

Communication Skills for Docents 2019 Garden Docent Training Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens

- ✓ Be welcoming---set the tone with a smile, relaxed posture and an air of confidence in your ability to lead
 - If there is time before the tour begins, gather information from your group (their interests, expectations, experiences) and build anticipation by alluding to tour highlights.
- ✓ Inclusive comments---build on visitor comments, refer to visitors' hometown, etc., during the presentation
- ✓ Project your voice---enunciate, make sure you can be heard (ask if they can hear you, if you worry they cannot), adjust volume as necessary
- ✓ Positive body language---consider your facial expressions, eye contact, posture, gestures
 - Be aware of keeping your body facing towards your visitors rather than facing toward the object and be aware of tight spaces or getting/pointing too close to objects
- ✓ Descriptive language---use words that generate mental pictures, use specifics, watch slang
- ✓ Transform unfamiliar words into familiar words---explain or define jargon, proper names, foreign words, or art terms
- ✓ Sentence structure---practice using complete, reasonably brief sentences that make their point precisely
- ✓ "I don't know" should be a comfortable answer to a question
 - You can suggest, or offer to find out, where to get the answer, or you can connect the question to something you do know that relates to the visitor's inquiry
- ✓ Answer the unspoken questions: "why was that just said?" and "how does that apply to me?"
- ✓ Compare and contrast---by comparing and contrasting, visitors refine perceptual skills that will help them analyze the different elements of the objects
- ✓ Choose objects based on their ease of viewing---location and size
- ✓ Avoid information overload
- ✓ Say what we mean---watch for frequent use of "um," "like," "you know," "er"; phrases like "I think," "I've been told," or "sort of" make it appear the speaker is uncertain about facts

Adapted from: *The Good Guide: A Sourcebook for Interpreters, Docents and Tour Guides* by Alison L. Grinder and E. Sue McCoy, and *The Interpreters Training Manual for Museums* by Mary Kay Cunningham