

National Docent Symposium 2017

Multisensory Tour – San Antonio Museum of Art Docent Guidelines

Planning

1. Develop an email list; send invitations 2 weeks ahead of time.
2. Guests respond to the Museum's Tour Scheduler; this helps us plan based on number of guests.
3. Plan and organize your tour 3 weeks in advance.
4. In our case, multiple docents present objects.
5. We have a time-keeper, a 'DJ' who oversees the music, and someone in charge of the scents.
6. If a presenter needs any special scents or props, they will inform the tour leader ahead of time via email.
7. The leader of the day is responsible for the organization of the tour, the route, selecting objects to present, etc. It is up to her/his discretion to make any adjustments or to accommodate any special request.

Welcome

1. Docents should arrive 30 minutes early to prepare.
2. Invite each guest to a gathering space while waiting for the rest of the visitors. Provide name tags as they arrive.
3. Inform the visitors to use the restrooms before the tour.
4. Docents must be sensitive to the visitors' needs. Wheelchairs will be offered.
5. Docents are introduced to the guests at the beginning of the tour.
6. Tours should start promptly with a brief address. Remind the group that the tour is about 1.5 hrs.
7. Describe the route of the tour (noting terrain, stairs, or elevators) and emphasize efficient and expedient transit.
8. Scents may be passed around at certain stops (smelling is optional for guests).
9. Museum folding stools are offered. Either the guests or the docents take them.

Tour

1. Prepare 6 objects for each tour. Allow 10 minutes for each object.
2. Allow 2–3 minutes transit time between stops.
3. The tour should not last longer than 90 minutes.
4. Help situate the group in front of each object; semi-circle is best.
5. When the group is situated, the docent shares their name, and begins their presentation. Repeat for each stop.
6. Foreign or specialized words should be spelled. Place emphasis on excellent descriptive techniques.
7. Do not pass props during the descriptive part of the presentation. Will your audience better appreciate the connections between the props and the art before or after the presentation? Describe the props that you are using.
8. Use a maximum of 1-2 oil scents for each object; use music or sound effects at your discretion.
9. There is time for questions while props are passed around. Music may also be played.
10. Other docents should be respectful of the presenter who has the floor. Comments are fine when there is silence while passing around props.
11. One docent tracks the time and signals to the presenter with their remaining time.
12. If time is short for the final object, allow the group to choose to stay for the final presentation or to end the tour.
13. Help your group back to the main entrance. Inquire if anyone needs a taxi, assistance to the sidewalk, etc. Thank the visitors and depart.

Using Props

1. Allow 3–4 minutes for passing the props (as part of the total 10 minutes).
2. Do not let guests control the time they spend with the props; one or two docents should pass the props around.

3. Another docent oversees the scent collection and will pass the vials. Move the small vial from side to side under the nose to diffuse the scent. Introduce the scent and its relevance to the art/culture. (Avoid wearing perfume or cologne.)
4. When offering a touch prop, guide the visitor's hand either from top to bottom, or from bottom to top. This helps them to translate their touch into a mental image.
5. Correct hand-guiding technique: the docent places their hand under the visitor's hand and moves around the tactile model.

San Antonio Museum of Art Multisensory Tours – Object Description Rubric

Photo (and photographer credit if known)

Gallery Name and Location:

Type of Object (i.e. Painting, Sculpture):

Title/Object Name:

Artist Name:

Object Creation Date:

Accession no.

Purchased/Donated, etc.

Material Used:

Size of Object:

Prop (Y/N):

Number of model(s)/prop(s):

Brief Description of Prop(s):

Suggestions for usage of prop(s) or guide to touch experience:

Description and comments on the art/artist:

Other Notes:

How to Guide a Vision-Impaired Patron

Guidelines by Iris Gonzalez, San Antonio Museum of Art Docent

This guide was created to help docents at the San Antonio Museum of Art guide visually impaired patrons during museum tours. Below are general tips we've learned in developing these tours, as well as specific training on how to guide a visually impaired person.

General Tips

- **Remember to be verbal:** Introduce yourself every single time you speak to someone, tell everyone about transitions to a new activity or area, say out loud how the group is now going into an elevator. If you leave the person, remember to say, "Excuse me, please," so they know you are gone. Speak out loud where you are navigating the person, so they are oriented to SAMA's spaces.
- **Remember not to be verbal when it counts:** Visually impaired guests rely on their sense of hearing to appreciate the tour—and SAMA's echo-y galleries presents a hearing challenge, especially when the museum is busy. Please be mindful and help the patrons hear the docent presenting the object.
- **Please keep the tour length to 75 minutes, and no more than 90 minutes.** Navigation in between museum objects will take longer than expected. Passing around props for patrons to smell, touch, feel also takes up extra time, as patrons will ask for the object and ask questions about it. We've discovered that it's best to hand out the prop either at the beginning or at the end of the docent's object presentation. Please keep to the tour

length, as many visually impaired guests also have other impairments and many find a 90-minute tour difficult to endure.

- **Offer a stool to patrons:** If they are not interested in one at the tour's start, please try to bring several along, as many change their minds halfway through the tour. Help the visitor touch the folding stool at some point, but do not force their body down to seat in it.
- **Safety is always first:** As you verbally guide guests thru space, please remember to point out handrails on the stairs and in the elevator. If the group is large, it may be safer to split the group up into two elevators. Remember our guests cannot see if they are stepping on a guide dog's tail, or walking into a wheelchair as they exit the elevator.
- **Do not worry about specifics:** You do not have to say, "We will walk ahead 24 feet" or "We will walk up 7 steps" because it is difficult to remember specifics like that, as well as navigate through space. Think about your passenger giving you driving directions on a busy highway in an unknown area—you only need to know the next turn or exit, not that exit #172 is in 16 miles. Keep it general enough to be helpful for navigation.
- **When a 3-D prop or model is used** (or one with a raised line contour) is best to use the hand of the docent as a guide, placing it under the hand of the blind or visually impaired guest. Start navigating the model from top to bottom and side to side, but let their hand free on top of yours. If we hold their hand they lose some of the ability to fully interpret the object. Our pressure on their hand detracts from the personal experience.

Making contact

- Speak to make contact, introduce yourself.
- Ask the person if they require assistance and, if so, ask how they wish to be assisted.
- If the person requests a guide, then ask which side they wish to be guided on, stand alongside the person and let them take your arm.
- If the person is seated, allow them to stand up unassisted unless they request your help.

Correct guiding position

- The person takes hold of your arm just above the elbow, four fingers on the inside, thumb on the outside; the grip should be firm.
- You should keep your arm relaxed and close to the side of your body.
- You should remain half a step ahead of the person you are guiding.
- Give brief but clear verbal instructions, mention appropriate hazards and say if there are steps or curbs up or down.
- If you must leave the person you're guiding at any time, let them know and leave them in contact with a solid object, such as a wall.

Note about grip: After verbally indicating to the person that he will be guiding him, the guide offers the person his arm by touching his elbow against the person's nearest arm. This grip positions the vision-impaired person half a pace behind you, so he can then detect changes in the guide's body, e.g., turning left or right.

Negotiating Narrow Places (Walking Single-file)

- You may need to walk single file when moving through crowds or narrow spaces. Put your guiding arm behind your back; the person with the vision impairment straightens out their arm and walks directly behind you.

Note about crowds: The guide places his arm behind his back and the vision-impaired person changes his grip from just above the elbow to the wrist of the guide while moving to a position behind the guide. The vision-impaired person then extends his arm to its fullest extent. Guide the vision-impaired person then proceed through this narrow space until there is enough room again for two people to walk abreast. The guide then

returns his arm to the normal position and this signifies to the vision-impaired person that he is to return his hand to the normal grip position.

Going through doors

- Approach the door with the person you are guiding on the hinge side. The guide verbally indicates to the vision-impaired person which side the hinge is on by saying either **door left**, or **door right**. Tell the person you are guiding if the door opens outward or inward.
- Use your guiding arm to open the door. The person with the vision impairment can use their free hand to take the door handle from you, and then find the handle on the other side of the door, and close it behind you both.
- The guide should go through the door first and his partner follows, closing the door behind you both. If the hinge is on the left, the vision-impaired person should be on the guide's left, with his left hand free and vice versa.
- The guide then opens the door with his grip arm - the vision-impaired person can then distinguish whether the door opens inwards or outwards. As you move through the door, the guide places his grip hand on the handle. The vision-impaired person then moves his free hand down your arm, and thus makes contact with the handle and is then able to close the door behind you both.

Note: It is important that as the guide approaches the door he looks to see which side the hinge is on.

Changing sides

- If the person you are guiding is not on the hinge side as you approach a door, ask them to change sides. He or she will side-step behind you, taking your other elbow with their other hand.
- To facilitate this, bend your free elbow and point it out behind your back, making it easier for the person with vision impairment to locate.

Note: It may be necessary in some situations for the vision-impaired person to swap to the guide's other side, i.e., when negotiating a tricky pathway or going through a doorway. This may be done in a stationary or mobile position. The guide verbally indicates the need to change sides. If the vision-impaired person is holding the guide's left arm with his right hand he will bring his left hand onto the guide's arm, release his right hand and place it on the guide's right arm. He will then bring his left hand over to the guide's right arm and release his right hand, resuming the normal guide grip on the other side.

About Turn

- Verbally indicate the need to about turn. Turn to face each other. The vision-impaired person grasps the guide's free arm with his free hand and releases the other grip. Guide and person can then turn to walk in the new direction.

Ascending and Descending Stairs

- Always approach steps and stairs straight on, not diagonally.
- Stop or pause when you reach a step or curb and say, "Step down," or "Step up."
- If the step is higher or lower than usual, warn the person you are guiding.
- Tell the person you are guiding that you are approaching stairs and whether they are going up or down.
- Approach the stairs so that the free hand of the person you are guiding is at the handrail, and explain whether the rail is above or below their hand.
- Always say when you have reached the top or bottom of the stairs, and pause for a moment.
- If the handrail is on the left and the person with the vision impairment is on the right, change sides.
- **Ascending stairs:** The guide then stops at the foot of the stairs and verbally indicates that there are steps up.

- **Descending stairs:** The guide approaches the stairs, slowing down and then stopping at the top. The guide then tells the client that you are at the top of a flight of stairs. Use of the handrail applies as for ascending stairs. The guide then asks the vision-impaired person to gently slide their foot forward to locate the edge of the first step. The guide then waits for the client to indicate, by squeezing his guiding arm or verbally indicating, that he is ready to walk.

Note: More anxiety typically is experienced when descending, rather than ascending stairs. It is best not to say how many steps you will be ascending or descending, as this can lead to loss of concentration by the client of your body movement, as he may be too busy trying to count the steps.

Seating (Single Chairs or Sofas)

- Grip the back of the chair so that the person you are guiding can feel where it is. The person can then use your arm to guide them into the seat.
- If the back of the chair is against a wall, it may be easier to walk towards it in such a way that the person's leg brushes gently against the seat of the chair.
- Let the person sit down unaided; never push anyone backwards into a chair.

Note: Approach the chair centrally and verbally indicate whether the seat is facing your partner or away from him. Place your guiding hand on the back of the chair. Your partner can then slide his hand down your arm to the chair and establish its position. He can then move into it feeling the side of it with his leg and checking the seat with his hand.

Aisle Seating (Auditorium, Stadium, Theater)

- Maintain the normal grip position as you move down the aisle. On reaching the row of seats the guide then turns sideways and leads them into the row in a side stepping manner. Your partner may trail the back of the row of seats in front with the back of his hand (ensuring that he does not disturb the people in the row in front). The guide walks until his partner is standing in front of his seat. The vision-impaired person should then check the seat and sit down.
- On leaving the guide takes the lead again and a similar procedure is followed until the aisle is reached.

Curbs

- There is no need to say each time you come to a curb. Pause before stepping up or down. The vision-impaired person will feel the change in your body movement as you proceed.

Cars

- Say which way the car is facing, and then simply place your grip hand on the passenger door handle. Your partner can then slide his grip hand down your arm and locate the handle while his other hand locates the roof. The passenger can then open the door for himself and get in.

Guiding or Walking next to a Person with a Guide Dog

- Walk on the side **opposite** the dog.
- Do not interact with the dog; the dog is working.
- If you see someone stopped with the dog leash in their hand instead of the guide dog harness handle (harness handle is down on the dog)—the person is indicating s/he needs help.

Parting company

- When you are acting as a guide, never leave the person in "free space."
- Make sure the vision-impaired or partially sighted person knows where they are, the direction in which they are facing and where they should go next. When you leave them, remember to say that you are going so that the visually impaired person is not left talking to him or herself.

Sample Music Selection



The Lansdowne Marcus Aurelius

Roman, 140–150 CE

Marble

- *The Forum* – Jeff Beal (<https://youtu.be/Qf4NGEibHgl>)
- *Legacy of Rome* – Andreas Waldetoft (https://youtu.be/2DD_NR8flpw)
- *I pini della Via Appia* – Ottorino Respighi (https://youtu.be/TQwGTe_MueM)
- *Grand March* – Giuseppe Verdi (<https://youtu.be/TX0qN6QEvGg?t=50s>)

Sample Scent Selection



Atlantean Figure

Maya/Toltec Culture, ca. 900–1150 CE

Limestone with traces of pigment

All scents are from Demeter Fragrance (<https://demeterfragrance.com>)

- Holy Smoke
- Sassafras
- Chipotle
- Dark Chocolate

Commentary: The Mesoamericans were extravagant with incense, burning it 9 times a day. They manufactured ornate vessels in which to burn it. Large braziers called *Tlexictli*, or “fire navels” provided continual light, warmth, and a place to burn copal. Another type of ladle-like incense burner was held in the hand and used in various motions during ceremonies to direct the sweet smoke towards its intended recipients.

Additionally, fragrant oil massages were a common form of therapy applied in the sweat lodges called *Temazcallis*.

Online Resources

- Guiding a Person with a Visual Impairment
 - <http://www.ncbi.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Guiding-a-Person-with-a-Vision-Impairment-WORD.pdf>
- [VIDEO] Sighted Guiding – How to Help Blind and Partially Sighted People, pt. 1
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yEoY6NeISs4>
- American Foundation for the Blind – Learning About Blindness

- <http://www.afb.org/info/for-employers/visual-impairment-and-your-current-workforce/learning-about-blindness/345>
- American Foundation for the Blind – Statistical Snapshots
 - <http://www.afb.org/info/blindness-statistics/2>
- Miami Lighthouse – Community Mobility for the Visually Impaired
 - <http://www.miamilighthouse.org/Docs/CommunityMobilityForTheVisuallyImpaired.pdf>
- Guide Dogs for the Blind - Blindness and Guide Dog Etiquette
 - <https://www.guidedogs.com/explore-resources/general-information/blindness-and-guide-dog-etiquette>
- Art Beyond Sight – Verbal Description Database
 - <http://www.artbeyondsight.org/mei/verbal-description-training/samples-of-verbal-description/>
- Writing About Art – Visual Description
 - <http://writingaboutart.org/pages/visualdesc.html>
- Wikipedia – Audio description
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Audio_description
- American Council of the Blind – The Audio Description Project
 - <http://www.acb.org/adp/ad.html>
- WikiHow – How to Describe a Color to a Blind Person
 - <http://www.wikihow.com/Describe-a-Color-to-a-Blind-Person>
- [VIDEO] Describing Colors as a Blind Person
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59YN8_lg6-U
- Waunakee Community School District – Sensory Words
 - <http://www.waunakee.k12.wi.us/faculty/lcarothers/EffectiveWriting/Descriptive/Sensory%20Words.pdf>
- Descriptive Words
 - <http://descriptivewords.org/>
- Tara McCarthy - Descriptive Writing
 - <http://gec.kmu.edu.tw/~lc/ecorner/eBook/Descriptive%20writing.pdf>
- Sensational Books!
 - <http://www.sensationalbooks.com/>
- National Federation of the Blind Online Store
 - <https://ecommerce.nfb.org>

Surveys have terrific value. Sample survey:

With online-based survey software we can solicit feedback, and obtain data to create reports. We can give our participants an easy-to-remember URL to complete the survey at home, or we could later email the URL to them.

A suggested list of questions you might use:

- Which date/tour did you attend? _____
Based on this tour experience:
- did you enjoy your visit to the San Antonio Museum of Art? YES ____ NO ____
- Was your overall appreciation of the art enhanced? YES ____ NO ____
- Did you believe the tour was well-researched? YES ____ NO ____
- Did you believe the tour was well-designed? YES ____ NO ____
- Did you believe the tour was well-presented? YES ____ NO ____

-- Do you have suggestions for how we may improve this tour? NO ____ YES ____:

-- Do you think the use of scent was beneficial? YES ____ NO ____

-- Do you think the use of sound was beneficial? YES ____ NO ____

--Do you think the use of touchable props was beneficial? YES ____ NO ____

-- Do you believe the docents were attentive to your needs? YES ____ NO ____

-- Would you return to the San Antonio Museum of Art? YES ____ NO ____

--Would you recommend this tour to visitors with vision impairments? YES __ NO __---Were the museum galleries difficult to navigate through? ____YES ____NO

-- Please provide any additional thoughts you may have regarding your experience at the San Antonio Museum of Art.
