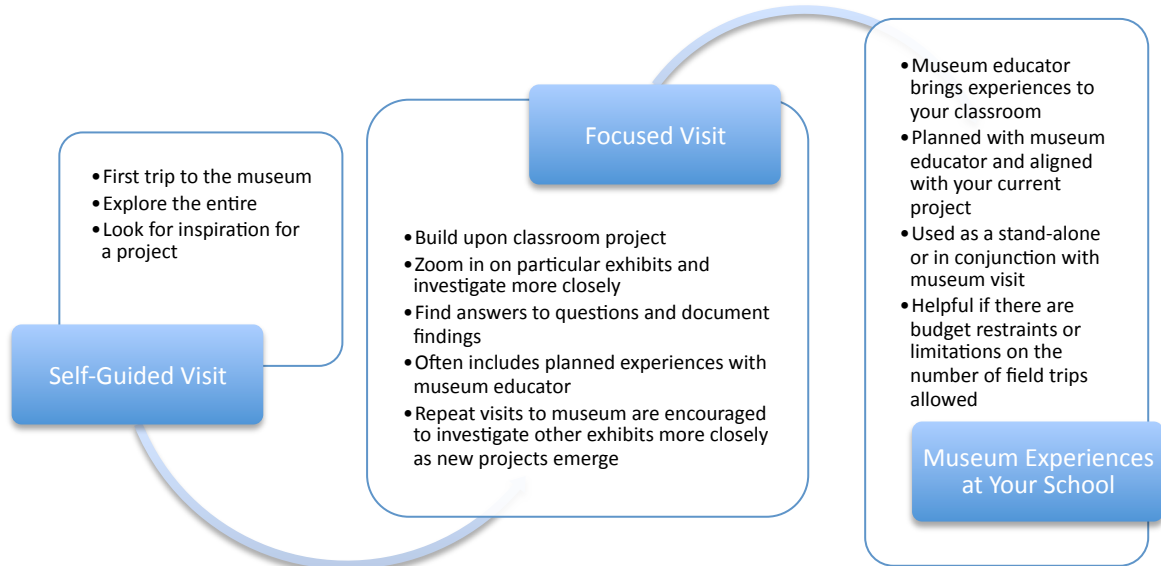


Planning for a Successful Museum Visit

What type of museum experience will you use?



A few months before your visit

- Explore the museum on your own.
 - Some museums offer a free visit to educators or have a special open house for educators. Find out if you need to schedule an appointment.
 - Check to see if the museum offers professional development opportunities.
 - Prior to visiting on your own, check to see if the museum allows adults to visit on their own without children. Some museums prohibit this for safety reasons.
 - Find out how the museum can accommodate any children with special needs or English language learners in your group.
- Decide if you will be doing a self-guided visit, a focused visit, and/or if you will have a museum educator visit your classroom.
- Learn more about the focused field trips offered. How long do they last? Does a museum educator lead activities?
- Contact the museum staff with questions.
 - Describe what you are studying in the classroom and ask for tips about what children might explore in the museum.
 - Find out if there are additional resources that can be downloaded related to your topic.

- Learn about the arrival and check-in procedures,
 - Ask if there is an orientation time with museum staff upon arrival.
 - Find out whether the museum has assistants or volunteers that will supplement the child/adult ratio in your group.
 - Find out the length of the visit included with admission.
 - Find out if the materials in tinkering/makerspace or art exhibits can be used to make something related to your project.
- Prepare to register.
- Get approval for your trip from your administrator.
 - Find out how far in advance you must register. Have a few potential dates in mind when you call or sign up online.
 - Find out about admission prices and methods of payment.
 - If applicable, find out if the museum offers discounts to schools or organizations serving low-income children.
 - Determine the total number of children and chaperones. Refer to the museums guidelines on the adult/child ratio.
 - Find out if the museum has lunch facilities or if you must provide a sack lunch.
- Plan for transportation. Find out about parking for buses.

At least one week before your trip

- Decide which exhibits you would like to explore and investigate.
- Prepare chaperones. Check the museum website for tip sheets for chaperones. Remind chaperones to:
- Stay with the children that have been assigned to you. Know their names and make sure they know your name.
 - Help children learn and explore. Supervision and safety is most important, but also be sure to interact with the children.
 - Ask questions that require more than a yes/no answer.
 - Refrain from using your cellphone while chaperoning.
 - Keep your group together in one exhibit area at a time.
 - Encourage children to pick up after themselves.
 - Help children to work together, take turns, and share.
 - Notify a museum employee if a child is separated from your group. (Be sure the chaperone has your cellphone number as well.)
 - Give children an advanced warning before it is time to leave. If possible, let the children choose one favorite exhibit to explore for another 10 minutes before departing.
- Create chaperone groups.

- Prepare itineraries and guiding questions for each exhibit for the chaperones. Try to spread out in the museum so everyone is not in the same exhibit at the same time.
- Make nametags for the children and chaperones. Include your organizations name and phone number.
- Consider asking everyone in your group to wear the same color shirt so they are easily identifiable once inside the museum.
- Think up some challenges you could pose in the art area or maker area beyond, “What do you want to make?” (e.g., *Can you create something for the _____ our class is building? Can you create part of a _____? Can you create something that will help the _____ do his work?*)
- Prepare materials the children can use to explore museum such as:
 - Yarn to measure things
 - Baggies to store the string and a post-it label
 - Pens/pencils
 - Individual clipboards, journals, or trip boards made from cardboard and binder clips
 - Paper
 - Crayons for rubbings
 - Child-friendly digital camera
- Prepare materials you can use to record children’s thoughts such as:
 - Camera
 - Paper or iPad to record children’s thoughts during “stop and debrief” with your small group of children

Preparing for children for the museum visit

- Introduce the idea of visit to museum.
 - Ask: *What do you think you might see?* You may try creating a web around this question.
 - Introduce the idea that they can learn more about [your topic] at the museum.
 - Ask them what do they want to find out.
 - Discuss how they can record information. Who will draw what?
 - Show the children photos or virtual tours of the museum exhibits so they know what to expect.
 - Think up questions you will ask in advance to focus children’s interest.
- Assign children to small groups.
- Review the museum’s rules and behavior expectations with the children.

During the trip

- Check out any signage about daily special events or activities that are happening.
- Explore the exhibits that you identified.
- Refer to the questions you identified in the classroom.
- Encourage children to use the materials and tools you brought in their investigations.
- Document what you see children doing or saying.
- Make things related to your topic in the art exhibit or the makerspace/tinkering exhibit.
 - What do they want to make?
 - Talk about the materials and tools and how they might be used in a safe way.
 - Encourage problem-solving as the children work with materials. Resist jumping in too early to offer assistance. Help them figure it out.
- Discover new topics.
 - Tour the rest of the museum.
 - Record things children say and do that indicate interest in a potential project topic.

Following the trip

- Debrief about the trip in small or large group discussions.
 - What did they see related to [topic]?
 - What did they do related to [topic]?
 - Share the constructions made in the art exhibit or the tinkering/makerspace.
- Add to webs or lists.
- Decide what to make to show what they have learned. What do they want to make, revise or add to based on what they've learned?
- Ask about what else they saw at the museum. Was there anything there they would like to learn more about (e.g., bridges, shoe store, post office, vet office, water works)?
- Invite the children to draw pictures and dictate thank-you notes to the chaperones.
- Write a letter or email to the principal or other teachers sharing details about your day at the museum.
- Contact the museum coordinator with any comments or feedback about your trip or suggestions for improvement.
- Share photos of what children learned with families. Encourage families to take their children to the museum and give them specific suggestions on what they might see or do.