

Guidelines for Developing a Five-Minute Object Lesson
2024 Garden Docent Training
Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens

Follow these steps when developing a five-minute object lesson.

1. Identify the audience.

- a. For training purposes, it is helpful to think about the audience as a group of typical Hillwood visitors, i.e. intelligent, curious adults with little to no knowledge of the lesson's subject.
- b. Review the "Learners and Learning" handout and "The Visitors' Bill of Rights" to think about the audiences' needs.

2. Choose the object and identify its location in the garden.

- a. Please choose an object in a room that is on the tour and is one we have already covered in class. Those rooms include: motor court, French parterre, Japanese-style garden, Friendship Walk/Overlook, putting green, Lunar Lawn, and rose garden.
- b. You will present this lesson outdoors in the garden room before darkness falls.
- c. Think about location—is there enough/convenient space for a small group to gather? How well can the object be seen?
- d. Consider the strength of the story the object has to tell when choosing an object. There is no list of required or approved objects provided by Hillwood.
- e. Many choose objects that they believe they will include on their tour.
- f. It is fine if several docents-in-training present lessons about the same object. Take the pressure off yourself to find a "unique" object.

3. "Read" the object.

- a. Brainstorm what you see and what you know about the object.
- b. A good framework to help you brainstorm is the "Garden Object-Based Learning Model: Using Visual Evidence to "Read" a Garden Object, or Feature" worksheet. You have a completed worksheets for the French parterre's boxwood, and for the feature you chose for your homework.
- c. Do the research you need to do. Research should pull strongly from the training resources like the readings, lectures, handouts, and class notes.

4. Distill the brainstorm down to the big ideas about its design, function, and relationship to Marjorie Post and the museum's mission in caring and preserving the object today.

5. Write your objective(s)—what you want your audience to be able to do better at the end of the lesson.

- a. Your objectives should be written like the ones on each training class's agenda or "above the line" on the example lesson plan for Diana.
 - i. Begin the list of objectives with this phrase: "As a result of participating in this lesson, participants will be better able to:..."
- b. Objectives should be clear, defined, and use active verbs.
- c. They should describe observable behaviors will take place and indicate that learning has happened.

6. Develop and then refine a list of questions that will move the lesson forward: the "body" of the conversation.

- a. You can see examples of questions in the example lesson plan for Diana.

7. Develop an introduction with two parts.

- a. The first part of the introduction is the advance organizer. It does two things:
 - i. finds out a bit of what the audience knows (Like asking, “Who has been here before?”)
 - ii. it gives them a brief overview of what they will be doing (you can consider this your theme)
- b. The second part of the introduction is a good “hook” question—one that grabs their attention; it can be before or after your advance organizer.
- c. You can see an example of an introduction and its two parts in the lesson plan for Diana.

8. Write a solid conclusion with two parts.

- a. First summarize succinctly the experience, referencing the objective(s).
- b. Second ask a question that assesses what the visitors will take away from your lesson. Their answers will help you understand how well the objectives were met.
 - i. This may feel superfluous now with such a short lesson, but will become more helpful asking after a sixty minute tour.
 - ii. A good question can be: What is one important idea you will take away from this discussion?
- c. You can see an example of a conclusion and its two parts in the lesson plan for Diana.

9. Write a lesson plan for your object lesson putting all these steps together. This written lesson plan will be submitted to Jordan and Lisa.

- a. Follow the structure of the written lesson plan for Diana as an example, as well as reference the template document distributed at the object lesson workshop class.
- b. Choose a style for your lesson plan: script-like (like Diana), bullet points, or outline format.
- c. A written lesson plan will include these sections, which should be labeled:
 - i. Description of the audience
 - ii. Basic object information and its location
 - iii. Objectives (As a result of participating in this lesson, visitors will be better able to:...) that are clear, defined, and use active verbs
 - iv. A two-part introduction with an advance organizer and hook question
 - v. The sequence of questions (and distilled answers) in “the body”
 - vi. Big ideas about design, function, and relationship to Marjorie Post and the museum’s mission in caring and preserving the object today
 - vii. A two-part conclusion with a summary and evaluative question

10. Practice, practice, practice. Time the lesson so that it doesn’t exceed the time requirement. Tips include: practice out loud, in front of a mirror, record yourself and watch the recording, leave time for answers.

11. After the lesson plan is presented, assess how it went. A Self-Assessment Worksheet will be provided for this purpose. Determine how those assessments influence your next lesson plan (for your room demonstration).