at you GenCon) for the length of the convention; the BCEC is not open 24/7. The building has a formal shutdown time where everyone is ejected from the building. So as the song goes: You don't have to go home, but you can't stay here.

Inventory (Your Load is Too Heavy/You are holding too many things already)

Pax is an all day affair so you have to carry everything with you¹¹. Think carefully about what you will actually use rather than what you may want or think you may use during the day.

Very Useful items: We have had a good experience with these things while at PAX. They are useful and not a huge weight or space penalty.

- **Face Mask.** Face masks are not currently mandated on the Pax website. Note that while masks are not mandated, the website has an extensive disclaimer that boils down to: “if you get COVID, it’s your problem”. No one is going to complain or look at you funny if you decide that you need to mask up for your own safety. Gaiters and cloth masks are useless, use a KN-95.
- **Water bottle.** If you say: “why do I have this water bottle?” take a drink. Bring a lightweight bottle that can take abuse, is easy to open and drink from. Nalgene has proven themselves to be a good choice. An aluminum bottle is going to make you sad by the end of the day because of the extra weight. People who have forgotten their water bottles have regretted it by the end of the day. If you wake up in the morning thirsty: You are not getting enough to drink at the con; drink a quart before leaving for the con.

If your bottle is empty; immediately refill it. Water bottles are free to refill. The water pressure in the water fountains is quite variable and none of the water fountains have bottle fillers. Bring a wide mouth water bottle to ensure you can get as much water as you can even if the water pressure is low (Think elementary school water fountains where the fountain just dribbles). Many conference rooms will also have 5-gallon water dispensers.

- **Bags/Backpacks/carryalls:** You will need a bag and everything you have will go into it. See below for additional details on Bag-Prefit.
- If you are going to be traveling ultra-light, consider small waist bags or collapsible bags. Be aware that this option will be limited for larger objects like coats or games. Plan accordingly or use bag check liberally.
- **Food:** BYO food is not restricted. See additional comments below under Food.
- **NUUN tablets (or the equivalent)** are worth their weight. They are electrolyte tablets without sugar. If you start craving salt, you need to up your electrolytes.
- **Smart phones for multiple uses:**
 - **Camera** to take pictures of anything of interest. Pictures are fast and can be sorted out later.
 - **Texting/iMessage:** It is considerably easier to text message than to make phone calls while on the convention floor. Noise and reception will make phone calls difficult at best.
 - **APP: PAX.** It carries a map and schedule of events. Normally the guidebook app for the relevant show goes live 2-4 weeks in advance of the PAX you plan on attending. The app has the panel schedules, maps and other immediately useful items for the show.

¹¹ Most people do not have housing that is close to the event. So if you need to go back to your hotel/apartment the round trip is going to be an hour. So you carry everything you need, or be willing to spend a lot of time in transit when you go back to your hotel room.

You can set alarms in the guidebook app for panel discussions. This varies year by year between a dedicated app and the general purpose guidebook app.

- APP: QR Code reader: Some retailers have QR codes for specials, websites, etc.
- Note taking apps. Useful in concept, but proven to be unwieldy on the floor. Evernote, google docs, notes all fall into this category.

DO NOT try to run a wi-fi hotspot off of your phone while at PAX. Your phone will have to scream over the background noise of 70,000+ smartphones, wi-fi devices, ipads and laptop computers. Your cellphone battery will quickly pay the price.

- Phone charger. They are small and light and extend the life of your phone. The better chargers will recharge spare phone batteries at the same time.
- Spare Phone battery. Reception in the BCEC is getting better but the convention floor will drain your phone battery in a hot minute.
- Bring cash. A lot of the vendors have credit card machines, but the connections inside the hall are flaky. Get your cash before getting to the BCEC: 70,000 of your bestest friends will have forgotten to get cash and will drain the cash machines dry in hours.
- Dayquil/Aleve/Ibuprofen. Don't bring the entire bottle. Bring enough to last for the day in case you need it. Being able to deal with minor aches and pains or a cold on site will help your quality of life (and everyone around you).
- Kleenex. A little pocket pack of Kleenex in your bag makes all the difference for the sniffles or a nosebleed so you're not wiping bodily fluids all over the place.

Optional items: All of these items have been used at PAX and are considered to be worth the weight or trouble. You won't need all of the items listed below and several items overlap in function, so pick and choose accordingly.

- Large supplemental batteries. - High capacity batteries that extend the life of electronics for the day are very useful. Instead of having to find an outlet to keep your phone charged it is possible to go all day with a good phone battery without having to recharge on site. Bring a 6' USB cable for the battery so you can plug in the phone while leaving the battery in the bag. Bring the battery charger with you so if you stop to charge things you can charge the battery as well.
- Multi-plug USB brick. You will make a lot of friends if you have a USB multiplug and suddenly 4 people who were going to get in a knife fight over a single outlet all have power. (Writers note: For us, large batteries have almost completely replaced the USB brick.)
- Multi-plug for 110V items - You'll be looked at as a god if you can turn a single outlet into six. This is only needed if you plan on a lot of accessories that need 110 power instead of USB power. 2015 onward, we didn't use (or haven't carried) the 110V multi-plug at all after going to an ultralight inventory strategy, but that may not work for everyone.
- Ear plugs - you will be surprised how loud the main floor at PAX can get. It can/will be oppressive. Etymotic makes a great pair that doesn't feel like you're underwater and you can hear normal conversations through, they're \$12 on Amazon and come with a carry case.
- Dice - Everyone likes having their own dice. Only bring them if you plan on playing something. Otherwise it is dead weight.

- Deck of cards or small games - You are going to be in line at some point. Having something to kill time with and share with friends is always handy. Focus on easy to learn/play, lightweight and fast to break down when the line moves.
- Deodorant/Antiperspirant - There are lots of people at pax. Some of us need deodorant because we are stinky people. Some of us need a second shot during the day. If you happen to be one of those people, do yourself and your friends a favor-pack a travel size dispenser or one shot deodorant wipes in your bag.
- Hand sanitizer - Con Crud and Pax Plague are real things.

Extravagances: These are items we have stopped carrying to PAX and have been replaced with other things, are things we took with us but never used at PAX, or was too much weight/space/trouble to carry around. Before bringing one of these items make sure you have a use case for it; or it will end up at the bottom of your bag adding unwanted weight. We are not saying “Do not bring this thing” but we are saying you give this item a good long, objective think to see if this item is actually going to be useful for you on the floor at PAX.

- Big camera - SLR or equivalent (weight/space/awkward). Unless you are taking professional grade photos for a professional outfit (website, press corp, etc), leave the big camera at home.
- Laptop Computer (weight/space). You won't have anywhere to use it unless you're participating a design workshop that calls for one.
- iPads (weight/awkward). Useful in concept; it ended up being dead weight. Very high risk of dropping and destroying it.
- Solar charger for ipad/iphone (weight & replaced by high capacity batteries). Solar panels extend the life of your electronics immensely. If your bag has a built in solar panel, make sure you use it. We previously used a clip on panel arrangement that was a champ. Since then high capacity batteries have improved to the point where the solar charger is redundant for us.
- Boxed games, RPGs, War games, Table top games. These are all extravagances. Yes, this is a game convention but... don't bring this stuff in unless you are scheduled to DM/GM a game in advance or have a table scheduled in the tabletop area where you can set up shop. Otherwise you have a lot of gear and no where to store it (and you can run afoul of the “no roller-bag” rule). Use the materials supplied by the DMs for the pre-generated scenarios and borrow a game from the game library in the tabletop area. If you are planning on bringing this material to the game, coordinate with convention staff on proper storage of your game materials or plan on using the coat check or parking close to the convention hall so you can get your games in and out.
- Camp chairs (weight, space, utility)- Any kind of portable, break down chair you see at campsites, tail-gating, watching parades. The smallest, lightest ones weigh 2-3 pounds. This scores real high on the “I think it will be really useful to have, I'll use it anytime I sit down” meter. Decide how much you will be sitting down and how much you will be carrying it around. In reality you will use it a lot less than you anticipated. Make sure you have a use case for this before you bring it along.
- Electric-socks - mostly a weight add. Yes it gets cold in Boston in Late winter/early spring. You will be paying a weight penalty for the batteries for electric socks. Plus you have to walk around on the heating elements all day. And if you forgot to turn the socks off, you get wet sweaty feet. For us, it's the weight penalty. A performance wool sock, like hiking socks, works great here.

Bag-prefit: Prefit your bag, coat and gear in advance. Take everything you think you are taking with you and put it in the bag. Answer the following questions for yourself:

- Is the bag comfortable?
- Do I have a place to put my water bottle that is easily accessible? The water bottle will be the thing that is used the most.
- How easy is it to take on/off the bag?
- Can I get material into and out of the bag without a large production? Do I have to take the bag off in order to put something into it? This is very important in the crowded spaces of PAX.
- Does your coat fit in your bag? How do you carry your coat when you are not wearing the coat?
- Will you knock someone over if you turn around? Do you look like a sherpa from carrying all your stuff around?
- How much does this whole thing weigh? Shave off any unneeded weight. Being a weight-weenie is worth it in this case. Turn your bag inside out and shake out all the stuff that has collected at the bottom. You'll thank yourself at the end of the day.
- Are there any rough or sharp edges? Are you going to catch on someone or injure them when walking around. This is more of a cosplay question but things will happen.

Walk around with your proposed bag, coat and gear for a couple of hours. This is a weight and comfort check. Ask yourself: How long was it until the bag had to be adjusted? Where did the bag dig in on your back? Which part got sore first? How long until you wanted to put the bag down? How long until you put the bag down? Adjust as needed until you are comfortable carrying the bag around for extended time periods. Your endurance is not going to magically be extended during PAX (and will be shortened in the last couple of days) so get a good idea now on how your bag is going to treat you.

Everyone in the group should have their own bag. Stuffing everything in one bag forces the group to stay together and unduly loads one person with all of the weight and volume. Spread the load out among everyone.

Clothes:

Don't wear anything you truly care about. This is not the right place for a suit or expensive delicate clothing. Wear comfortable clothes in easy layers so you can adjust easily on the fly. Uncomfortable or wet clothes will exacerbate con shock (see below). Costumes and cosplay are discussed separately.

Shoes: Your feet have to last all day. When possible use shoes that are well broken in. The floor of the BCEC is concrete. Test any tweaks to your footwear well in advance (Gel insoles, wool socks, arch support, etc). Do not make radical changes in your foot wear the day of PAX, it is easier to diagnose and adjust issues with shoes that you are experienced with rather than brand new shoes with lots of doodads on them. Expect to walk 5-7 miles each day and 20-30 miles over the course of the weekend. Do not wear open toed shoes, sandals or high heels: Boston in February/March is cold, wet and unforgiving (snow is not out of the question). You will get your feet stepped on while in the convention hall.

Socks: Wool Socks - cold wet feet are a buzz kill and will ruin your day at PAX until you dry out (and will still set the tone for the day). Cotton chafes and chills; wool is comfortable when wet. At the minimum, wear wicking socks.

Underwear: Wicking underwear- keeps you cool and dry. There is some anecdotal evidence that wicking clothing cuts down nerd stank.

Rain coat or outer jacket: Bring raincoat and wool jacket. Getting caught between South Station and the BCEC by a surprise 20 minute rain shower without a raincoat will ruin your whole morning. This exact scenario has happened in the past. Make sure your coat packs down into your bag cleanly and tightly.

Coat and bag check/storage:

Coat check is sometimes free and sometimes pay by the piece. The main coat check is located on the lower level on the south side. If the coat check is free this year, feel free to spam it.

If you are checking out of your hotel and have a lot of baggage with you: please check it at coat check. Hauling all of your crap along the con floor is a pain for everyone around you and will get the attention of the Enforcers (Remember, roller bags are banned on the convention floor).

If you leave/abandon your property at coat check the convention hall will hold it for up to sixty days before disposing of it. If you have lost something at the convention hall: Check the Lost and Found on the BCEC website¹² to see if any of the items match what you lost; from there contact the convention hall with your ID, an accurate description of the item and the ID code on the Lost and Found website and they can help you out.

Wizard Needs Food Badly (Food, Eating, Onsite and Offsite Concessions)

You will have to eat at some point during the day while attending PAX. Planning ahead for food will make your PAX experience much more enjoyable. Now is not the time for intermittent fasting or non-medical dieting.

Onsite Concessions¹³:

The concession stands will be mobbed 10 minutes after the show starts and be that way until it closes for the evening. \$15/meal is standard. The food vendors are scattered throughout the main level of the venue and the main floor. Expect the usual fair in convention food: Burgers, hot dogs, pretzels, pizza by the slice, gobs of soda. If you have a previous history of issues with convention hall food (indigestion), you'll have it here.

The Sam Adams bar at the main concession area that has food seems to follow a different rhythm than the rest of the food service and loads up at different times from the rest of the food service (YMMV).

¹²Convention Hall Lost and Found: <https://signatureboston.com/attend/lost-and-found>

¹³ Most of these notes are Pax East Specific. If people have West, South or Unplugged specific comments, I would be happy to include them.

The bar has not been serving alcohol for a couple of years now. In previous years, alcohol was abused and so it will not be available. If you need a beer that bad, go out to one of the bars in the Seaport. Food vendors in the BCEC close at 6pm sharp. If you are planning on staying late into the evening make sure you take this into account. You will get burned when your plan is: "We'll go to the 5pm panel, get dinner inside the BCC and then hit the 7:30 panel"

Special note on Alcohol:

There have been beer gardens in the past. Access is restricted to people who are legally of age. PAX had not said anything about throwing people out who are publicly intoxicated, but I expect anyone who ends up drunk and disorderly is going to be shown the door. Enjoy a drink but be responsible and don't violate any of the Rules Of PAX.

Offsite Concessions:

The two closest "convenience" stores in the area is the 7-11 on on Seaport Blvd and the Metro Convenience on Summer Street.

The nearest drug stores are CVS on Seaport Blvd and the CVS in South Station.

South Station has a collection of fast food establishments and a well stocked CVS. This is the spot to make any final purchases of supplies before heading into the convention. South Station will be open all weekend, but expect it to be loaded up with commuters and PAX goers for the weekend.

There is a large collection of restaurants in the Seaport and Boston area¹⁴. I am only going to list a smattering of the closest in the area:

Lunch/Coffee food (Chioptole, Shake Shack, Starbucks, Flour Bakery, etc) is available on Seaport Blvd (Thompson to D street) and Congress street (Between the children's museum and Boston Wharf Road) with a smattering on Summer street. There are a couple of restaurant take out places on D street just south of Summer (Fargo, Jimmy Johns). Expect lunch places to be heavy on Thursday and Friday with the local lunch crowd. It is not known how many of these places are open over the weekend.

Restaurants (Legal Seafood, Tony C, Rosa Mexicano, Sushi etc) that are an easy walk from the BCEC are aimed at the yuppy/brogrammer crowd. Most of them are on Seaport Blvd between Thompson and D street. Be prepared to pay yuppy rates (minimum \$30/person, and with current inflation don't be surprised if it is more than that), and factor in an extended wait (minimum an hour) because of PAX. You may want to get reservations early in the day and/or be ready to eat in small groups (2-4) to allow getting in and out of the restaurant in a reasonable time.

There have been food trucks parked either at the main entrance or the east side of the building in the past (D street). It is hard to know which trucks will be there until the day of PAX. Dress for the weather

¹⁴ For an extensive list of dining options:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1GZUpPdHisyhDPMJoN0wgwkXHUqzB-7FPoA4KlhRZQ-g/edit>

Credit to WeFightTheBlues (Reddit) - 2023 Note - I don't know how up to date the restaurant list is. A lot of restaurants went belly up during covid.

since the wait time to get served can be 20-40 minutes and you may be waiting or eating outdoors. We do not know if there is an announced schedule of food trucks in advance. Some of the food trucks have posted their own schedules, so you can check your favorites to see if they are going to be there. You can expect 8-10 food trucks to be parked on the side of the building. The trucks add a great deal of variety to the food choices.

Recently UBER EATS, DOOR DASH and other food delivery apps have been used to bring food to the convention hall. Make sure the driver knows they are going to the convention center. Try to find a way to meet them outside because trying to get the delivery driver to get through the security checkpoint to bring you dinner is unkind.

BYO Food:

You can carry in your own food (don't violate the bag check policies). BYO food is good in that it is always available and you know what it is. You need to factor this into the amount of weight you are carrying.

BYO food should be:

- A good mix of carbs, protein and fats. A little each will do you better in the long run instead of just trying to run on candy, chips and soda all day.
- Shelf stable. It has to be safe to eat after eight hours at room temperature.
- Easy to eat with a minimum of fuss in individual servings.
- Individually wrapped, you don't want to have to go messing with a single big bag that has lots of stuff in it. GORP is a notable exception to this rule.
- High durability. You want to be able to drop the food/container on the floor and have it still be edible and not have filled your bag full of food and broken container.
- Moist. Anything that is "low water" needs to be supplemented with water when you eat it. Eating dry foods without water is a stealthy way to get dehydrated.
- Easy to share. Sharing food with others is a sure fire way to make friends and calm people down.
- Well characterized. You want food that you know what it will do to you. This is not the time for experimentation, having an emergency evacuation from either end in a BCEC bathroom is a terrible time (written from experience).

BYO food should not be:

- Anything that is all sugar. You'll learn about carb crashing and ConShock for fun and profit.
- Anything that requires refrigeration. You don't want to be eating rancid food.
- Anything that needs a utensil. If you need a fork it is not a good choice. This also included foods that include bread sticks that are used to eat the pudding/chocolate sauce.
- Potential choking hazards. The big ones are lollipops and hard candies.
- Sticky or sticks to you and gets everywhere. Melted chocolate is a prime example.
- Packaging that can easily tear, break, shatter or leak. Glass containers, drink boxes and yogurt containers all win this award. This also includes "Squeezable" food packs - again drink boxes and yogurt.

- Food that crumbles into a powder in its container. I'm looking at you Honey Stinger Waffles.
- Anything you need to reheat.
- Really dry or really salty.
- BIG BOLD FLAVORS or special *delicate* flavors. Let's be honest, eating at PAX is not a five star dining experience. Keep the food simple to eat with no surprises.

Good Choices:

Pure Protein Bars have proven themselves to be our "go to" item for quick snacks. They have many flavor options, don't carb crash you, have decent moisture and tolerate being in a bag for hours on end. Starburst

Kind bars - low on moisture, but high marks for everything else and worth it

Reese's pieces - high fat content, won't melt in your bag!

Trail bars of any kind. (Low water)

Trail "munchy" things. Try for high in fat for slow-burn energy. Minimize carbs due to carb crash. (Low water)

Triskets/Crackers. Cheez-Its were very nice for the difference in flavor. These do violate the low water rule, but they were such a nice change of pace for a food choice.

Bananas. You have to be careful carrying them around because they have low durability.

Gorp is a reasonable choice (peanuts, raisins, M&Ms). YMMV. find a way to make sure it doesn't split and fill the bottom of your bag with peanuts, chocolate and raisins. (Very low water)

Bad Choices:

Kit-Kat bites - They melt in the bag and then congeal into a single mass.

Cheetos - Crushable, can't close the bag, turns my fingers orange. Carb crash.

Gummy bears - carb crash all the way around

Beef jerky - Leaves people thirsty. - Are you thirsty? Drink.

Gogurt and Drink boxes - Easy to crush/puncture, easy to leak.

Honey Stinger Waffles - By the time I ate it, it was a crumble. I opened the package enough so I could pour it into my mouth.

Single serve pudding - This has disaster written all over it, and you need a spoon to eat it.

Nutella packs that come with the bread sticks. Good in theory, they are a sit-down food and don't tolerate being eaten in crowds well.

Doritos and Taki-Takis— crushable and messy, with bright orange powder everywhere.

Attending the convention:

SPEAK FRIEND AND ENTER (Security Checkpoints, Bag searches and Banned items)

The convention center (not PAX) has a bag search policy for shows this large, including full body metal detectors and drug dogs. The front doors (not the convention hall) open and bag check starts at 8am.

Note that Pax East and West all appear to have similar policies. Pax Aus does not expressly state that metal detectors and drug dogs are in use.

As noted above: Assume everything you carry in is subject to bag search, metal detector scan and being swept by drug dogs. Prohibited items are subject to immediate seizure (and possible arrest).

Banned items include:

- Firearms
- Knives
- Illegal drugs
- Dangerous goods

Hopefully it doesn't need to be said but: Be polite and courteous to the bag check people. Holding up the line with pranks or being difficult doesn't do anyone any favors. This is not the place to make your stand against The Man. Before you get to the front of the line, get your bag off and keep the line moving.

As of 2022, The BCEC (Pax East) had significantly improved their bag and body scanners so getting through security is much less of a "each person walk through the scanner one at a time" and is now a "everyone keep moving at a steady pace". This has reduced the security wait significantly.

In addition to the items that are banned at bag search, there are items specifically banned from the main convention floor (due to crowding and life safety issues). They are allowed anywhere else inside the building. These are convention hall policies¹⁵, not PAX policies so don't go complaining to the Enforcers about these rules. Restricted items include:

- Roller bags (just use bag check)
- Children's strollers (strollers can be carried in the expo hall)
- RC vehicles (cars or drones)
- Stilts (This does apply to cosplay, so plan appropriately)
- Roller blades/roller skates/hoverboards

The convention halls for Pax Aus, East and West all appear to have similar policies with minimal variation for banned items on the convention floor.

ETIQUETTE

The seven rules of Pax: These are the six rules laid out by the organizers¹⁶. If you can't figure out what they mean, maybe you should skip Pax. Violating these rules can have your pass seized, be banned from future shows and/or turned over to local authorities.

- Drugs are bad
- Don't steal
- Don't punch or kick people
- No cheating

¹⁵Convention Hall Policies: <http://east.paxsite.com/safety-and-security#expo-hall-policies>

¹⁶The Six Rules of PAX: <http://east.paxsite.com/safety-and-security#the-six-rules-of-pax>

- Don't harass anyone
- Don't mess with things that aren't yours.

Basic Convention Etiquette: Here is the basic etiquette for attending any convention. While breaking these rules may not get you thrown out; you will immediately be flagged as “that jerk.”

- Think before you act or speak - Ask Permission, Not Forgiveness
- Respect other people's space.
- No gawking, staring, ogling, or leering.
- Be considerate of other people's time - Respect social cues other people are signaling
- Cosplay is not consent

SURVIVING THE DAY, AND ENJOYING IT

Line up for security: Bag Check is outdoors. As we have noted: Boston weather can be cold, wet and miserable (If you are lucky you get one, if you are unlucky you get all three). Assume you will be standing in the bag check line for an hour, so dress to stay warm and dry.

If you want to get onto the floor at 10am: Plan on being on site by 9am to make it through bag check.

Queuing up: If you arrive between 8am and 10am: After making it through bag check you will be funnelled to the queue area and held there until 10am. Once 10am hits: the queue lines will be released into the main floor in a staged release. The escalators and front entrance to the main floor are not opened until the queuing lines are cleared. All side entrances and the hotel bridge will open shortly after the queue line is cleared.

Don't just wander out onto the con floor blindly. Review your schedule and decide on a course of action and stick to it. Even if the immediate item is “we will explore this aisle of the con” or “let's look at that specific booth” or “okay, we'll get off the floor, go pee, get more water, and then decide what to do”; try not deviate. The con floor has gotten larger year over year so getting disoriented on the con floor is a real possibility. Getting distracted by the SHINY and waffling while on the con floor is a good way to get con shock (See CON SHOCK below). Those with four-day passes may wish to do a grid search with frequent breaks of the con floor on the first day to plan out what you want to see in subsequent days.

Don't get dazzled and buy shit you can easily procure online for a similar price. Thinkgeek (or their vestigial descendants) and WeLoveFine rely on you losing your frame of reference. Concentrate on limited edition stuff, convention only items and con/event pricing offerings. You've got a smart phone, price check all the things.

Buy things on your last day. Step back and consider your purchase and make sure you actually want it. Be careful with your timings so you don't have to haul around a heavy box/bag all day. Exception:

Cards against Humanity. Second exception: The Penny Arcade Swag area does sell out so pick that stuff up early - check the listed size of the PAX swag, it tends to run small.

Be prepared to be completely self contained and self supporting: Unless you have rooms in the adjoining hotels (or a car in a close parking lot) it is a 60-90 minute round trip anywhere else. Popping back to the hotel when your bag gets heavy is a significant commitment.

Friends and Family: Running into friends, neighbors, family is all good and fun at PAX. Hang out and have fun with them. Don't expect them to feed, house, or clothe you if this hasn't been arranged in advance. Try not to impose or invite yourself into another group's plans to cover deficiencies in your planning.

Waiting in line: It is going to happen. Plan on waiting in line half an hour for ho-hum panels and at least an hour for popular panels (or more for big items like concerts or Main Stage events). Use the time constructively while in line: play a game, take a nap, plan the rest of your day, eat something, drink and recover from con shock.

If you are going to play games in line, try to pick games that pack up quickly, easily and are light. Dice games or a pack of cards do well. Games also work well because they can be shared with other people in line. Remember that you have to carry this weight around.

You can monitor the @PAX_lines for information on the bigger theaters and their lines.¹⁷

Panel discussions: There are lots of panels that cover a wide range of topics (your favorite game studio, AAA titles, life in the industry, character writing, how to DM, costuming, gender studies, retrospectives, local editions of TV game shows, etc etc ad nauseum). Many of the panels are very popular and will fill to capacity long before the doors to the panel open. The enforcers enforce a hard attendance cap on all panels.

Video Game demos: Expect to wait 2-4 hours to try a AAA demo (Final Fantasy, The Last of Us, Animal Crossing, DOOM, Mass Effect, Star Wars, etc etc). Check to see if exhibitors have advance reservations available so that you can book a reservation and skip the line (Example: Oculus at Pax East 2015 was taking reservations). Final Fantasy and Pokemon are definitely going to be 2024's line blowouts.

If the line for the demo wraps all the way around the booth the wait is **at least** an hour and is easily 2-3. The freeplay computer areas can have similar waits as the AAA titles. If you have decided that you must absolutely try a specific game demo: plan on getting into the 10am queue line first to guarantee a reasonable chance at getting to the booth first - You will want to be at the main entrance before the doors open and people are admitted into the queuing area (9am-ish).

¹⁷ PAX_lines: https://twitter.com/PAX_lines

Be warned: The enforcers will not allow people to hang out (lurk) near the end of the queue lines in the expo hall for video games. The queue lines already take up a lot of the con floor and cause traffic issues. Lurking near the end of the line in an attempt to get into line will only impede traffic and piss off everyone around you that is trying to get past you. You will be shooed away until there is an opening at the end of the line (and then it is first come first served).

It is very easy to hit a dozen little games in the indie mega-booth in the same time it takes to wait in line to try a single AAA title. There will be 45-55 titles in the indie megabooth, not counting the Tiny Build booth (which will have another couple of dozen over the four days). There have been some real gems amongst the chaff that have come out of the indie-megabooth (Orcs-Must-Die comes to mind). Take a moment to decide how you want to spend your time on the con floor. Since Covid, the indie mega-booth and the tiny-build booth have had difficulties. Hopefully they are still around.

Board Games: There is a large and healthy board gaming/table top section. It is quieter (quieter here is a relative term) and less frenetic than the expo hall. There is plenty of opportunity to try out games of all stripes (dice, board, RPG, table top wars). Demos last from ten minutes to over an hour. It is an opportunity to sit down and try something different from video games. In addition there is a game library: You can check out a game, play it with your friends and return it when you are done. It can be a good place to get off the main floor and sit down for a couple of minutes. There will also be plenty of game vendors here ready to sell you just about any game you have heard of.

Evening Events: While the main convention floor closes at 6pm the board game and tabletop section stays open. In addition there are a wide collection of panels, concerts, movies and game show panels (Price is Right, \$10,000 Pyramid, Jeopardy, etc) that continue until midnight (When the convention hall closes and kicks everyone out). Most of the panels that could be considered “adult” or having lesser expected attendance have been shifted into evening hours. Gauge your interest against your need for sleep so you can attend the next day.

Group size and dynamics: Group size will dictate how quickly your group moves on the floor, what it can accomplish and how fast decisions are made.

Group sizes of 2-3: Group size is reasonable: decisions can be made and the group can be held together on the con floor.

Group sizes of 4-5: Hard to hold together. People get jostled a lot trying to keep the group together. Decision making on the floor is difficult due to noise.

Groups larger than five: Group sizes this large are unwieldy (to put it politely). The group will routinely get torn apart on the con floor and people spend more time trying to reform than getting anything done. Decision making on the con floor is very difficult due to noise and congestion on the floor. Heaven help you trying to find a restaurant for dinner.

Some questions for your group to consider:

Is everyone going to be doing the same activity? Having 3 people playing Magic and one person watching is not fun for the person watching unless they explicitly need the down time.

Do you have an assembly point for the group? If the group gets separated/lost/has dead phones: do you have a place to meet up again (lobby, lounge, etc). Does everyone have their own phone if people get separated?

Is there a planned departure time? Does everyone have keys to the hotel room? Does anyone need to be ferried around (wheelchair, crutches or other ADA restrictions)? Does everyone have a ride to the hotel for the night? Are there backups for this in case of injury/sickness? Imposing all of the driving/key master duties on one person detracts from that person's experience if they have to get pulled out of whatever they were doing in order to let people into rooms, drive people, police the group, make sure people get fed, make sure everyone gets home at the end of the night, etc etc etc.

Don't call, Text: The sheer number of phones in the area make cell phone reception unreliable. Texting is much more reliable. Trying to have a phone conversation over the crowd at PAX is an exercise in futility. If you can get the call through, you can't hear anything.

Child wrangling: If you plan on bringing young children (under 10) with you: You will get the trouble you have earned. PAX is a loud unfamiliar environment and it is easy for people to get separated in the press. It is all and all unforgiving to small children. Your mileage may vary based on the particular child. I am not saying this cannot be done, but there are challenges involved and the margins of error are smaller and often less forgiving.

For very small children: strollers are not allowed on the main floor. Be ready to carry the child whenever you are on the main floor.

Small walking children should be kept a hold of at all times. Small children walk off given half an opportunity, and the main floor is full of people and distracting things. If you are considering a child leash: Consider the pros and cons carefully. You will stay attached to the child, but everyone else who doesn't see the leash will be running into it all day.

Children also have differing abilities to deal with Con Shock (see below). Keep an eye out for this. If your child melts down due to con shock, you may be done for the day.

Make sure children know what an ENFORCER looks like in case they get lost. ENFORCERS will get him/her someplace safe. Have contact information attached to the child so the ENFORCERS can contact you and you can come collect your child. A necklace or bracelet with the parents contact information will go a long way to stream lining the return of a lost child to its parents.

Bathrooms: There are large gang bathrooms scattered on the outer edge of the expo hall and scattered throughout the outer halls. There are gender-neutral bathrooms throughout the hall. They are marked on the map. There are single toilet 'family' bathrooms near the most, but not all of the women's and men's bathrooms.

PAX XP: There is a scavenger hunt during the convention with prizes for people who finish. In previous years it used QR codes. This year it appears that there is a QR code on the back of your badge. Follow the instructions on the back of your badge to participate.

Con Crud: There have been outbreaks of Pax Plague in the past. Pax Plague (Con Crud) is the collection of flus, colds, and other nasty diseases that people bring to Pax and share with everyone else. All of the elementary school rules for not getting yourself and other people sick are in force (cover your mouth, Cough into your elbow not your hand, wash your hands, bring hand sanitizer, etc). The worst case was the Pax Prime¹⁸ (2009) that had Swine Flu. Google for the “Pax Prime Iron Guard”. See also Con Shock. These rules also apply to the Coronavirus. If in doubt, bring/wear a facemask to reduce disease transmission and get your damn shots. COVID killed an Enforcer in 2022. Plague is deadly serious stuff, don't be a plague rat.

Other notes: Cards against humanity comment- There have been CAH in the convention goodie bags in the past. Do not overlook odd looking things in the bag. CAH has come in oatmeal packets that looks like weird ripoffs of Quaker's Oatmeal. CAH once had popsicles with odd statements on the popsicle sticks. Be prepared to join an informal card swap right there if you want all of the cards in the set.

Things TO DO before and during PAX:

- Shower each day. Don't add to the nerd stank.
- Use deodorant with low scent but big protection. The “Outlast 48hrs” deodorants are particularly good for this. If you're the stinky kind consider carrying a travel-size deodorant or deodorant wipes in your bag and use it during the day.
- Sleep each day. It is needed. Food can help offset the need for sleep, but you will have to pay back this sleep debt eventually. Trying to offset sleep debt with extra food is a suckers game; get enough sleep and you will be a lot happier.
- Stay hydrated: Have we said this enough yet? Yes? No? Well then take a drink.

Things NOT TO DO before and during PAX:

- Attend PAX while badly stressed out by outside events. Go to PAX to have a good time but don't expect it to cause a good time. If you are badly stressed out by other things going to PAX may or may not be a good place to try and blow off steam. As a result we take the wednesday off in advance of PAX to have some off gassing before going into PAX, YMMV. As stated before: PAX is loud and an unforgiving place that doesn't care if you are having a bad day.
- Attend PAX while in an altered state due to recreational drugs. We are well aware that recreational marijuana is legal in Massachusetts. The environment is very much out of your control so adding perception/mood altering chemicals is not going to help you or the people around you enjoy the show.

¹⁸ PAX Prime Iron Guard: <https://www.penny-arcade.com/comic/2010/03/26>

- Attend PAX while recovering from usage of recreational drugs or alcohol. A friend got falling down drunk at a friday night studio party and was (badly) hungover for all of Saturday. He did not enjoy his Saturday PAX. A hangover is best not experienced at PAX.

CON SHOCK

ROLL YOUR SAVING SAVING THROW VERSUS DEATH RAY, POISON, ALL WANDS (INCLUDING PARALYZATION AND POLYMORPH), STONE, DRAGON BREATH, STAVES AND SPELLS¹⁹

Conshock is a vicious stew of fatigue, thirst, footsore, hungry, uncomfortable and sensory overload that occurs to people at conventions. It goes by many names: Hangry (Hungry+Angry), Dazzled (Stunned from flashing lights and noise on the floor) and Sensory Overload (Too much noise/people/all the things) are its best known aspects. It is easy to have con shock sneak up on you because you are busy doing things (looking at games, trying demos, participating in a game, ohhh SHINY). No one issue drives con shock: two, three or four issues gang up and get a critical mass where suddenly you are grumpy, hungry, tired, thirsty and footsore all at once. At PAX it is very easy to forget to eat and drink on a regular basis. Add in the sensory overload and being a little footsore from being on the main floor and you can get a case of con shock.

Preventing Con Shock: Preventing con shock is a number one priority. You will have a lot more fun at PAX by not getting con shock.

- Drink water on a regular basis. Any type of mild dehydration will drive con shock. If you feel thirsty at all: drink. This may sound like a contradiction: Don't forget to drink. There's plentiful bathroom access.
- Eat on a regular basis. BYO food helps immeasurably here.
- Schedule rest breaks in advance and take them even if you don't feel tired when you are scheduled to take a break. If you sit down for your scheduled break and your feet thank you: take the whole break because your feet are tired.
- If your bag, shoes, clothing, etc. become uncomfortable: Stop and adjust it. Trying to power through will not do you any favors throughout the day.
- Do not ignore minor warning signs or hints: Address minor problems as they crop up (eat, drink, rest) before they compound each other. Being in denial about warning signs will lead to bigger problems later.
- Acknowledge to yourself if you are sick or have Pax Plague. If you're sick, don't come to PAX; it's better to miss the day at PAX than to put someone else at risk! *You* may be able to power through it, but someone else may not be so lucky especially if they are immunocompromised.

Learn to recognize the symptoms of con shock in you and your friends: Some people get spacey and find it hard to make decisions, some get very short and snappy with people. *If you are right and everyone else is wrong:* congratulations, you have con shock. Learn to recognize con shock so it can be addressed and dealt with before someone has a blowup and meltdown on the con floor.

¹⁹ Yes, we are old school here.

If you get the grumpies/Con shock/dazzled/sensory overload: IMMEDIATELY get off the show floor and sit down or flop someplace relatively quiet. Get something to eat, drink and rest.

Getting over con shock: It will take 45-90 minutes to get over an entrenched case of con shock. This is assuming you eat, drink and rest. There are several places to sit down and chill out or nap. Familiarize yourself with the AFK lounge, handheld lounge, diversity lounge, beanbag/yogibo crash areas (amongst others). The AFK lounge in particular is equipped to help people with con-shock or convention overload. They are in the guidebook app and very nice. Attending panel discussions is also an opportunity for quiet/rest, assuming con shock has not set in and entrenched.

Con Shock and soda/caffeine: Soda at PAX is and is not your friend. Soda has ingredients that work for you in the very short term and against you in the long term: Lots of refined sugar and caffeine. Sugar and caffeine works in the short term: 20-40 minutes. After that the sugar leaves you in a lurch and the caffeine starts to wear off (YMMV). The caffeine also has a second effect: It is a mild diuretic. We aren't talking about anything life threatening: You're just urinating a little bit more, and as a result you're a little more thirsty. This mixture of low blood sugar, caffeine withdrawal and thirst make for a triple whammy. Those steel root beer mugs look cool but are a guaranteed ride to sugar crash town.

Trying to re-hydrate/cafeinate/refuel with more soda will feed the cycle. You get another pep of sugar and caffeine followed by sugar/caffeine crash and stealth dehydration. You can easily end up in a vicious Bang/Bust cycle. This feedback cycle can be exceedingly fierce if you are using caffeine to cover for lack of sleep.

If you wake up the next day thirsty, immediately drink a quart of water. You're a little dehydrated and asking to have a nasty case of con shock that day. When it hits you won't know why you're grumpy when you haven't done anything yet.

Accept that you will not be able to see/do everything. People easily over schedule and overwork themselves trying to do/see everything. People also fail to put in rest breaks into their schedule. If you don't schedule a rest break (or panel discussions which can cover for rest), con shock will enforce a rest break (usually at an inopportune time). A con shock enforced rest break is rarely pleasant.

Costuming/Cosplay

Pax does not have an official standing on cosplay beyond some specific rules. Notably the weapons and overt sexuality rules -In general if you are planning something that should be "on the other side of the double yellow line" or your mother would say "take that outdoors", don't bring it to PAX.

Test out the costume in advance: Try the costume on in advance and live in it for a couple of hours so you can file down all the rough edges. This includes rifles, magic staves and other props that you will be carrying around for the day. Make sure you address these questions:

- Can you use the bathroom without help?

- Can you eat and drink?
- Can you sit down/stand up? Can you stand up/sit down without help and is it comfortable to sit?
- Are there any “minor” pinches, rubbing or wear points on skin?
- How much does the costume weigh?
- How easily is your costume openable for weapons and security check? How badly will you set off the metal detectors?
- Is it breathable/Does it have adequate venting? Do you get warm in the costume? If you are outdoors in the cold, are you going to freeze?
- Can you walk a quarter mile without stopping? Can you stand for several hours without blistering or having foot pain?
- For larger costumes: Can you fit through a standard door, ride the escalator and climb stairs? Are you dragging anything behind you that will get stepped on and torn off?

Any of these issues won't be so minor after a couple of hours. Regularly check for dehydration and overheating if the costume covers your entire body. Bring a change of shoes if your costume involves high heels or unusual footwear.

Costume durability: Are you going to have bits and pieces fall off if you bump into people? Do you need to bring support gear to keep it in one piece? Duct tape, glue gun, super glue are all options. Make sure you factor this into the weight you are carrying. (Suggestions from Jackson)

If you dress to attract attention you will get it at PAX. Specific and recognizable characters from video games (Overwatch, Diablo, Fortnite, Borderlands, Darth Vader, Final Fantasy, Gears of War, Mario, Mass Effect, Samus, Autobot Bumblebee, Final Fantasy) puts you in this class. You will encounter lots of people wanting photographs. Just be aware that it may be hard to get things done if people are coming up to you throughout the day asking for photos. Take this into account in your time planning. As a note: cosplay photos are not allowed on the main convention floor because of traffic congestion. Pose for photos in low traffic areas (ie: the upper floor hallways) so you are not blocking people.

If you dress provocatively: Expect to get the attention of the Enforcers. While PAX appears to be fairly liberal on skin tight outfits (Samus Aaron in her blue suit without the armor or men dressed as a psycho from Borderlands are PAX standards), showing provocative amounts of skin (definition of “provocative” is subject to enforcer discretion) will get you warned to adjust your dress or thrown out if you continue to flaunt the rules. PAX is known for enforcing this rule rigidly on the exhibitors-There is a “no Booth Babes” policy (The Chainsaw Lollipop girl was ejected from Pax East due to flaunting this rule). The only known stretching of the rules was Duke Nukem - even then they had to tone it down a bit. Since Duke-Nukem and Chainsaw-Lollipop, exhibitors have maintained a muted dress code for their staff.

MISCELLANEOUS

The things you should at least bring to the hotel (not otherwise mentioned):

Personal towel (very useful if you are splitting a hotel room with half a dozen friends)

Shampoo/conditioner

Toothbrush

Razor/shaving stuffs

Comb/hairbrush

one shirt for everyday of the con + 1

Pants, underwear, same number as shirts

TWO pairs of socks for every day of the con, especially if you will be walking a lot

Comfy clothing to wear in the hotel after getting back from PAX.

Swimsuit (hot tub/pool/seasonal)

Prescription medicine

tylenol/aspirin/etc

Photo ID, Driver's license. checkbook, car keys

Extra pillow and blanket if you are staying in a packed room

Additional suggestions for others things to bring to a convention/trip can be found with Google.

Old Materials:

2015:

UPDATE (2015): The MBTA has been slowed down due to the heavy snow (this is improved from crippled). Allow extra time for any journeys that involve the T. Seriously, the T is fucked.

UPDATE (2015): The weather this year is expected to be cold. The current weather for the weekend in the morning is expected to be consistently below freezing. If you arrive early at the convention hall expect to be waiting outside until the doors are opened. Please do not get chilled/frostbite/pneumonia because you *had* to be first. It is expected to snow on Thursday. Be prepared for 3-6 inches of snow on the ground outside the BCEC.

Update 2017- The hall has multiple coat check facilities throughout the space. Some are more heavily used than others. Before swarming the coat check next to the queue line (along with 70,000 of your closest friends) try using one of the less used coat checks - otherwise you will be in line for an hour waiting to check your coat. Coat check is \$3.

If you are checking out of your hotel Sunday morning and have a lot of baggage with you: please check it at coat check. Hauling all of your crap along the con floor is a pain for everyone around you and will get the attention of the Enforcers (Roller bags are banned on the convention floor).

Bag check is run by the venue, not the convention. Locations fluctuate from year to year, so don't expect it to be on official maps. There are multiple bag checks: remember which damn one you used. Enforcers may not know the location of every bag check.

IMPORTANT NOTE FOR APRIL 5, 2018:

Michelle Obama will be speaking at a conference at the Seaport World Trade Center on Seaport Blvd on Thursday. Expect traffic, security and parking to be cranked up to an extra level of crazy that day. The building where that conference is occurring is a 10 minute walk to the BCEC. Expect the parking competition to be extra fierce that day.

If you are staying in the SeaPort Hotel (where the other convention is occurring): The Secret Service will be in attendance. When inside the Seaport hotel building and support spaces between the hotel and that convention center: Obey any (reasonable) request the Secret Service makes of you: displaying/proving cosplay equipment is not a weapon, removing masks to prove your identity. You can safely assume that all Secret Service agents are heavily armed; and while they may not want to have an incident (ie shoot someone) the Secret Service is trained on a "Shoot First Ask Questions Later" mentality. If you are being snotty, noncompliant or they feel you are a potential threat to the person they are protecting, you can be very sure they will exercise force if their training and rules of engagement allow them to. Be nice and friendly and they will be nice and friendly.

PAX 2019 schedule

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1M2Sm5TboPPiGf57geuAmpPth8EEhD5dSPAmtxnIEXvc/edit?usp=sharing>

PAX 2020 schedule

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1urd81qWlMdiNV5fVnJJuihXbmN7PC7-JXN1P0AvvNow/edit#gid=0>

PAX EAST 2021 was cancelled due to COVID.

2022: **VACCINATIONS: PAX is requiring proof of vaccination²⁰ for COVID-19.** Get vaccinated if you aren't already. If you are vaccinated, bring photos of the front and back of your vaccination card, or bring your properly certified APP (webpage has references to this). You can be sure the organizers will not want that kind of publicity that comes with being a super spreader event. PAX is not screwing around with this, get vaccinated and wear a mask.

PAX EAST 2022 NOTE: Young children may be effectively banned this year due to the vaccination mandate. PAX is not making exceptions for unvaccinated children. So before you plan on bringing your kids to PAX, make sure they are eligible for vaccination and are vaccinated before you arrive on site.

2022 NOTE: Due to COVID it appears that full masks will not be permitted as it restricts enforcers ability to check and make sure people are obeying the mask mandate.

2023 notes:

NOTE: the red line will be shutdown on March 25th and 26th. So if you are on the Red Line there will be shuttle busses. Very important: the shuttles will not be serving Park or Downtown Crossing so if you if you are coming in on one of the other lines, you will have to transfer at Haymarket or be prepared to walk in from Park or Downtown crossing.

Exact MBTA quote: *Shuttle buses replace Red Line service between Harvard and JFK/UMass the weekends of Mar 4 - 5 & 25 - 26 to allow for work on the new signal system. Shuttles will not be directly servicing Park St or Downtown Crossing. Please board at Haymarket or State.*

2023 NOTE: Germ prevention masks are still required when costuming. Real masks, not costume masks

2024 notes:

Service interruptions for Spring 2024: The MBTA has service work scheduled for the Orange and Red lines for March. This service work is expect down that line during the service work. Exact dates have not been announced. The tentative schedule that has been posted *appears*²¹ to conflict with PAX.

²⁰ <https://east.paxsite.com/en-us/health-and-safety/health-and-safety-information.html>

²¹ <https://www.mbta.com/news/2023-11-09/mbta-announces-ambitious-track-improvement-program-eliminate-all-speed-restrictions>

And check the current planned suspensions as listed on the main website. The main website is more upto date than the tentative dates that were listed above.

[Subway | Schedules & Maps | MBTA](#)

March 18-21 (Thursday): ORANGE LINE SUSPENSION

North Station to Jackson will be shut down during this time. If you want to get to the Red Line in order to ride in to South Station:

From the North: Transfer to the Green line at North station and ride into Park.

From the South: your options are T provided shuttle buses (which can be catch as you can), hoof it to the the Red or Green lines (depending on where you are) or riding up the commuter line.

March 23-23 (Saturday and Sunday): RED LINE SUSPENSION

Broadway to Ashmont (The entire Ashmont Spur) or Broadway to North Quincy will be shutdown during this time. If you want to get to South Station:

The primary option is the MBTA shuttles replacing the Red Line or the commuter rail along the Braintree line.

The main transfer stations (Park and Downtown crossing) will be open. The Alewife end of the line will be open

Thanks to:

The usual suspects.

If you need to track me down on Reddit /u/Elfich47