

# Docent Internship Program

## Handbook

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*\*Condensed version for public portfolio\**

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# Docent Internship Program Handbook

## Table of Contents

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| <b>Summary of Docent Internship Program .....</b>                            | <b>2</b>     |
| <br><i>Policies</i>  |              |
| <b>Role of the Docent .....</b>  | <b>2</b>     |
| <b>General Rules for Our Institution .....</b>                               | <b>3</b>     |
| <b>Emergency Guidelines .....</b>  | <b>3</b>     |
| <b>Touring Logistics .....</b>   | <b>4-5</b>   |
| Touring Pledge   |              |
| Touring Guidelines   |              |
| Types of Tours   |              |
| Tour Scheduling  |              |
| <b>Internship Logistics .....</b>  | <b>6</b>     |
| Maintaining Active Status  |              |
| Accessing Information & Forms  |              |
| Internship Contract  |              |
| <b>Training Schedule &amp; Assignments .....</b>                             | <b>7</b>     |
| Orientation Workshop   |              |
| Gallery Research Project   |              |
| Journals   |              |
| Tour Shadowing   |              |
| Reviews & Assessments  |              |
| <br><i>Instructional Materials</i>   |              |
| <b>Orientation Workshop Goals .....</b>                                      | <b>8</b>     |
| <b>What Makes a Great Docent? .....</b>                                      | <b>9-12</b>  |
| <b>Guidelines for Structuring Tours to Family &amp; Student Groups .....</b> | <b>13-15</b> |
| <b>Tour Template .....</b>   | <b>16</b>    |
| <b>Self-Evaluation .....</b>   | <b>17-18</b> |

# Summary of Docent Internship Program

The docent internship program is open to individuals who are interested in working in a museum setting and who enjoy communicating with diverse groups of people. All majors are welcome, but the internship is ideal for students in the fields of education, history, ethnic studies, political science, and museum studies. Successful candidates should have an interest in history, a friendly personality, a desire to help others learn, and a respect for timeliness. This is a great opportunity for people who want to polish their public speaking skills, meet the local community, build their professional portfolio, and learn about local history.

## Role of the Docent

Docents serve as guides who lead informational tours. Additionally, you may work at special events or assist the curator and archivists with research and programming for special exhibitions. As a docent, you are an educator, host, and representative of our institution.

**Educator:** Your primary role is to educate the public by interpreting our galleries to our patrons. You must be able to answer their questions or direct them to the proper person to answer their questions.

**Host:** Docents must exercise high levels of hospitality for our patrons. You must be able to enforce rules and expertly guide them through the building and make them feel comfortable and welcome during their visit.

**Representative:** Docents are part of the face of our institution. More than anything else, our patrons will remember YOU and how you made them feel during their visit. Your attitude, performance, and knowledge are key to the success of our institution.

# General Rules for Our Institution

1. Docents must never leave guests unattended, and should not permit guests to wander away from the group. This is especially important for youth tours.
2. Docents must wear badges at all times when in the building.
3. No smoking is permitted in the building at all.
4. Food is only permitted in the foyer area.
5. Photography is only permitted in the foyer area.
6. When in the temporary exhibit space and reading room, handbags must be kept closed.
7. Patrons must not use cell phones during a docent-guided tour. It disturbs other patrons. Calls should be taken in the foyer or outside the building.
8. Patrons must not touch or lean on any of the antique chairs in the Restored Classroom or any of the gallery displays.
9. Tours will pass each other in the hallways and occasionally share rooms. When there are simultaneous tours, docents must maintain a sense of order for patrons.

## Emergency Guidelines

Because we do not have in-house communication devices ( beepers, walkie-talkies, etc.), docents are permitted to keep their cell phones on them during tours. However, the ringers must be off. Vibrate and other silent notifications are permissible.

**Generally, the guard or staff will call 911 if necessary. However, we encourage you to use your good judgment. If there is ever a serious, urgent emergency during a tour, call 911 yourself. If the guard or other staff members are unavailable to assist with a non-emergency situation, call the local Police Department Non-Emergency Line at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.**

### Fire

1. Stop the tour immediately and lead patrons to the nearest safe exit. Do not use the elevator.
2. Upon exiting the building, gather at the designated meeting location at [street address].

### Medical

1. Summon the guard or a staff member.
2. Remain with the patron.
3. As much as possible, do not touch a guest, wheelchair, or walker.

### Inclement Weather

1. As soon as staff members are notified of any building closures, late openings, or early closings, we will let our docent team know by phone or email.
2. If you have any questions or concerns about getting to or leaving from our institution safely, feel free to contact Valerie Wade.

# Touring Logistics

## Touring Pledge

For every tour, docents must:

1. Reasonably accommodate the needs and desires of patrons.
2. Strive to protect our galleries and building from damage.
3. Provide accurate information to our patrons.
4. Be courteous to other docents and staff.

## Guidelines

1. Docents must arrive at least 15 minutes before their scheduled tour time. Upon arrival, they must sign in at the Welcome Desk and pick up their badge. Simply sign in and sign out for each of your shifts. *It is important that you accurately track your hours for your internship credit.*
2. At the beginning and end of each shift, docents must check in with staff to receive updates and feedback on the day's tours.
3. At the start of each tour, docents must greet their assigned group, introduce themselves, and give their Tour Introduction speech.
4. Enforce the rules of the institution throughout the tour. If patrons refuse to follow the rules, consult a security guard and/or staff member to handle the situation.
5. At the end of each tour, docents must thank patrons for visiting, answer a few lingering questions (if necessary), and give their Tour Conclusion speech.
6. If a gift shop visit is included in the tour, contact appropriate staff members. Make yourself available to help if necessary.
7. Tours should take roughly an hour from start to finish. This will vary depending on the type of group, and whether they are doing gallery activities.

# Types of Tours

**School Tours (Youth):** Most of your tours will be composed of K-12 students from various local schools. You will have to ensure your interpretation of the galleries is age-appropriate, and alter your pace accordingly.

**Regular Tours:** These are general adult or family tours, usually a dozen people or less. Usually given at a leisurely pace. Expect lots of storytelling and questions. They typically want time at the end to visit the gift shop.

**Large Group Tours:** These tours require extra coordination between docents so that all guests end the tour at the same time. They typically want time at the end to visit the gift shop.

**Special Tours:** Occasionally, board members will schedule tours of our institution with special guests. We will let you know of any special tours as quickly as possible so that you can prepare.

## Tour Scheduling

The tour schedule is set as far in advance as possible. However, despite our best efforts, sometimes we will have last-minute tour requests. As docents, the majority of your tours will be scheduled at least two weeks in advance. Each month, Valerie will email you a link to sign up for docent shifts. Check it frequently for updates.

### Substitutions

If you need to reschedule your shift, you must find a fellow docent to take your place. Use the Tour Exchange Form located on the Docent Internship Program website to report your schedule change. Docents must repay their substitutes one tour (hence the “exchange.”) Please be respectful of other docents’ schedules. Unless there is an emergency, make every attempt to coordinate exchanges at least 48 hours in advance.

### No-Shows & Late Arrivals

If a docent does not coordinate an exchange and/or does not show up for a scheduled tour, the docent must give two make-up tours. Make-up tours must be scheduled with Valerie Wade. All make-up tours must be completed by December 15 for the fall semester and May 18 for the spring semester.

If a docent has a legitimate last-minute emergency, contact Valerie Wade to discuss make-up options and credit.

Docents should arrive at least 15 minutes before their scheduled tour. Late arrivals more than three times per semester will require an extra tour and/or other disciplinary action to receive full credit for your internship.

## Internship Logistics

Each university and department maintains its own process for internships. Docents are responsible for ensuring that all the university requirements for their internships are being met. To receive full credit for your internship, docents must maintain active status as outlined below.

### **Maintaining Active Status**

1. Docents must adhere to all rules and guidelines presented in this handbook.
2. Docents must conduct all assigned tours satisfactorily.
3. Docents must complete all trainings and attend subsequent meetings.

### **Accessing Information & Forms**

All docent information will be available online. Some forms and links will be private, so they will be emailed to you. It is your responsibility to provide an accurate email address and to check it regularly for updates. Every effort will be made to make all necessary information available to you in a timely fashion.

### **Internship Contract**

Docents, institution staff, and universities must all be in accord regarding requirements for each internship. As such, each intern will receive a contract that includes a checklist of all requirements necessary to receive full credit for their docent work at our institution. Interns will sign these contracts and keep copies on file as records of their work for themselves and their universities.

# Training Schedule and Assignments

*Your gallery research projects, journals, and assessments will be compiled to create your final project to turn in to your university supervisor/professor for your internship credit.*

## Orientation Workshop

In late August / early September, our institution will host an orientation workshop, which will be divided into two sessions.

- Part 1 – Introduction to fellow docents; institution overview; overview of tour policies; tour of the galleries; receive homework assignments
- Part 2 – Docent training; goal exercises; overview of scheduling and logistics

## Gallery Research Project

*\*see separate instruction page\**

As part of your training, you will be required to write at least 3 short reports based on our galleries.

## Journals

Twice a month, on the 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays, you will submit a brief journal entry on your experiences at our institution. Your entries should answer questions such as:

1. What are you learning from the galleries? From patrons? From your own research?
2. How do you feel about your docent work? Is it getting easier each week? Did you have any particularly difficult or enjoyable tours? What is something you did well? What is an area of improvement?

## Tour Shadowing

Before conducting tours on your own, you will need to shadow at least two tours with a staff member. (Depending on scheduling, you should shadow one adult tour and one youth tour.)

## Tours

Docent interns must conduct at least one tour per week. Preferably, you will conduct more.

## Reviews & Assessments

Our Docent Internship Program is meant to be mutually beneficial for our institution and for you. We will have periodic reviews and assessments so that we can be sure the program is functioning as well as possible. So that you have no surprises at the end of your internship, we will inform you of your performance, and we will give you opportunities to inform us of ours.

# Orientation Workshop Goals

**By the end of orientation, the docent intern will be able to:**

1. Correctly follow group tour procedures.
2. Present a tour with clear organizational structure that properly uses an introduction, transitions, and conclusion.
3. Explain the tour rules accurately to guests. Know the institution's rules for guests and docents and how to apply them.
4. Observe visitors and present an engaging, informative visitor-centered tour.
5. Name the galleries and rooms throughout the building.
6. Summarize basic United States history to introduce tours.
7. Summarize basic United States history to relate to each gallery.
8. For each gallery, name at least three objects/photos and explain their significance.
9. For each gallery, explain relevant themes and identify objects/photos that relate to these themes.
10. Present all content used in the tour accurately and know how to respond if a question is asked.
11. Identify primary institution staff by name, face, and role.
12. Accurately research objects or questions of interest using the internet and/or available databases.

# What Makes a Great Docent?

Docents are catalysts for learning in our institution. They are a bridge between visitors and the exhibits. Docents guide visitors and help them blend what they already know with what they will learn on the tour.

Docents rise to the daily challenge of engaging diverse and discriminating audiences in creative ways. They find themes that are relevant to visitors and provide them with opportunities to tell their own stories. Docents stimulate visitor curiosity, imagination, and individual expression by asking questions and encouraging the active participation of each tour group member. When docents actively engage visitors in looking at and talking about the exhibits, they will take with them a deeper understanding of the exhibition themes. Through this personal relationship between visitor and docent, learning and appreciate for the exhibition occurs. A great docent accomplishes this goal: Long after their tour, visitors continue to think about the issues raised in the exhibits and apply this new information to their everyday lives.

Here are a few tips you can employ to become a great docent.

1. **Know Your Stuff:** Nothing helps a tour go smoothly like thoroughly knowing the material you are presenting. The objects and images in the galleries tell stories, so take time to read the exhibition script and familiarize yourself with the information and images you'll be sharing with your visitors. Read the docent handout and use it to guide yourself through the exhibits. The more you know about the galleries, the more your confidence will grow. You are not, however, expected to be an expert, so don't feel like you have to provide a lecture. (That's what professors are for!) Be familiar enough with the galleries that you can ask good questions and shape a conversation. If you feel unprepared to answer a visitor's question, don't be afraid to say, "I don't know." Before your visitors leave the institution, make every effort to find answers by consulting with staff and resources. Then, perhaps encourage visitors to use the archival collection to research their question or refer them to their neighborhood libraries. Remember, unanswered questions can be a positive way to lead visitors toward further inquiry and research.
2. **Know Your Audience:** Most visitors are already interested in the broad topics at our institution, and they bring their own experiences and knowledge. They've come to learn more, to share their experiences, and to have fun. However, every visitor and group are different, so it is important to assess your audience before your tour begins. Is your group made up of youth or adults? Are they tourists from out of town or local? Are the people in the group interacting with each other? Are they strangers to one another?

Have any of them ever visited our institution before? Knowing a little about your audience will help you structure and direct your tour. You already know that a tour structure for 4<sup>th</sup> graders is not going to be appropriate or interesting for teens or adults. Without even thinking about it, a good docent will adjust tour length and content to the group. It's up to you to decide which questions will be most effective with each tour group. Talk to your fellow docents and find out how they structure their tours for different audiences.

3. **Know the Art of Asking Questions:** There's a skill to asking questions, encouraging visitors to participate, and limiting discussion time. To facilitate a conversation, docents are encouraged to lead observation-and-inquiry-based tours. So instead of reading from note cards, involve your visitors by asking them different types of questions. Try to elicit opinions, memories, ideas, and new questions. Here are some types of questions you can ask on your tours:
  - a. **Cognitive / Memory** questions ask what visitors already know or can see. Answers involve simple recall and are either right or wrong. Examples: *Do you attend school? Have you ever visited a history museum before?*
  - b. **Convergent** questions ask visitors to do something with the information they already have or can see. They involve finding similarities, differences, patterns, and/or relationships. Convergent questions ask visitors to categorize, organize information, or to find a central theme. Example: *In 1869, successful businessmen were barbers, blacksmiths, and draymen. How does that compare to the businessmen of today?*
  - c. **Divergent** questions ask visitors for new ideas or inferences. They are open-ended. To answer divergent questions, visitors must gather information from past experiences, link it to information being explored in the galleries, and create new understandings and interpretations. Example: *Why do you think it is important to preserve the history of a specific culture? What does it mean for Black Americans?*
  - d. **Evaluation** questions ask visitors for judgments, choices, or conclusions. Answers should not be casual opinions. To be valid, answers must come at the end of time spent considering the subject. Example: *Do you think learning these stories about everyday people who made a difference in our city helps to build a sense of community or a shared sense of identity? Why or why not?*

You will find that asking questions of all types will come naturally to you as you explore the exhibits. Try to use a combination of these question types on your tours to keep the discussion lively. Try to validate all answers, even if they seem a little off the mark. Children are especially sensitive to being told their answers are "wrong." Some generic replies are: "Well, you've given us something to think about" or "I've never thought about that before. Thanks for the new idea."

After asking a question, give your visitors some time to respond. Usually, someone will speak up in about ten seconds. If after ten seconds, your group remains silent, coax them a little. Rephrase the question or redirect it to an individual who seems outgoing. (Try not to put shy guests on the spot.) Don't be intimidating. If no one has a response, answer the question yourself and ask, "Does anyone agree or disagree?" When asking questions to individuals, make sure to vary your audience sampling. Try to pose your questions to visitors of various ages, genders, ethnicities, and cultures.

### **Timing & Authority**

Your tours should take around 45 minutes, depending on group age and number of people. Sometimes, the tour discussion may go on longer than it should. It is the docent's responsibility to limit the discussion, then guide the tour group to the next gallery. Use a comment like: "I'm sure we could talk about this subject for hours, but I do want you to enjoy the rest of the galleries." In addition to timing, a great docent maintains a position of calm authority. Here are some tips for setting a good tone with visitors:

1. **Know Who's Boss:** You may occasionally experience an unhappy, unruly, or disruptive visitor. If you have an unruly student on your tour, remain calm and focused. If the problem persists, ask the teacher or adult chaperone to remove the student from the tour. You are not responsible for discipline. You are responsible for a great tour. If you are dealing with an unhappy or disruptive adult, calmly explain that their comments are interfering with the other visitors' enjoyment of the tour, and ask them to refrain from the behavior. Refer to the institution's policy for disruptive visitors. If needed, call for a staff member or security guard.
2. **Know Your Own Star Power:** Docents are performers, so stage presence makes a difference between a good docent and a great one. Be confident!
  - a. **Smile:** A friendly face will put visitors at ease and make them feel welcome. But don't let that smile get stuck on your face. Naturally respond to visitors' questions and comments so they know that you're listening.
  - b. **Make Eye Contact with Your Visitors:** Good eye contact will make visitors feel included in the discussion and will often encourage their participation. Make sure your eye contact is natural and relaxed. Don't try too hard, or you may end up staring at visitors.
  - c. **Use Natural Hand Gestures:** Don't shove your hands into your pockets, play with your jewelry, or wring your hands. Be careful not to get too close to the exhibits. You serve as a model for appropriate behavior, so don't lean on the exhibits or touch the cases.
  - d. **Be Aware of Your Posture:** Confident, professional docents stand up straight. Try not to sway or shuffle back and forth while you're talking to your visitors. It is likely that visitors will be scattered around you, so try to place yourself so that your back

is not toward anyone for any length of time. Move around just enough so that you can see everyone's faces, and they can see yours.

- e. **Be a Good Listener:** When a visitor raises or answers a question, focus on them, make eye contact, and respond appropriately. If the rest of the tour has not heard the question or comment, repeat it for the entire group to hear.
- f. **Use Your Voice as a Tool:** Your voice can be used to create a lively and exciting presentation. Vary the tone and volume of your voice. Use it to show emotion or to emphasize a point. Try not to sound "canned" like a television commercial or telemarketer. Be natural and engaging. Also, speak clearly. Enunciate and articulate your words precisely. You will lose your audience's interest in no time if they can't understand you. Make sure you can be heard. Think of projecting rather than speaking loudly. Limit "um," "you know," and "like" from your vocabulary. These pause fillers disrupt the flow of your tour. There is nothing wrong with a few seconds of silence while you find the right word or collect your thoughts.

3. **Practice Makes Perfect:** Once you've explored the galleries, read the docent handbook, and thought about the themes in the exhibits, it's time to start practicing for your tour. Practice introducing yourself and welcoming your visitors. Then, walk through the exhibition again and see what objects and images catch your eye. What aspects of the exhibit most interest you? These ideas will guide you in developing your tour. Another good way to practice is to ask questions. Ask your family and friends questions like: Did you ever imagine what it was like to live in the past? Did you think there was any difference between Black Americans living in New York and those living in Texas? This practice will prepare you for the conversations you will have with our visitors.

### **Use Your Team**

Our staff and your fellow docents are here to support you. Talk to other docents about their experiences. Find out how they answered an unexpected or challenging question. Take tours led by fellow docents. You'll be surprised at what you can learn from other docents' tours, and they from yours. Don't be shy about incorporating others' good ideas and successful techniques into your tours.

Above all, relax and enjoy your tours!

# Guidelines for Structuring Tours to Family and Student Groups

## Family Tour Groups

### Families

- Receive and share information from each other.
- Learn through conversation and social interaction.
- Come in all ages—from infants to grandparents.
- Because families are busier than ever, they sometimes have less time to spend at the exhibition than do other types of group tours.
- Families need to know where rest rooms, water fountains, and food concessions are located.

### Hints for Leading Family Tours

- Be clear about the length of the tour.
- Make sure you address both children and adults.
- Be sensitive to the fact that adults accompanying the children may not be their parents.
- Create a team spirit by encouraging adults and children to answer questions and examine objects together.
- Tell children that their “job” is to assist the adults in solving problems or answering questions.
- Don’t be insulted if a family must leave before the tour is over.

## Adult Tour Groups

### Adults and Older Adults

- Visit museums to increase their knowledge.
- May have little use for specific information, but may find insight into something familiar.

### Hints for Leading Adult and Older Adult Group Tours

- Avoid alienating adult visitors by talking to them like students.
- Do not underestimate older adults; tap their wisdom and experience.
- Interpret the exhibition on the basis of relevance to past, present, and future cultural contexts.
- Older adults may be intellectually sharp, but physical limitations may require shorter tours or time for rest.
- Background noise may interfere with hearing, so find a quiet spot for discussion.
- Speak audibly and clearly.

## Student Tour Groups

### Pre-kindergarten–2nd Grade Students

- Have vivid imaginations and like to pretend.
- Have short attention spans.
- Are more physically oriented than verbally oriented.
- Strongly identify with their names.

### Hints for Leading Pre-kindergarten–2nd Grade Student Tours

- Employ activities that allow children to discover things—don’t tell them, ask them.
- Ask children to look or touch, then describe.
- Ask children to solve a riddle.
- Tell stories.
- If students are wearing nametags, call them by their names.

### 3rd Grade–5th Grade Students

- Are avid observers.
- Are eager to learn new things.
- Like to talk.
- Love being challenged to find objects or clues.
- Work well on independent assignments.

### Hints for Leading 3rd Grade–5th Grade Student Tours

- Ask children to hunt for an image or an object in the exhibition.
- Ask children to describe that image or object.

### 6th Grade–9th Grade Students

- Are aware of their appearance.
- Are peer centered.
- Like to work in groups.
- Can be distrusting of adults.
- Have an uninterested air about them (they seem like they don’t want to learn or don’t care).

### Hints for Leading 6th Grade–9th Grade Student Tours

- Treat adolescents with respect.
- Ask open-ended questions that allow them to express their opinions.
- Ask pointed questions. (Do you think America’s physical border boundaries or fences are doing their jobs? Why or why not?)
- Give group-oriented assignments.
- With the teacher’s permission, give adolescent students time to visit some of the exhibition on their own.
- Don’t take whispering, giggling, or imitating personally.
- Don’t take yourself too seriously; keep your sense of humor.
- Don’t ask them to sit on the floor in a circle.

### 10th Grade–12th Grade Students

- Have strong opinions about what they find interesting and relevant to their lives.
- Have longer attention spans.
- Like doing activities alone or with friends.
- Are peer centered.
- Often are compelled to challenge the status quo.

### Hints for Leading 10th Grade–12th Grade Student Tours

- Let students express their opinions and provide opportunities for them to give feedback.
- Ask a provocative question or make a provocative statement at the beginning of the tour. Ask the same question at the end of the tour to test if opinions, values, or perceptions have changed.
- With the teacher's permission, build in some flexible or free time to their visit.

# Tour Template

***Tour length should be about 45 minutes, depending on the type of group.***

## **BEFORE THE TOUR:**

- Review tour materials.
- Plan your time so you can arrive at the museum ***at least 15 minutes*** before your scheduled tour.
- Wear your docent name tag.
- Check in with the institution's staff.
- Decide with other docents where each of you will begin.
- Wait by welcome desk for your tour group.

## **MEETING YOUR GROUP:**

- Introduce yourself, state that you will be their docent and if needed explain:
  - what a docent is.
  - "Raise your hand if have you been to our institution before."
  - Review etiquette *in your own words...*
    - Do not touch the exhibits; please stay with the group
    - Walk, do not run; inside voices
    - Explain how you would like your group to participate and answer/ask questions (examples: raise your hand, no such thing as a bad question, etc.)
- Find out what they already know: "Do you know anything about [tour subject matter]?"
- Give a summary highlighting what they are going to see on the tour.

**EXHIBIT CONTENT:** *See your gallery notes.*

## **CONCLUSION:**

- Thank them for coming and encourage them to come back with their families/friends.
- Let them know how long any temporary exhibits will be on display.

## **If you have extra time...**

- What was your favorite piece and why?
- What was your favorite part of the tour and why?
  - If feasible, send youth groups for restroom breaks *with teachers in charge.*

# Self-Evaluation

Docents are encouraged to evaluate themselves to improve their performance throughout their internship. (This is also a good exercise for life in general. Check in with yourself to evaluate areas for improvement.) Docents are also evaluated at least once per semester through direct observation by staff or another trained docent. Docents are encouraged to pair up and follow each other on a tour and use the following questions as guidelines for discussion/improvement.

## **Your Overall Impressions**

- How do you feel about this tour? What was successful? What might you do differently next time?
- What was the best part of the tour for you? Did you have a good time?

## **Audience Overall Impressions**

- What impression do you think the guests had?
- How could you tell if the guests were having a good time?

## **Your Preparation**

- Did you feel well prepared for the tour?
- What new information do you need to research for your next tour?

## **Audience Preparation**

- Did the guests appear to be familiar with the general themes in the galleries?
- How did their preparation or lack thereof affect the tour?

## **Delivery/Engagement**

- What percentage of the tour was spent listening to your voice?
- What percentage of the tour was spent listening to the guests' voices?
- Do you feel you were successful at actively engaging the guests rather than lecturing to them?
- Do you feel your type (open-ended), level and direction (scaffolding) of questioning was appropriate for fostering communication among the group?
- Are you comfortable leaving adequate time for students to consider the questions prior to responding and providing enough time for all students who wish to respond to have the opportunity?

- What strategies did you use if you saw that the guests were not having a good time?
- Were you able to conduct the tour without reading the information from the script to students?
- How did the tour flow? How were your transitions from topic to topic and from gallery to gallery?

### **Management**

- Are you comfortable managing student responses so that their individual voices are heard rather than everyone answering at once?
- How was the group behavior? What strategies did you use to manage the group and facilitate a successful tour?
- Is this an age group you are comfortable working with? What is your grade level preference?
- Did you have an introduction at the beginning of the tour and a conclusion at the end of the tour?

### **Tour/Museum Goals/Objectives**

- Do you feel you were consistent in using the tour script, meeting the stated objectives and tailoring it to your delivery style?

### **Your Learning/Experience**

- What have you learned from this tour?