

HOW TO MAKE TOURS MORE INTERACTIVE

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- I. Challenges
 - How to involve adults
 - How to achieve a balance between giving out information and allowing people to talk
 - How to avoid embarrassing adults if they are afraid when they talk they will reveal some ignorance
 - How does a docent ask the right question
 - What to do when there is no response to a question

- II. Involving Adults
 - At the beginning of a tour, engage the visitors in conversation about where they are from, and thus establish an easy give and take
 - Encourage interruption – i.e. questions
 - Use contrast and compare with two different objects, beginning with differences and then focusing on similarities
 - Use opening gambits such as, “This is what I say to children”
 - Take cues from the group
 - Set up expectations – hint at excitements to come such as “Wait until you see how our last artist will use narrative or compositional device”
 - Establish respect for the visitor by treating each comment or question with dignity and respect.

- III. Achieving a Balance between Giving Out Information and Allowing Visitors to Talk
 - Begin with observation and description, either as a group or by the Docent
 - Use observation about what the visitors see to allow artistic information, biography, historical context, technique, etc. to be disseminated
 - The information then has a context and is more easily assimilated or remembered

- IV. How Does a Docent Ask the Right Questions and What to do About Silences
 - Allow the questions to come from description
 - Take cues from the group and ask questions appropriate to the information learned in the give and take on the way to the beginning of the tour
 - Be affirmative and supportive about any question or comment
 - Use tact and humor
 - Silences are OK – generally most visitors are more uncomfortable with silence than the docent, and will begin to volunteer