



TRIP TIPS for Visiting

The following tips can help make the first visit to a museum, botanical garden, wildlife center, or other cultural institution go as smoothly as possible.

(1) Choose where to visit:

- o If you're not sure which institution to visit, look in Family Time, or check the internet for ideas. **Talk to** other parents, your cultural liaison, or other staff at your school or center to find out if they have any recommendations.
- o Consider the age of your children when choosing a place to visit. However, **don't assume that Children's Museums or Zoos are the only places to visit with young children.** Art, science, history, and cultural museums also have objects and exhibits that can engage and interest young children.
- o Find a partner. Sometimes it helps to make the first visit with another family. See if there is a parent or caregiver at your center or school with whom you could team up to take the kids to the museum.

(2) Plan ahead:

- o Confirm the hours by calling, and make sure to set aside enough time for the visit. You don't have to stay all day! Remember that if you are going on a weekend, the museum will be crowded. The earlier you go the less busy it will be.
- o Get the directions by calling or checking the website, and referring to the last page of Family Time. You can also call the MTA at **(718) 330-1234** for detailed public transportation directions. Bring the museum's phone number with you in case you are having trouble finding it and need to call to confirm directions.
- o Check publications or call the institution for special events or activities going on that day.

(3) Prepare your kids:

- o Dress them comfortably. Some hands-on activities may be messy.
- o Bring a book or toy for the trip to and from the cultural institution.
- o Eat first! Then you don't have to worry about it when you get there.

- o Bring a snack as well. When you get to the museum, ask at the information desk if there is a place you can eat the snack.
- o Talk to your children about visiting plans to increase their excitement and reduce any anxiety about going to a new place.

(4) Once you get there:

- o Take time to organize. Go to the information desk to pick up a map and other materials about what is going on at the institution that day. Ask what would be of interest for your children (give their ages).
- o Talk with your kids about their interests. Ask them what they would like to see first.
- o Locate the restrooms. Take time to go there before beginning your visit.
- o Pick a meeting place in case you get separated from your children and point it out to them. Tell children to go tell a security guard if they get separated from you.

(5) Remember to...

- o Visit some place new! Making your first visit can be difficult, but can also be fun and rewarding for you and your children.
- o Be flexible. Let your kids enjoy the museum at their own pace. They may decide they want to stay longer in one exhibit rather than visit another.
- o Take breaks. Preschoolers learn best in short segments and can get tired. Take time out to eat a snack. When you go back, you might want to try a different exhibit so that your children stay engaged.
- o Don't try to do too much. About one or two hours is plenty for young children. Tell them you can come back another day to see more of the museum.
- o **Have fun!**



TRIP TIPS for Learning

The following learning tips can maximize the educational benefits of your visit to the museum, while keeping it fun for kids. Most of the tips are designed for children in preschool through kindergarten, but many work for older children as well. Remember that learning can go on before, during, and after the museum visit.

(1) Before the visit,

- If you're not sure what institution to visit, look at Family Time or other publications or check the Internet for ideas. Talk to other parents or staff at your school or center to find out if they have recommendations.
- Talk to your children's teachers about what topics your children are learning about in school. Use this information to choose which museum to visit or what to focus on in a particular museum.
- Find books on topics related to what you will be seeing at the museum and read them to your children. You can bring the book with you on your visit and help your children make connections between what you have read and what you are seeing.
- Talk with children about how museums are collections of different kinds of objects. Children are natural collectors. Ask your children if they collect anything. What do they collect and why?

(2) During the visit,

- Let your children do some of the guiding during the visit. When you enter a room, ask them what they would like to look at first.
- Ask your children open-ended questions that encourage them to express themselves, such as:
 - What's going on in this picture (or exhibit)? What do you see that makes you say that?
 - How is this object like (or not like) that one? What is the same or different?
 - What are words you would use to describe this object? What does it remind you of?
 - Which (picture, sculpture, animal) is your favorite? Why?
 - How does this exhibit, painting, etc., make you feel?
- Ask your children to tell a story about an object that interests them. Ask them to think of their own name for a painting or sculpture.

- o Play games, such as "I spy" by describing an object and having your children find it (Can you find the cat in this room?). Or ask them to find something in the exhibit that is a particular color or texture or pattern (e.g., blue, red, rough, smooth, striped).
- o If your children can read, have them read some of the text or captions to you.
- o Encourage them to ask questions. Don't worry if you don't know the answer. You can bring a notebook to write down questions they have so you can try to find out either at home or at school.

(3) After the visit,

- o Ask your children to talk more about what they have seen. What did they like best? What didn't they like? Why?
- o Encourage them to talk with family, friends and teachers about what they saw.
- o Have your children tell you some of the new words they learned on the visit, and write down the words for them. Ask them to tell you one thing that they learned during the visit, and write down that too.
- o Have your children draw pictures from the trip and write down a story they create about the trip.
- o Have children make artwork of objects they saw during the visit. You can use the brochures given out at some museums to make collages.
- o Some museums have family guides that you can take with you for additional activities to do at home.
- o Go to the library to find books about topics that interested your children at the museum. When reading the book, relate it to things you saw on your trip.
- o Get your children involved in planning the next trip to a museum. Were there things that they would like to learn more about? Were there exhibits they want to go back to see again?