

**Guidelines for Developing a Five-Minute Object Lesson
Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens
2026 Mansion Docent Training**

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 mansion.

- a. Think about location – is there enough/convenient space for a small group to gather? How well can the object be seen?
- b. 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.
- c. Many choose objects that they believe they will include on their tour.
- d. It is fine if several docents-in-training present lessons about the same object. Take the pressure off yourself to find a "unique" object.
- e. You are required to choose an object in a room that is on the tour (entry hall, pavilion, French drawing room, Russian porcelain room, icon room, first-floor library, dining room, kitchen and pantry, French porcelain room, and Post's bedroom suite).
- f. For the first five-minute object lesson please choose an object that is in the French collection: French furniture, textiles, or porcelain. (Note: for the second five-minute object lesson, you will switch nationalities and choose an object from the Russian collection.)

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 "Object-Based Learning Model" worksheet. You have a completed worksheet for the entry hall's commode, or chest-of-drawers.
- 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 style, function, and production.

- a. Good frameworks to help you organize your distillation are: "The Style-Function-Production Framework" handout; and the "Example of an Application of the Style-Function-Production Framework" handout for the roll-top desk in the French drawing room.

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

- a. Begin the list of objectives with this phrase: "After participating in this lesson, participants will be better able to:..."
- b. Objectives should be clear, defined, and use active verbs.
- c. You can see example objectives on each training class's agenda or "above the line" on the example lesson plan for the Franklin tea cup and saucer.

6. Develop and then refine a list of questions that will move the lesson forward through the style-function-production discussion: the "body" of the conversation.

- a. You can see examples of questions in the example lesson plan for the Franklin tea cup and saucer.

7. Develop an introduction with two parts.

- a. The first part of the introduction is the advance organizer. It does three things:
 - i. finds out a bit of what the audience knows
 - ii. it gives them a brief overview of what they will be doing (you can consider this your theme)
 - iii. arouses their curiosity or challenges them to think
- 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 example lesson plan for the Franklin tea cup and saucer.

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.
- c. You can see an example of a conclusion and its two parts in the example lesson plan for the Franklin tea cup and saucer.

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

- a. Follow the structure of the written lesson plan for the Franklin tea cup and saucer as an example.
- b. Choose a style for your lesson plan: script-like (Franklin cup and saucer example), 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 style, function, and production
 - 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 in the mansion, **assess how it went.** A Self-Assessment Worksheet will be provided for this purpose. Determine how those assessments influence your next lesson plan.