

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

All of the components you used in developing a single object lesson apply. The conversation develops in an orderly fashion. It contains the big ideas (think framework), objectives, and a sequence of events. All of these components have to be built on what you know about the audience for whom it is being designed and what you know about the room and the objects in it.

Follow these steps when developing a room lesson.

1. Identify your audience.

- a. For training purposes, 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 room.

- a. Please choose only from the eight rooms included on the docent-led tour: motor court, French parterre, Japanese-style garden, Friendship Walk/Overlook, putting green, Lunar Lawn, rose garden, and cutting garden.
- b. This means that several docents-in-training may present a lesson about the same room; that is ok.

3. "Read" the room and its features.

- a. Brainstorm what you see and what you know about the room and its features. Record the storm on paper.
- b. A good framework to use to help you brainstorm is to complete the "Brainstorming for the Room Lesson" used during class.
- c. Select the few features (max 3) you might use and make connections among them.
 - i. Exclude the terracotta sphinxes outside the French parterre. Be mindful that the patio the gold fountain is located in off of the Lunar Lawn is small and does only accommodates small number of visitors on a tour.
 - ii. Refer to the "Japanese-style Garden & Accessibility" handout for guidelines on best to navigate the Japanese-style garden depending on the visitors' needs.

4. Focus on the BIG IDEA. The big idea has already been identified for you. It is the overarching framework of design, features, and Marjorie Post/museum today. However, your challenge is to present this framework as a meaningful focus that engages the visitors' interest and curiosity. It derives from your own experiences and interests in the room you have chosen. Focus on the big idea in a way that stimulates you and your visitors to think and make connections.

5. Research features and ideas thoroughly.

- a. Finalize your choice of a few features to focus on.
- b. What additional information do you have to know in order to enhance the visitors' explorations of the room and its features? Be selective.
- c. Research should pull strongly from the training resources like the readings, lectures, handouts, and class notes.
- d. Distill the information. Remember, you can't share all you know. Visitors do not want to be overwhelmed with information.
- e. Strive to make this a learning experience that involves using our senses.

6. Write down your objectives.

- a. Remember, objectives are clear statements of the outcomes you expect for your visitors--- what you want them to be able to do or “take away” as a result of their exploration of the room.
- b. They spring from the big idea: the overarching framework of design, features, and Marjorie Post/museum today.
- c. Begin with this phrase: “As a result of participating in this lesson, participants will be better able to...”
- d. We strongly recommend beginning the objective statements using action verbs from the following selection: identify, discuss, and describe.

7. Develop and write down an introduction, with two parts. The introduction to the room helps your group feel comfortable, sets a conversational tone, and gives them a sense of what will be happening (refer to your objectives).

- 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 (refer to your objectives)
- 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 the rose garden.

8. Identify the key questions you will use. The questions serve as guideposts in the conversation. The sequence of questions moves the conversation forward through the body of the conversation, around the room and features you have selected.

- a. Start with the “hook” question, typically placed somewhere in the advance organizer. It really needs to grab the group’s attention.
- b. Brainstorm what you think the answers to the questions might be.
- c. Continue to distill the information you wish to convey, as needed.

9. Write transitions. Yes, write them down.

- a. Use transitions to link each section of a sequenced experience to the next. They:
 - i. generate anticipation for what will be seen or heard next;
 - ii. invite visitor involvement (mental and sensory);
 - iii. create a bridge or connection between ideas;
 - iv. provide direction or focus during group movement;
 - v. allow visitors to apply their own experiences and knowledge;
 - vi. create a foundation for new information.
- b. Transitions are short (only one or two sentences), and can use questions, provocative statements, summaries, and analogies.
- c. Examples include:
 - i. Relates to the “big idea” “Can you find another feature which could have had the same function during Post’s time?”
 - ii. Hints at reason for the next stop on the tour..... “If you think this is X, let’s see how it compares to Y in the next room.”
 - iii. Can be an action or activity... “As we move to the next room, watch out for X.”

10. Develop a solid conclusion with two parts. A conclusion completes the lesson's structure and creates a solid framework.

- a. First, summarize succinctly the experience, referencing the objectives.
 - i. That brings visitors back to the original advance organizer and assists them in reflecting on what has taken place.
- 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. Evaluating the experience provides you with information that can help you decide what to keep and what to change for future groups.
 - i. Feel free to use one of the following examples:
 1. "What new information from our tour do you leave with?"
 2. "What do you take away from this tour?"
 3. "What will you remember from this tour?"
 4. "What was your favorite moment of this tour?"
 5. "What did you enjoy most about the tour?"
 6. "What did you find most memorable about this tour?"
 7. "What will you take away from the tour that you'd like to tell a friend?"

11. Write a lesson plan for your room lesson, putting all these steps together.

- a. This lesson plan will be submitted to Jordan and Lisa.
- b. Follow the structure of the written lesson plan for the rose garden as an example, as well as reference the template document distributed at the room demonstration workshop class.
- c. A written lesson plan for a room will include these components:
 - i. Audience description (for this purpose: typical Hillwood visitors)
 - ii. Name of room and objects
 - iii. Objectives (As a result of participating in this lesson, participants will be better able to:...)
 - iv. Big idea: from framework of design, features, Marjorie Post/museum today
 - v. An advance organizer including hook question
 - vi. The sequence of questions (and distilled answers)
 - vii. Transitions between features and sections
 - viii. Conclusion: summary & take-away question

12. Practice, practice, practice.

- a. Time the lesson so that it doesn't exceed the ten-minute time requirement.
- b. Practice out loud multiple times.
- c. Spend time in the garden room, and plan where you will stand and where visitors will gather.

13. After the lesson plan is delivered, assess how it went.

- a. Use the Self-Assessment Worksheet. Determine how those assessments influence your tour lesson plan.