

Welcoming All: Engaging with Different Visitors

Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens

2024 Garden Docent Training

1. Review these Tips for Engaging with Different Visitors

Offered below are general tips and examples for engaging with a variety of visitor types, that are informed by us considering unconscious bias.

- Check in on unconscious bias you may have. People are asking questions out of a desire to learn more or to gain clarity on what you've said. They are not trying to trick you up. If you feel defensive when a question is asked, use that as a learning opportunity for yourself, what about the question was challenging to you. Maintain your confidence by maintaining your composure, awareness of bias or emotionally triggers allows you to remain in control of the message.
- It's ok to not know. Prepare yourself with a few ways to direct challenging questions to the website, or other Hillwood resources. Be prepared to say, "I don't know." Be patient with yourself. Like any skill, answering questions takes focus, deliberate practice, and repetition.
- If a visitor is impacting the tour timing or negatively impacting others' tour experience, consider strategies to respond to those visitors. For instance, a visitor who is asking a plethora of questions can be asked by the docent to stay after the tour concludes to allow more time to address their questions. Example response: "These are insightful questions and while I'd love to spend more time on them, I do want to ensure the tour finishes on time. If you have the time, please chat with me after the tour."
- Use a framework for answering questions. Answering questions under pressure might lead to you misinterpreting the question. Instead use a framework to help you respond effectively.
 1. Listen to the whole question. You don't have to answer immediately. Pause for a few seconds to think about all the parts of a question and the best way to answer.
 2. Seek to understand the context. If you are unsure if you've understood a question correctly, check for confirmation by paraphrasing the question back.
 3. Involve the whole group. Even though you are taking a question from one member of the tour, you are still responsible for the attention of everyone on the tour. Involve the rest of the group by repeating the question or paraphrasing it.
 4. Respond concisely. Keep your response as focused as possible. To avoid going into too much detail, check back with the visitor to see if you have answered their question. "Does that answer your question in enough detail?"

2. Jot down some responses and ideas for how to address the Derailer, Detailer, Dasher, and Disengaged.

Bring to the April 1 class and we'll discuss as a group.

- **The Derailer** | *Takes discussion in different direction, asks unrelated questions*
- **The Detailer** | *Wants specific details, interrupts for clarification or to ask questions*
- **The Dasher** | *Always rushing, looking at watch, anxious about time*
- **The Disengaged** | *Avoids eye contact or physical proximity, has side conversations*