

Classroom/Tour Management Techniques for K-12 Groups

EXPECTATIONS instead of Rules

- During your welcome, use the word “expectation” instead of “rules.”
- Let the students know that we expect this behavior of ALL visitors (adults, too), so we are not singling them out.
- Focus on the behaviors you want to see, not what they should avoid:
 - Use inside/quiet voices (also called “one inch” or “library” voices, have very little ones practice)
 - Use walking feet
 - Stay with your group
 - Do not touch the art (this one is so important it’s okay to keep it a negative, BUT you can emphasize how much you will see and explore with your eyes and minds.)
- Ask chaperones to turn phones off or to vibrate and to avoid talking to other chaperones during the tour.

In your welcome/introduction

- Tell them your name and how they should address you (Mr., Ms., first name, etc.).
- Tell them what you’re going to do together today: look at art, talk.
- Tell them your theme.
- Share the expectations for behavior – ideally, ask the students to tell you what they think the expectations for behavior are. If you don’t have time, then tell them.

Get students to walk in a line through the museum

- This keeps them together and out of the way of other visitors, as well as keeps the art safer.

Have students walk on the RIGHT side of the stairs

Have students sit at every stop

- Sitting “criss cross” or “criss cross applesauce” is a MUST for elementary school students.
- This keeps students focused, helps ensure everyone can see, and protects the artwork.

Dealing with props/activities

- For tours that include clipboards and pencils (STEAM tours):
 - When seated, have students put clipboards and pencils in the “off” position – this is on the floor in front of them, and they aren’t touching them.
 - If pencils are a distraction, have them be “real scientists” or “real artists” by putting their pencils behind their ears. Be careful with this one...it could backfire.

Giving directions

- Ask everyone to look up at you while you explain what to do.
- Ask if someone in the group can explain what they are going to do (i.e. getting them to repeat the directions).

Positive discipline

- Always focus on “positive discipline,” which isn’t discipline at all, but describing behaviors you want instead of listing things the students cannot do.
- Make ample use of praise. When you see good behavior, acknowledge it. This can be done verbally, of course, but it doesn’t have to be. A nod, a smile or a “thumbs up” will work, too.
 - “I like how John waited patiently while raising a quiet hand.”
 - “Ahmed, thanks for participating and thinking about the question.”
- Often, students who are not demonstrating these behaviors will begin to, so that they get praise, too.

Describe the behavior you want to see in your question

- “Who can raise their hand to tell me what animals they see in this painting?”

Positive reminders

- You can never remind too often.
- Each time you move to another part of the gallery (or to another stop), remind them to
 - Walk
 - Keep hands by their sides
 - Give any uncovered artwork some “room” as they move by it

Guide/Docent moves first

The kids don’t know where you want to take them next, so have them stay seated until you are physically in a position to LEAD. For example, “Stay seated while I move to the back of the group.” Walk around to the other side, “Now you can stand up and please follow me to XXXX.”

If kids are seated in rows, you can ask the back row to stand and join you, then the middle row, etc.

Mid-tour stretch

Pause in the middle of the tour to lead a stretch with the group. You and they will feel better! Pick 2-3 of the following:

- Reach your arms up over your head.
- Reach down to touch your toes.
- Reach one arm across the front of your body. Do the same with the other arm.
- Roll your head to the left and right.
- Make a face.
- Shrug your shoulders.

One last stretch

At the end of the tour, do one last stretch:

- Reach one arm up to the ceiling.
- Reach the other arm up and then bend it down to pat yourself on the back. You did a great job today!

Getting everyone to participate

- Ask a simple question, and say that you are going to wait until everyone has an idea/answer...then wait for that. Then, ask the kid(s) who have been quiet up until now.
- Say something to the effect of "I love seeing all these hands up...I hope we can see some new hands up, too."
- If you have an eager beaver who answers everything, you can quietly talk to hir as you move from one artwork to the next and say, "I know you have an answer for all my questions. I'd love to see what others have to say, too. At this next stop, let's try to give other people a chance, and then if you have something different/new to add, you can raise your hand."

Attention Getters for Elementary and Some Middle School

- Check in with the teacher at the start of the tour to find out what their "quiet" sign is. (If you forget to ask the teacher, ask the students during the expectations.

Common attention getting techniques in schools today:

"Clap once" (call and response)

In a moderate voice, say, "Clap once if you can hear me." (some students will clap) then say, "Clap twice if you can hear me." (most, if not all, will clap) and you'll have their attention!

Clap pattern (call and response)

Do a clap pattern: Long, long, short, short, short

You do it once and some will clap the pattern back. Do it again (immediately after) and you'll have everyone responding together.

This one helps save your voice

Give Me Five

The teacher/Guide/Docent holds up their hand with all fingers out and "counts down" on the fingers (you can use your voice, too.) Sometimes students will count with you and put up their hand to show that they hear you. Some teachers make it into a game of sorts, and expect that all students will be listening by "3". If they are all together by "4" it's super-special...praise them!

Agó / Amé (call and response)

This is a Ghanaian Language of the Ashanti tribe, so students who have studied Africa are more likely to know this. “Ago” means 'are you listening?', and “Ame” means 'you have my attention'. It is used in ceremony and in every day. It is respectful. A child will not say 'ago' to an adult, but he or she may say it to an audience that contains adults, to get the crowd's attention.

Things Juline likes to do with lower elementary school:

“If you can hear me, touch your head.”

“If you can hear me, touch your nose.”

This is a little like ‘Simon Says’ and can keep a group of wiggly kids distracted for a little while

Be sure you have the attention of everyone in your group before you start talking.

Don't attempt to speak over the chatter of students who are not paying attention.