Understanding Audiences

Every individual entering your institution differs from every other individual. Each group is different from every other group. Learning styles, backgrounds, interests, needs, and ages are among the variables accounting for this phenomena.

In this issue, we begin a pursuit that you, as a teacher, should never fully conclude... that of striving to better understand audiences.

Inside: Impact of Learning Styles ▲ A Guide to Child Development
▲ Disruptive Audiences ▲ Older Adults ▲ Letting Teens be Themselves ▲
Only twelve months ago, The Docent Educator made its first appearance, unannounced, in the mailboxes of selected institutions throughout the United States. Today, The Docent Educator counts thousands of readers among its subscribers — volunteer and staff educators serving in museums, historic homes, zoos, botanical gardens, libraries, parks, classrooms, and archives in all 50 States, 5 Canadian provinces, and countries as distant as New Zealand, Panama, and Belgium.

Professional organizations, such as the American Association of Museums, the National Association for Interpretation, and the National Association of Museum Volunteers, came forward to offer support and encouragement. Concerned docents and staff educators, who understand that communication, and participation are the keys to growth and professional improvement, began submitting manuscripts, letters, ideas, activities, and photographs to share with their colleagues.

We, who have the privilege of creating The Docent Educator every quarter, are grateful for this most promising beginning. In gratitude, and to celebrate our first birthday, we present this special, expanded issue of The Docent Educator.

In addition to reflecting upon the past, we want to express our optimism for the future. In the next year, we will explore such important topics as:

- **Interdisciplinary Approaches:** Teaching Across the Curriculum;
- **Tough Topics:** Examining Nudity, Slavery, and other Problem Areas;
- **Special Audiences:** Visitors who Require Special Considerations; and
- **Thematic Teaching:** Great Themes that Provide Cohesiveness and Pizzazz.

We hope that all our subscribers, especially those whose subscriptions are soon to be renewed, will remain with us as we continue to move ahead!

Alan Gartenhaus
Publishing Editor
Every audience is different. This simple axiom explains why teaching cannot be achieved by formula or script. To truly connect with the variety of individuals and groups they encounter, docents must be flexible and prepared with strategies that reach and respond to a full range of individual and collective differences.

Individual experiences are never identical. The particular place you are in (and the direction you choose to look) determine your experiences. Since no two people can be in exactly the same spot at the same time, all of our experiences are, to that extent, different. Add to this the many other variables among people, such as age, cultural background, education, interests, learning styles, special needs, etc., and you begin to understand why the same tour cannot serve all individuals, groups, and circumstances.

Attempting to deliver all learners on a tour to a single point of understanding or knowledge is impossible. In addition, it is counterproductive and contrary to the spirit and nature of learning within museums, zoos, botanical gardens, and other such facilities. The reason for understanding audiences is not only to better deliver or transfer specific facts. It’s to put docents in control of their teaching situations and to provide them with the tools to promote the full range of individual learning that should occur during any lesson.

Even for the most conscientious docent, contemplating the range of individual and collective differences among visitors can be intimidating. The more you learn, the more you must take into account. The more you take into account, the more complicated teaching seems. But this is only true in the beginning. Eventually, awareness of individual and group differences becomes almost instinctive. With increased sensitivity and awareness comes an increased aptitude for encouraging participation and facilitating learning. And, as teaching abilities are honed and refined, “job” satisfaction increases dramatically.

The first step on the path to understanding audiences is to recognize that within every tour group are individual differences only thinly veiled by such labels as “third graders,” “people having visual impairments,” or “senior citizens.” Each person within a “category” acquires, absorbs, and responds to things in his or her own manner.

The second step on this path is to believe that thinking and perception need not follow a single point of view to be correct. Once that idea takes root, one can dispense with such subjective, and often erroneous, judgments as “slow” and “smart.”

Learners do have an obligation to approach the learning situation with a willingness to try; however, the burden of sustaining that interest is the docent’s. The commonly expressed notion of having had a “good group” or a “bad group” is often less accurate than having provided a group with a lesson that was “appropriately” or “inappropriately” geared to their interests, abilities, and needs. When tours don’t work, “good” teachers ask themselves, “What could I have done to better engage and encourage?” not, “I just don’t understand it? I gave the exact same tour yesterday and that group loved it!”

An effective teacher establishes reasons to learn at the very beginning of the lesson, creating a desire to learn. The satisfaction that comes from fulfilling that desire is much like scratching an itch. But, it takes understanding an audience to know what motivates them to learn, and to anticipate what will pique their interest and encourage their participation.

There’s just no way around it, effective teaching is complicated. But it is also challenging and fun. And, while it may require additional effort, the rewards derived encompass many of the reasons people volunteer their time and energy to be docents.

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or call us at (206) 323-4966

Alan Gartenhaus
Publishing Editor
As is well known, the root meaning of the word "docent" is "teacher." For that reason much of the attention currently being focused on learning styles in other educational settings has great applicability to the museum environment as well. Because every visit to a museum of any kind should be a learning experience, it is helpful for docents to consider the learning styles of visitors when planning and conducting tours.

Many approaches to learning styles are available for adaptation to the museum setting. Bernice McCarthy’s Format System was featured at the 1987 Docent Symposium in Toledo. I had an opportunity to explain the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator at the recent symposium in Denver. Without going into great detail, I’d like to discuss briefly how an acknowledgment of differences in learning styles can lead to more satisfaction for both visitors and docents, especially when the goals of a tour involve inquiry teaching.

A concept critical to this endeavor is that “differences are gifts to be cherished, not deficits to be corrected.” This means that a wide variety of types of questions will need to be included in each tour (regardless of the age of the visitors) and a wide variety in the nature and number of responses should be expected and welcomed. Because most of us teach the way we would like to be taught, the danger is that tours will be conducted to meet the needs and desires of “conceptual clones” of the docent!

Four sets of significant differences are examined briefly here and then applied to the museum setting. Each is a component of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) which is itself an outgrowth of Carl Jung’s theory of personality. Although there are currently no publications that directly focus on the use of MBTI in museums, two general references that are very helpful are Gordon Lawrence’s People Types and Tiger Stripes (Gainesville, FL: Center for Application of Psychological Type, 1982) and David Kiersey’s and Marilyn Bates’ Please Understand Me (DelMar, CA: Prometheus, 1984). Both are easily ordered from local bookstores if they are not already on the shelves.

◊ Introverts and Extroverts

The first of four differences in learning style (and hence in visitor behavior in a museum) has to do with where information is processed, or how an individual figures things out and tries to make sense of things. Here, the essential difference is between extroverts who process information orally, by talking about it, and introverts who process information internally, by thinking about it. What this difference means is that, when a docent asks a question on a tour, the extroverts (estimated to be about 75% of the general population) will be willing to tackle it immediately because they find it natural to “think out loud.” Extroverts use conversation as a way of conveying their thoughts as those thoughts form and develop. Therefore, they are often a boon on tours because they are willing to respond to a docent’s questions immediately. On the other hand, docents need to be careful not to judge extroverts by what they say when they begin to speak, but rather by their concluding thoughts, which represent their having “thought through” the question.

Introverts, of course, are just the opposite. They prefer to think a response through in their minds before they venture to say anything out loud. This means that there can be a pause (which may seem an eternity to the docent) before an introvert responds to a question. However, the pause doesn’t imply an unwillingness to respond or indicate a judgment being...
Passed on the question asked (or the docent asking it!). Although introverts are seldom the first to answer questions, they are interested in answering them. If the docent asks “Are there any other ideas about this question?” after the discussion seems to have concluded, there are likely to be contributions from introverts that would otherwise be missed.

- **Sensors and Intuitors**

  The second significant difference in learning style has to do with how individuals notice things. Here the differences seem to be between those who notice things based on input from their five senses (seeing, hearing, etc.) and those who call upon their “sixth sense.” Members of the former group (about 75% of the population) are sometimes called *sensors*, while individuals in the latter group are sometimes referred to as *intuitors*. Clearly there is a case that can be made for the use of all six senses on a museum visit, but the difference between sensors and intuitors helps to explain why visitors react differently to different questions. Sensors enjoy the questions that ask them to notice detail, identify colors and shapes, compare and contrast the specifics of two artifacts. Intuitors, on the other hand, sometimes find the preceding questions too confining. They would prefer to focus on larger themes and enjoy addressing questions that have to do with the mood of a piece of art or the quality of life in a particular historical period. They are also among the more enthusiastic participants in brainstorming sessions, whether in zoos, botanical gardens, or museums.

- **Thinkers and Feelers**

  Whatever the setting, visitors on tours are often asked to make judgments about what they observe and experience. Individuals tend to respond to these requests for evaluation from one of two perspectives. Some, a group called *thinkers* in MBTI terminology, tend to objectively, logically, and analytically make such judgments using facts and data. Others, called *feelers* in MBTI parlance, call on their values, convictions, and beliefs when making judgments; they take a more subjective, people-oriented approach. Thinkers and feelers are evenly divided among the total population. Differences between them make for very interesting conversations when visitors in museums are asked to determine which work, artifact, or device best exemplifies the spirit of an artist, or a period, or a scientific concept.

  Thinkers generally select some criterion to make their decision and then systematically evaluate individual items against that criterion. Feelers, on the other hand, often consult their own personal preferences or consider the impact an item had/has on the lives of individuals (including the artist and the visitor him/herself), or look for items that are reflective of values important to the individual visitor. Of course, asking members of a tour which item (painting, plant, animal, artifact, etc.) they will highlight when they tell others about their visit to the museum, zoo, or botanical garden results in, not only a wide variety of responses, but widely divergent reasons for the choices as well.

- **Judgers and Perceivers**

  Although people give many reasons for making their decisions, not everyone is equally inclined to make judgments. In fact, the propensity to evaluate or not is the basis of the fourth set of significant differences according to the MBTI. Here the distinction is between those who automatically evaluate what they observe and experience (the *judgers*) and those who just as automatically delay making judgments because they keep noticing additional information that could impact upon their decision (the *perceivers*). This means that judgers, about 50% of the general population, are very responsive to a docent’s request for evaluations of works, or artists, or influences, or utility. The perceivers’ tendency to remain open to incoming information means that they are fairly willing to tackle unfamiliar materials or ideas, while judgers sometimes make up their minds a bit too quickly about, or against, challenging items or concepts. In this case, judgers can sometimes be asked an informational, rather than evaluative, question. A wonderful example used by the docents at the Toledo Museum of Art is directed toward modern abstract art; instead of asking whether museum visitors like a particular piece, they ask “How do you know this piece was done in the twentieth century?”

  The difference between the two questions just described is a good illustration of how knowledge of museum visitors’ learning styles can help a docent enhance the quality of the learning experience these visitors have in the museum. The *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* is just one approach to understanding learning styles. The important thing is not which approach to learning styles is used, nor is extensive formal training in any particular perspective on learning styles necessary; what is critical is an understanding of the extent to which attention to learning styles can influence the quality of a visitor’s experience at a museum, or zoo, or botanical garden. Reading about and attending workshops on learning styles can help docents plan and conduct their tours so that a wider variety of visitors can have the kind of learning experience that will make them eager to return for more.

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Watching Children Grow
A Guide to Childhood Development

Unlike most people in "the teaching profession," docents engage students of many ages and backgrounds.

Think about it. Third grade teachers teach eight-and nine-year-olds. Most of their students probably live in the neighborhoods near the school. These teachers can become experts on their students' thought and behavior patterns. High school teachers might teach a broader range of students, but they still have the opportunity to spend day after day with students ages 14-18, really getting to know their thoughts and feelings.

Docents, on the other hand, teach any school group that comes to their institution. Classes may range in age from preschoolers to 18 year olds. Few of us have the opportunity to get to know any particular group of students in great depth. But while we may not have intimate knowledge about the characteristics of any single age group, we do need to be able to gauge, at least in a general way, the level of abilities and interests of students on our tours.

Much has been written about the developmental stages of childhood. My comments were culled from two sources, The Good Guide (Grinder and McCoy) and Approaches to Art in Education (Chapman), and my own observations gathered from almost 20 years spent talking with kids in museum galleries. Please note that the exact age at which children move from one stage to another is fairly fluid, but the ranges given below are the most common ages for each stage to be in effect. The titles given to each stage are my own.

The Magic Years - Ages 3 to 6
These are years when nothing is impossible. Santa can still come down everyone's chimney on the same night, and fairies can live at the bottom of the garden. These young children have vivid imaginations and cannot easily separate reality from imaginary events. Their sense of themselves as separate persons with individual identities is still weak, which is why they move very easily in and out of becoming other people like princesses or super heroes (what we adults call pretending). Children in the magic years seem to be bundles of physical activity and feelings. Although they are beginning to make sense of their world, their impulse toward empathy (which translates into becoming or pretending) and physical activity (running, jumping, hugging, dancing) is much stronger than their intellectual curiosity.

Children of this age have few inhibitions and will be eager participants if you plan activities that engage their imaginations.

Ideal activities for children of this age level are those that involve imagination and pretending, physical movement and activity. In a display of musical instruments, students might imagine they are playing one of the instruments and act it out for the class. Then, involve all the children in the same activity. Have an imaginary band concert while you parade around the room letting each child "play" an instrument. The docent's job is to lead the parade, but also to ask children what instruments they have chosen and to make sure that they are "playing" it with appropriate body movements.

Children of this age associate their identity very strongly with their name. Ask teachers to put large name tags on these children so that you can call on them by name.

Two cautionary notes about children this age in museums. One, they have very short attention spans. Counter this by keeping them busy in imaginative activities. Discussions should be short and directly related to objects they can see, and a certain amount of wiggling is to be expected. Second, children of this age have very little impulse control. Preschoolers particularly cannot remember not to touch something just because you ask them not to. Their touching is not so much disobeying you as it is responding to their own, strong internal impulse to feel something. The best way to control this situation is also to keep them busy. If they are engaged in imaginative play, walking like an Egyptian pharaoh or making the sounds of various animals, they will not even think about reaching out and touching a display.
The Discovery Years - Grades 1 through 3

The most wonderful thing about children at this age is their delight at discovering new things. Because their eyes are now fully developed, they love being challenged to find objects from visual clues. Having developed a stronger sense of who they are, these children have an increasing awareness about and interest in what is going on around them. They are avid observers of the world and its people! They continue to enjoy imaginary stories. They have also developed a great sense of humor and enjoy silly jokes, especially when they make them.

Perhaps because they are accomplishing remarkable things in school — learning to read, learning to write, learning how to interact with their classmates — they have a great sense of their own power and believe strongly in the power of others to accomplish things. They enjoy games, especially when they can participate with a classmate.

Their ability to express themselves verbally is increasing, although still somewhat hampered by limited vocabulary, making it easy to underestimate what concepts children this age can grasp. These are the students who enthusiastically raise their hands to answer a question even when they do not know the answer. It is an expression of their sheer delight at participating.

Activities that allow children to experience the excitement of discovery are critical for children this age. Don't tell them, ask them to find out. If you think about your tour in this way it will also lead you to discover the kinds of concepts you should be presenting. Can they find it out by looking and thinking? Or, is the fact or concept so separate from the object that you must tell them, adding another layer of meaning beyond that which they can discover. You will certainly want to tell them a few things, but for the most part at this age children should be given the chance to discover for themselves the joy of making sense of objects.

A look at the kinds of learning tasks children this age perform in school leads to the best ideas for museum activities. In science, children are asked to observe closely and describe accurately. In math, they count, match, sort, and place things into sets and subsets. Ask children to look at an object for a few seconds, then turn away and describe it. This appeals to their sense of power and also is a fun way to reinforce the notion that in a museum we must look carefully if we want to learn a lot about an object. Rather than telling them how a spinning wheel works, ask them as a group to try to figure it out. You can supply key pieces of information if they get stuck. Ask them to look at three animals and decide which two are most alike, and why.

Children this age love riddles and problem solving. A favorite activity for this age group at the Philadelphia Museum of Art is to ask them to go into a room full of armor and find ... a suit that would fit a child, a suit that would not fit a human (horse armor), and something that flies in the air (a stuffed falcon that served as the crest on a helmet). We can hardly contain their enthusiasm as we remind them not to touch or run while playing the game. Conversations center around the pieces they found and what can be learned from them.

Keep in mind that an understanding of historical time for this group is as yet undeveloped. For most of them, Moses roamed the desert at the same time dinosaurs roamed the Earth ... "a long time ago." Efforts to place things in historical periods should be minimal and are best when linked to a person the children have studied, for example, "in George Washington's time."

In addition, although these children are wonderful at noticing specifics, they are not yet able to infer generalities from them. Don't ask them to look at a group of paintings and decide what was important to the artists who painted them. Instead, ask them to find all the examples of outdoor painting in the room. Then you can tell them that all these painters liked to paint the out of doors, and that's called landscape painting ... and so forth.

The Confident Years - Grades 4 through 6

For many museums, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade classes constitute the largest single block of field trip visits among all the stages named here. Children of this age have, for the most part, mastered the skills they need to be able to take in information and process it. They can read, write, understand addition and subtraction, and are learning more complex ways of relating numbers. They now study subjects in school that are content driven, such as Colonial America or the Caribbean Sea. Because they read and learn more on their own about subjects that interest them you should always ask students this age and older, or their teachers, what they already know or have studied about the theme of your tour. Students this age still respond best to questions that are specific, not general. They are much more aware of, and interested in, the range of feelings people have. They have a growing interest in status and will often tell you, "She's the smartest kid in the class," or "He always acts like that." Not yet rebellious against
rules and authority, these children are eager to learn about new things and, for the most part, are still eager to take part in all discussions and activities.

Activities for this age should involve the whole child. Confident Years children do quite well at independent assignments. They like attempting to observe objects on their own, although they still need your help in drawing conclusions from the things they have observed. They like to talk and have a vocabulary adequate to discuss most things. At this age, it is appropriate to introduce new terms specific to the discipline of your museum.

Students are now slightly more self-conscious in imaginative activities requiring body movement, but they make up for it in their greater capacity to ponder intellectual issues. This age learner is particularly captivated by things that are odd or unexpected, such as hidden pictures and secret languages. They are very good at categorizing objects into groups, and love to do it.

In general, activities that these kids accomplish easily, such as “Tell me whether you think a rich, medium, or poor person would have owned this cabinet.” or “What kind of food do you think this animal would eat?” are wonderful when followed by, “Correct, how did you know?” Kids this age are very perceptive and quite able to reason, but are somewhat challenged when trying to explain their reasoning process.

Look at an abstract work of art and see if each younger in the class can come up with one adjective to describe it. I promise you will see things in the piece you have never seen before. Do not neglect the emotional side of these children; they are very sensitive, especially when responding to the mood or feeling of a human drama. If they seem shy when asked to express their feelings (remember, you are a stranger), suggest opposite words to inspire them. “Is what’s happening in this painting exciting or peaceful? What makes you think so?” Or, “If you were that person would you feel scared, brave, or both? Why?”

Looking in the Mirror - Grades 7 through 9

The transition from childhood into puberty has powerful effects upon young people in this age bracket. Bodies change shape. Girls begin menstruation; boys’ voices change. Some people shoot up in height, while others feel they will never grow. Hormonal changes associated with this volatile time of life cause skin blemishes to appear. Is it any wonder that people this age become self-conscious and terribly concerned about the way they look? These are the years of endless looking in the mirror. Students are keenly aware of their appearance, but also of their skills and talents, wanting to be recognized for accomplishments and chastising themselves for what they perceive as their shortcomings.

Emotionally, young adolescents are anxious to establish their own set of rules and values within their own peer groups. As they move slightly out from under the watchful eye and comforting safety of parents, their need to belong to a group of their peers is powerful. Intellectually, these children are just beginning to think abstractly. This means that you can discuss with them not only coins, but currency, the effect currency has on civilization, the political implications of coin design, etc. Young adolescents see themselves as very different from “children,” with good reason given all the changes they are going through. It is very important that we docents respect their desire to be treated in a more adult fashion, all the while understanding that, in fact, these young people still have a lot more growing to do.

One of the wonderful things about young adolescents is that they are not so far away from childhood as to have lost their sense of fun and play. They have a very active sense of humor and love to laugh, and tease, and joke. If treated with respect, these students love to engage in looking activities of all kinds, particularly if allowed to do so with friends.

The discussion of activities for adolescents in museums brings us into new territory. Thus far we have talked about what kinds of games or questions engage an age group. With young adolescents we need to add another ingredient — the perceived attitude of the docent toward the students. This aged person will rarely run up to you and say, “Are you our guide? What are we going to do today?” Instead, they will stay in their peer groups and let you know that they are more comfortable with a slight distance from you. They will not immediately display trust in you by answering your questions, but will reserve judgment until they see how you treat them.

Three key attitudes on your part will help these young people open up to you. 1. Do not treat them in a juvenile fashion. Talk to them using adult words and intonations. 2. Do not criticize them or imply criticism for being who they are, even though their joking and teasing can be tiresome.
3. Express through your body language and general attentiveness your genuine interest in them and what they have to contribute. This can have a magical effect on kids this age, since they are very self-aware. They will appreciate your interest in them, especially because they often do not expect it.

Activities similar to those named for The Confident Years work well for this age if introduced as mature projects. Worksheets are terrific, since they help ensure that all of the students will think about the questions you are posing. Try to develop strategies that allow students to work independently or in small groups. This will give you the opportunity to talk with them in fewer numbers or individually. Students this age will often engage in conversation with you one-on-one that they would not do in front of the whole group.

The Approach to Adulthood - Grades 10 through 12

The great thing about working with high school students is that they think like adults on many levels. Though their experience base may be more limited, their abilities to process information, make assumptions, predict outcomes, and discuss generalities are now fully developed. Instead of focusing on what a work of art looks like and how the artist created those effects, you can also discuss whether a painting of similar subject matter would still be relevant today or what a feminist interpretation of the work might be. Older adolescents also have longer attention spans and can retain more information, especially when it helps to explain what they see.

This age group has formed fairly strong opinions about what they find interesting and relevant in their lives, so try to make as many connections as possible between the material you cover and what students are studying in school. If you have teenagers at home, or can make yourself aware of current trends, music, and so forth, by all means do so. But beware! If your assumptions are not up to date, the kids will let you know.

Young people of this age have a great desire to be seen as competent, which leads them to resent, for instance, having to be chaperoned in a museum. They like doing things on their own and displaying their abilities. They are still very focused on conforming to the norms of their peer group. They may not be eager to answer your questions verbally, but will respond with a nod or a look. They typically have an overwhelming interest in male/female relationships, and this can be a rich area for discussion.

Ask students this age to go into an exhibit area and make some particular observations or decisions before you gather to talk. For example, in a historic house ask students to walk around the downstairs and decide the function of each of the rooms, or ask them to look around a room and come up with five activities that they think may have taken place there based on observations of the furnishings and so forth. In a gallery full of chairs, ask them to identify three chairs that are clearly different styles, and then name three that are in the same style. Students will appreciate the autonomy you give them as they look, and you can base your discussion on what they observed.

Finally, this age student is very critical of the adult-run world, and can be very articulate at criticism in general, especially when it is negative. If you have a particularly taciturn group, try taking them to an area of your institution that you think will affront their sensibilities. At my museum it’s the contemporary art section. I know that even the quietest group will challenge me on how something can be considered art if it looks like “a monkey could have made it.” Rather than perceive these challenges as a threat, use them as the point of departure for discussions. Do not feel you have to prove to the students that they are wrong to have the feelings they do. Instead, let them express their feelings, then express your own. If you feel positively, tell why you do. But, let the students be the ones who decide for themselves whether they should value something or not.

One of the truly wonderful things about being a museum docent is the opportunity to see young people at so many different stages of growth and understanding. Keep in mind what is positive about each of these stages and allow yourself some time to marvel at the amazing things they accomplish on their journey from infancy to adulthood.

Greater life experience and the ability to think abstractly enable high school students to develop more for reaching interpretations.

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Photos for this article by
Lynn Rosenfeld, photographer
Philadelphia Museum of Art
Priorities for Docent Training

Representatives from the Bellevue Art Museum in Bellevue, WA, asked the editors of The Docent Educator to address the following question, "What should be taught in a comprehensive docent training program in order to serve a wide range of audiences?"

Our response, in order of priority, is as follows:

- The purpose of the institution and of its docent program because all objectives, techniques, methods, and logistical considerations should flow from, and relate directly back to, the established purpose.

- The institution's expectations of and commitment to the docent program so that what is required and what is provided are fully understood and reliable.

- Instructional methodologies, including appropriate techniques for engaging in both inquiry and authoritative instruction. Among the issues addressed should be: active and passive learning; questioning strategies; age-grading lessons; establishing and maintaining discipline; teaching to multi-cultural audiences; teaching audiences with special needs or requirements.

- Content and background information related to the institution's collection and subject concerns, as well as appropriate themes, introductions, and conclusions for lessons/tours.

- Learning styles and methods of stimulating creative thinking so that the effects of personal, cultural, and temporal variables upon receiving, acquiring, and responding to learning situations are understood; and to assure that teaching encourages learners to become intellectually independent, providing them with the means to construct their own ideas, hypotheses, and educated opinions.

- Communication skills including language use, methods of clarifying and promoting understanding, vocabulary, techniques of public speaking, and appropriate listening skills.

- Presentation styles and attitude including flexibility, acceptance, humor, body language, and modes of motivating and responding.

- Evaluative techniques so docents can determine the effectiveness of their teaching, communication skills, style, and so forth, and use the feedback to construct routes for self-improvement.

- Logistics including timing, gauging how long to explore exhibitions or objects, and moving to facilitate direction and traffic flow.

- Troubleshooting including ways to manage disruptive behaviors, discourage teachers or parents who dominate student tours, and respond to other problems of concern to docents.

- Institutional planning and the schedule of future exhibitions so that docents are included and enfranchised. Curators, and occasionally the institutional director, should inform docents of the institution's evolving policies and direction, the content of changing exhibitions, any special programming, and other activities that may have impact and relevance.
Resources to Help Better Understand Museum Visitors

Insights: Museums, Visitors, Attitudes, Expectations

The Getty Center for Education in the Arts has produced a publication and video that encapsulate an extensive study of visitor expectations at art museums. Visitor and staff member focus groups were interviewed in eleven major museums across the United States.

The overriding concerns of the study were to:

• identify staff expectations and impressions of public expectations about art museums;
• evaluate public expectations about art museums and compare them to actual experiences; and
• explore educational insights of visitors and non-visitors of art museums.

The publication presents a well-organized summary of the report and reactions to it by curators, educators, and administrators presented in a symposium. The video presents edited excerpts from the focus group interviews. This publication is a terrific catalyst for discussions about museum visitors.

The publication and accompanying video are available free of charge, with $5.00 shipping and handling fee required in advance, from:

The J. Paul Getty
Book Distribution Center, GCEA-3
P.O. Box 2122,
Santa Monica, CA 90406
(213) 453-5352

(Resources information provided by Susan Miner and Susan Spero.)

Excellence and Equity

The American Association of Museums’ recent report, Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums, is the result of a two-year task force. The report offers “a new definition of museums as educational institutions that carry out their public service in the spirit of excellence and equity.” The published report can be ordered for $2.00 from:

A.A.M.
1225 Eye Street, NW
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It Works for Me ...

Docents share techniques they find successful.

I was just recently introduced to your magazine and find it not only interesting but helpful. I am always on the alert for new or improved information and techniques. In that spirit, I would like to share a few that I have found useful.

• The simple change of a word can make a difference. At the beginning of my tours, during the introduction and explanation of our zoo's rules, the change of the word "rules" to "manners" prompts a desire to comply.

• To get very young visitors, grades K-2, past all the exhibits in our Education building in a timely fashion, I have everyone, myself and other adults included, clasp our hands and hold them out in front of us. I will walk backwards and engage the group in conversation as we go.

• A wrap-up is useful for the group and to help the docent assess the tour's effectiveness. I tell my visitors that I want each of them to tell me something they learned on the tour that is DIFFERENT from the others in their group. Since each answer must be different, everyone wants to be first. This energizes the group and their ideas become kinetic and flow easily.

• There are many times when I don't know the answer to questions asked. I always say so, and later look up the answer and mail it to the class.

As an aside, we all enjoy humor. So I'd like to share two things that happened to me while touring. When in front of the flamingo exhibit, I am often asked why the birds stand on one leg. Posing it back to the group, one little boy answered quite scientifically, "Because if they lift up the other one they would fall down." And, to explain graphically why the ostrich can't fly, I use flight feathers with a demonstration and then bring out ostrich feathers. When I asked a group to think about why the ostrich can't fly, a boy answered "Because you have all its feathers!"

Deana Davis, Docent
Sacramento Zoo

Evaluation. Having merely read the word is your stomach now in knots? While the prospect of instituting an evaluation process often creates an unnatural "us against them" split between docents and paid staff, we — a docent and a docent coordinator — believe that evaluations work, and are beneficial to volunteers and staff alike, and ultimately to the public we serve.

Evaluation is an effective tool for improvement. Routine evaluation of docents' presentations is a means for the docent coordinator to assist the docents in doing their very best. But in order for evaluation to be an effective learning tool, it must be part of a cohesive, well-structured docent program. The museum and its staff have an obligation to provide volunteer docents with the means to succeed at educating the public.

The Brooklyn Museum's docent program is structured so that evaluation is an integral step in docent training. From the initial interview, evaluation is discussed so that potential docents know what to expect and how to make their relationship with the docent coordinator an educational one. At Brooklyn, the docents receive courses in tour techniques, our permanent collection, art techniques and materials, and art history. Throughout the semester, docents regularly meet with the docent coordinator for assistance with tour preparation. So, by the time of the first evaluation the docent has had ready access to the raw materials and expertise needed to succeed.

Next, each docent makes an appointment with the docent coordinator to present his/her lesson or tour. This one-on-one session involves the docent presenting a gallery lesson exactly as it would be presented to the public. Both the docent and the docent coordinator may stop the tour at any point to ask for information or clarification. Plainly stated, this is the docent's chance to learn by doing.

The presentation is followed by a brief meeting with the coordinator to get principal observations and immediate suggestions. A written evaluation, aimed at providing constructive criticism, is also given to the docents. It covers introductory remarks, content and knowledge of material, organization of information and presentation of theme, presentation style and communication skills, closing remarks and summation, and suggestions. Comments on how docents might further engage their audience are also offered.

Every docent has an individual style that, as long as it doesn't distract from the objects discussed, is encouraged. At the Brooklyn Museum, we're not interested in the cookie-cutter approach to teaching. What works for us is a confidential evaluation that offers constructive criticism in a manner that is encouraging in both tone and purpose.

Diana Linden, Museum Educator & Docent Coordinator
Maribeth Flynn, Docent
Brooklyn Museum
Searching for Similarities

It's September. Teachers throughout North America stand in the midst of an assortment of strangers. During the ensuing nine months, good teachers will uncover the unique needs of each of these strangers in order to facilitate learning. They will rely on experience and training as well as fat file folders of test results, report cards, medical records, comments from parents and past teachers, and a photograph from the first grade — all toothless grin and confidence.

Without such data, time, or training, how can docents be expected to create meaningful educational experiences for the same students? There is hope in the work of at least two psychologists, Jean Piaget and Abraham Maslow. Both theorists help us see that, although each child is unique, children are more alike than different.

Piaget was a Swiss psychologist whose observations of his own three infants led to investigations and experiments with the development of thought and language in children. He concluded that infants are born with only a few reflexes (such as sucking and grasping) and an innate urge to adapt to their environment. As the infant-child-adolescent grows, thinking develops through adaptation to an increasingly complex succession of environments.

Piaget believed that three main periods — and sub-stages — could be distinguished during which the development of thinking was measurably different. He called the first of these the period of sensori-motor intelligence (from birth to eighteen months). The second period he sub-divided into the pre-operational stage (18 months to age 7) and the concrete operations (age 7 to adolescence). The third period of formal operations begins at about age 12 and becomes fully developed by age 15 or 16.

For docents, the best news in Piaget’s conclusions is the idea that development of thinking is constant — one stage may not appear before another in children. Consequently, children experience similar, predictable stages of cognitive development. While every second grader is unique, every second grader will follow certain patterns as he or she adapts to an increasingly complex environment. And, although the order of the stages cannot be changed, enriched environments can speed up the process. Children who are exposed to more stimuli move from stage to stage more quickly and with more ease.

Also implicit in Piaget’s work is the important idea that all children learn all concepts best when they experience them first in concrete sensory form. Before formal operations (work with abstract concepts and symbols) are possible, learners must experience a concept in “reality” and develop the vocabulary to explain what they have experienced. It is in this area that museums, zoos, gardens, historic houses can excel. Docents who can provide hands-on experiences with real objects in real or simulated environments offer the best teaching available!

Although a contemporary of Piaget, the American psychologist Abraham Maslow was poles apart in his view of human development. Unlike Piaget and other behaviorists, Maslow believed that the individual is controlled by his own values and choices rather than by his environment. Nevertheless, Maslow, too, has a message of comfort for docents and teachers searching for similarities in their audiences.

In an article in the Psychological Review in July, 1943, Maslow first identified five sets of goals or basic needs in humans. He called them physiological (food, clothing, and so forth), safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. He concluded that the goals were hierarchical. That is to say, that most basic needs must be satisfied before the next levels can be realized. More importantly, however, Maslow also concluded that “man is perpetually wanting” because the needs are in a constant state of flux and most are only partially fulfilled at best.

While it is not in the realm of possibility to expect any museum, school, or other of society’s institutions to meet all the needs of the individual. Maslow’s theories do have significant meaning for teachers in all of those places. In both classrooms and museums, learners are striving to achieve their greatest potentialities — what Maslow termed self-actualization. Teachers and docents facilitate this struggle by attempting to provide — or at least recognizing the importance of — the other, lower-level needs. Each learner moves more easily toward self-actualization in a safe, non-threatening, supportive environment. Both teachers and docents enable self-confidence — the need Maslow termed self-esteem — by helping learners master skills and knowledge of their world.

It is impossible for docents to learn much about the individual children with whom they tour. Often the best they have to go on is superficial — grade... “six;” name... “Robert;” hair... “unusual.” Consequently, it is reassuring to know that there are certain constants in our dealings with other humans. Certain behaviors, needs, and ways of thinking are to be expected and accepted. Although the work of Piaget and Maslow can be studied in great depth and offer even more insight into the learner-audience, this simple truth is a comforting place to begin.

Jackie Littleton
Associate Editor
A “Child-Centered” Approach

“Fantasy enables young people to experience the exhibits on a more personal and emotional level. Pretending lets a child climb into the driver’s seat of a race car or onto the saddle of a horse.”

“Can we touch the snake?” “Is that a real mummy?” “How did you get the train into the museum?” “Can we crawl through the cave?”

Youngsters visiting The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis are full of questions and high expectations. Building on that excitement and curiosity to design a successful museum visit is the responsibility of the adult facilitator. The facilitator must link the child with the museum exhibits in an exciting, fun, and personal way.

While it helps to have a plan, the visit should emanate from the youngsters and be organized around their interests and around mental and physical capabilities. Each visit will have its own shape that evolves as you move through the museum responding to the questions and interests of the young visitors. Keep in mind that the museum exhibits, and the opportunity to confront the real thing, coupled with touching and exploring, are the “stuff” that make a successful visit for youngsters. Child-centered museum visits as a youngster are the key to lifelong warm, pleasurable adult memories.

Define your role. As the adult facilitator you are responsible for guiding youngsters in exhibit-based learning experiences. You are the bridge between the exhibit and the child. With your support youngsters can investigate, ask questions, and share information and ideas without fear of criticism or ridicule. Your role is to create opportunities for the youngsters to engage in independent exploration and discovery learning.

Watch for signs of high interest and involvement, boredom, and restlessness. Use these signals to decide whether to move on or remain and explore further. Tailor the visit around what you discover about the personalities, skill levels, and interests of the children as you move through the museum. A good facilitator is able to improvise and adapt on the spot.

It’s important to see this museum visit as part of a continuum of museum visits. Focus on making the visit the best possible experience at this particular time for the youngsters. Remember to limit the scope of the visit. Don’t fall into the trap of racing through the museum trying to see everything. Not only is it impossible to see every exhibit, but it is also much too overwhelming and tiring for youngsters and prevents them from concentrating. Let your young visitors set the pace and share in deciding what the group will see and do. Be sure to leave time for independent exploration.

As the facilitator, you must create opportunities for youngsters to become museum explorers. By prodding them to look more closely at an exhibit, plant, animal, or object, to find out how something works, to touch, and to ask questions you actively involve them in the search for information. Youngsters exploring a turn-of-the-century street in the Mysteries in History gallery at The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis can discover lots of information by comparing and contrasting the shops with contemporary malls, noticing how the butcher kept meats cold, comparing and contrasting the price of items in recreated stores with current prices, and looking for different types of transportation and communication.

Questioning is another way to connect youngsters to the exhibits and objects. Questions can be used to help youngsters look more closely at an object: What is it? From what
material is it made? How does it work? How was it used? Questions can help youngsters examine a pioneer cabin diorama for information. How did the pioneers get their water? What time of the year is it? Why do you think the covered wagon is loaded with furniture? How many different kinds of animals can you identify? Questions also encourage youngsters to share their thoughts and feelings. Why is it important to know about the past? What are some ways we learn about the past? What kinds of information can you learn about the past from a photograph or a letter? During the visit questions can be used to direct the youngsters’ attention, spark their interest, and personally engage them.

Tap into youngsters’ imaginations to further enhance their exploration and enjoyment. Fantasy enables young people to experience the exhibits on a more personal and emotional level. Pretending lets a child climb into the driver’s seat of a race car or onto the saddle of a horse. Using their imagination, youngsters not only see and touch, they also experience the thrill of winning a race!

There are lots of different ways to organize the visit:

- You can structure the visit around some of the youngsters’ favorite exhibits. Some museum exhibits never lose their appeal and often become identified with the museum. These museum icons are instant winners with visitors who seem never to tire of seeing and learning about them.

Docents taking a “child-centered” approach to touring will ask students questions that actively involve them in a search for information.

- You and the youngsters can set out in search of animals. Together you can look for the various kinds of animals found in the museum. How many different turtles can you identify? How does it feel to come face to face with a nine-foot-tall polar bear? Which carousel animal is your favorite? A search-based exploration lets the youngsters limit their focus while moving throughout the museum. There are endless topics around which the search can be structured. Try looking for shapes, things with wheels, big and small objects, different types of homes, and so on.

- Visits can be organized around classroom studies or special interests. The study of dinosaurs can be greatly enhanced by visiting a dinosaur exhibit and actually seeing dinosaur bones! In the soon-to-open “What If Gallery” at The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis students will be able to emulate paleontologists by uncovering dinosaur fossils, assembling a dinosaur skeleton, and investigating the characteristics that make an animal a dinosaur. These types of experiential explorations let students expand on the information they’ve learned, test the validity of that information, and use it.

- You and the youngsters can spend the entire time in one gallery and engage in an in-depth exploration. This type of visit lets young visitors immerse themselves in the gallery, move through the gallery at a slower pace, and concentrate on those things of greater interest to them.

Museums are marvelous places filled with the kind of “stuff” that youngsters find intriguing and exciting. Child-centered visits capture the wonder of the museum and translate into certain success with youngsters. So, relax and take your cues from the youngsters as you set out to experience the museum together!

Jeanette Hauck Booth is the Educational Resources Manager at The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis. She has presented numerous seminars on museum interpretation and co-authored the book Creative Museum Methods and Educational Techniques.
Letting Teens be Themselves

Teenagers! Just the thought of teaching this age group can make some people cringe. Teens don't pay attention and all they want to do is socialize with each other!

Channeling their Hormonal Energy
Their interest in each other can be channeled in an educational and positive manner. The docents at the Denver Museum of Natural History have developed a tour for teenagers that allows them to talk with, and learn from, EACH OTHER. The tour, The Global Environment: A Geography Tour, focuses on environmental problems in three exhibit halls: Africa, Australia, and North America. Playing the roles of anthropologists, geographers, and biologists, the students observe each of the halls' dioramas and assess how a hypothetical urbanization project could affect the plants, animals, people, and landscape of each of the three continents.

To make the exercise more challenging and interesting, the group is further divided into two groups: "pro-developers" and "con-developers." The pro group determines how the project will be detrimental. After a 10 minute introduction, the students are split into three groups and assigned a hall to visit. One docent goes with each group and acts as a facilitator to help the students look at the dioramas from the different scientists' perspectives. Unlike traditional museum tours, this activity encourages students to talk to each other and discuss the pros and cons of urbanization. After 25 minutes, the students congregate to share their findings.

Creative Thinking Put to the Test
This is when the fun and education begin. The students physically divide themselves into two groups, pros and cons, arranging themselves on opposite sides of the room. In debate style, they argue for and against the project. Inevitably, the discussion becomes heated! To keep the discussion from getting out of hand, docents use an adaptation of the classic rules for brainstorming:

• there are no right or wrong answers;
• there are no "stupid" comments or questions;
• each person has a time limit (in our case, it is 2 minutes) to present his/her thoughts;
• all comments must be defended by elaboration; and
• everyone should have a say (to avoid having a few people dominate the entire discussion).

If the discussion is slow, docents play "devil's advocate" to encourage students to look at the situation in a different light.

Making the Tour Relevant
The purpose of this activity is to demonstrate that there truly are no right or wrong answers. Urbanization and other development projects are often complicated and entail many points of view and factors for consideration.

If time allows, the docents bring up local projects and issues (e.g., building dams, highways, and so forth) to encourage students to think about what is happening in their own communities and what they can do to promote or hinder projects.

Although The Global Environment: A Geography Tour was developed three years ago, it is undergoing constant revision. The current tour is what we have found to work best because it allows the students to socialize in an educational manner. We encourage other museums that are trying to reach the junior/senior high school level to develop activities that are intellectually challenging, relevant to students' lives, and allow them to talk to each other.

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Peggy Zemach is the Environmental Education Specialist at the Denver Museum of Natural History. Prior to working at this museum, she was an Education Specialist at the Smithsonian Institution. She, along with a group of docents, developed this tour specifically to meet the social and intellectual needs of teenagers.
Disruptive Audiences
Advice from Someone Who Knows

I must admit that I don’t cherish the thought of giving tours to adolescents. First, because I don’t find it easy to face a group that, as a whole, towers over me by perhaps two feet or more. Second, because they are not shy in showing their dismay at having as their docent a person as short as I am — and with a strong foreign accent to boot. They sometimes roll their eyes, whisper to each other and giggle, and I even had a group that burst out laughing as they stood in front of me.

All of this can be a little demoralizing. However, from my background in special education I know that those who want to be successful teachers have to start by trying to develop a tough skin. So, I just play it cool and take command of the situation at once. Otherwise, the kids may try to work me over and the tour will not go well.

After the usual introduction and welcome, I say something like, “Because I am so short and have a foreign accent, there may be times when you cannot hear or understand me. I will appreciate you letting me know when this happens. I will be happy to repeat, if you ask me.”

Openly talking about what they may perceive as my shortcomings seems to bring them around, but this doesn’t mean that everything will be smooth sailing from then on. As you can understand, I frequently have to deal with tour disruptions.

For example, as I was leading a group to a gallery I happened to look back just in time to see a very tall boy trying to make himself as little as I am. This to the great amusement of his classmates. I asked him to come to the front and walk by me. When he rather defiantly asked me why, I prevented a potentially explosive situation when I replied, “Because I need your moral support.” The boy complied saying, “Many people need that.” After that, on his own volition or because someone in the group reminded him, the boy walked by me as we moved from gallery to gallery. The tour went well and ended on a good note.

Another time, a girl began to disrupt the tour with long and loud yawns. When she was indulging in the attention of my audience?” Appealing to their sense of fairness (something that, as you may know, is very strong in teenagers) did the trick. The girls stopped giggling, and we had a good tour.

So far, it may appear that my approach is mostly as a disciplinarian. However, the preceding anecdotes are exceptions to my basic method. I normally try to take the initiative in a positive, active way rather than a reactive one. I practice something else I learned during my teacher-training days: The best way to capture the students’ attention and maintain their interest is by getting them involved. I do this primarily by showering them with questions — and I insist on getting answers. My experience so far has been that the first response from a student breaks the ice and interaction begins. I then try to maintain the momentum by conveying interest in what they say, and by establishing a friendly, but no nonsense, environment for the remainder of the tour.

Depending on the group, all these things have worked for me to a lesser or greater degree — but they have worked. So far — and I knock on wood — I have not had to discontinue a tour because of my inability to handle the group.

Gloria Perry has conducted tours in both English and Spanish for the North Carolina Museum of Art since 1979. Originally from Columbia, South America, she received her undergraduate and Master’s degrees in special education from Eastern Michigan University.
Touring with Older Adults:
Emphasizing the Noun, Not the Adjective

Successful tours for older adults, as with any group, are largely a matter of understanding the audience and reshaping one's perceptions and techniques accordingly. The media, which strongly influences many of our commonly held perceptions, abounds with negative stereotypes of older people. Consider the advertisement for an emergency response system featuring poor Mrs. Fletcher who has "fallen and can't get up." Examining stereotypical representations of people, whether in the media or elsewhere, is a useful starting place when attempting to better understand an audience.

A common stereotype related to education is that the capacity to learn diminishes with age. Thus, the adage "You can't teach an old dog new tricks."

While most experts agree that the capacity to learn is maintained throughout the adult life cycle, the reasons for learning can change. For instance, children in school often regard learning as the accumulation of information, ideas, skills, and literacies to be used later on. Adults, on the other hand, often regard education as something to be applied to an occupation or a family role.

We should, therefore, expect the goals of learning to be different for older adults than their younger counterparts, partially because of changed social roles brought about by retirement, grandparenting, death of a spouse, or other life changes. Perhaps their goals become more general, such as to develop a more inclusive sense of how they relate to the world around them.

While knowledge of what motivates learning can help docents provide a better learning environment, knowing something about theories and styles of learning allows docents to discredit erroneous stereotypes and provide older adults with more meaningful tours. In a recent article in the *Journal of Museum Education* (Winter 1991), Lynn Dierking identified 10 generalizations that are key to human learning. Docents should have an understanding of all of them, but for purposes of this article's emphasis, we will focus on three.

1) The learning process is strongly influenced by prior knowledge, beliefs, and experiences.

Heterogeneity may be the most obvious characteristic among groups of older adults. The range of individual differences increases with age and life experiences. In addition, all the other factors that differentiate people from one another (educational background; social, economic, marital, and health status; social, religious, and political attitudes/beliefs) will determine the behavior, personality, and learning process of older adults.

It becomes necessary, therefore, to establish a context in which visitors feel comfortable sharing highly diverse observations, ideas, and experiences. This can be accomplished, in part, by asking older adults questions that work to establish an informal, accepting environment while revealing more about each visitor's aptitudes, interests, and perspectives.

Though the benefits of inquiry teaching are well established, decades may have passed since adults on tour were engaged in this manner. Students, on the other hand, are exposed to this method in their classrooms. Therefore, docents should "ease" these older visitors into this mode of interaction.

Many docents find "life review" an effective way to structure interaction with older adults. History is meaningful to older adults in ways that it cannot be for younger people. Life review encourages individuals to reflect on their diverse personal histories and relate them to exhibited objects.
by Betsy Gough-DiJulio & Raymond M. Leinbach

The docent’s questions and comments should direct the discussion to help visitors forge connections for themselves.

2) Perception is central to the learning process.

Information is acquired through the five senses (sight, hearing, smelling, touching, tasting). Making tours more multi-sensory is advantageous because it engages additional ways to perceive, while it acknowledges and accommodates differences in the variety of favored modes of perception.

The majority of older adults do not experience significant vision or hearing impairments. For those who do, however, tours that depend largely on the spoken or written word, or even upon viewing objects, may deprive them of a prerequisite for learning — perception.

3) Memory is central to the learning process.

Dierking defines learning as “a measurable change in behavior that persists over time, presumably because it becomes a part of our memory.”

While most older adults do not experience significant difficulty with short-term memory loss, those who do may be more apt to forget earlier parts of a discussion. Therefore, they may seem unable to link new information with prior knowledge, since what has been forgotten cannot be integrated.

To avoid creating problems for those who experience memory loss, docents should design questions that are not dependent upon visitors’ ability to recall information introduced earlier in the tour, while still building on previous concepts. For example, in an art museum, replace a question like this: “Think about our discussion of Picasso’s treatment of space in the last painting we looked at. How is de Chirico’s different in this work?” with this: “We just talked about how Picasso flattened space and presented different sides of an object simultaneously. How is de Chirico’s space different from Picasso’s flattened space?” The latter question does not require visitors to retrieve earlier dialogue from their short-term memory.

Current philosophies of museum education recommend a slower pace for ALL visitors to allow time for them to realize new insights and contemplate more fully the object(s) being discussed. Though most do not, some older adults do experience a significant slowing in the assimilation and processing of information, as well as in response time. Speaking at a moderate pace will help. Also, repeating or rephrasing aspects of the dialogue slows the pace of exchange, making it easier to follow while teaching or clarifying vocabulary and concepts.

Slowing the pace of discussions will also aid visitors having hearing impairments. It is estimated that approximately 15 percent of people over 65 experience significant hearing loss. A person who appears not to understand what is being discussed or asked may simply not have heard.

Presbycusis, the most common hearing impairment among older adults, is associated with difficulty hearing higher tones. Lowering the pitch of your voice, enunciating words and looking directly at visitors is much more effective than shouting.

Background noise, such as music or conversation should be minimized. Similarly, conversations between people in a group are often difficult to follow for people with hearing impairments, unless care is taken to repeat or rephrase what was said.

Some physical changes that occur with aging may require that docents make adaptations for older adults. Slowing the walking pace accommodates those with decreased mobility. While walking more slowly, try asking questions or pointing out objects for visitors to observe.

Rest and restroom stops may need to be incorporated into the tour. During a rest stop, pass an object around to shift attention away from the wait. If some of the visitors want to move more quickly, or don’t want to rest, direct them to your next stop and suggest a focus. You might say, “If you walk straight ahead and enter the next gallery on your left you will see an exhibition of landscape. Try figuring out which country each scene depicts.”

By understanding this audience and making a few adjustments to your teaching and touring techniques, you will find that when providing tours for older adults, you can emphasize the “adult” and not the “older.”

Betsy Gough-DiJulio earned her M.A. in art history from Vanderbilt University and is Director of Education at the Virginia Beach Center for the Arts, Virginia Beach, VA.

Raymond M. Leinbach, Ph.D., is an associate professor in the School of Community Health Professionals and Physical Therapy at the College of Health Sciences; and is the director of the Center for Gerontology at Old Dominion University, in Norfolk, VA.
In an effort to strengthen the educational bridge between the schools and museums, Phi Delta Kappa has developed a one-day workshop for museum educators and classroom teachers.

**The workshop provides:**
- a history and explanation of discipline-based art education.
- a sample of a discipline-based art curriculum.
- a demonstration of aesthetic scanning.
- gallery activities.

The workshop presenter is Gayle M. Southworth. Ms. Southworth is an experienced classroom teacher, a trainer for the SWRL Elementary Art Program, and has worked in museum education and docent training for the Honolulu Academy of Arts, the Witte Memorial Museum, the McNay Art Institute, and the Smithsonian Institution.

The cost of the one-day workshop is $1,500. This includes presenter’s fees, all expenses, and workshop materials. If you have questions or would like to schedule a workshop, please contact Shari Bradley:

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