



## Good Communication Skills: Tips for Guides

A solid, well-organized tour outline is only half of the challenge of providing a positive experience for visitors. The best tour outline, if poorly presented, can fail if it is not presented well. Strong content must be matched with a strong presentation. Keep these communication skills in mind when working with the public:

1. **Speak slowly and clearly.** Use vocal and facial expressions to enliven the presentation.
2. **Avoid jargon and slang.** Avoid annoying but often unconscious habits such as jingling coins in a pocket or clicking a pen.
3. **Maintain good eye contact** with all members of your group, from the oldest to the youngest.
4. **Encourage questions**, but don't pressure people to respond, as they may feel like they are being tested.
5. **Be receptive to people's interests** as indicated by questions or information provided prior to the tour. Tailor tour content to reflect these interests.
6. **If someone asks a question that you can't answer**, say you will find a curator or other expert on the site to help obtain more information. Follow through on this at the end of the tour.
7. **If someone touches an object**, walks where they should not, or otherwise breaks site protocol, address the problem politely yet firmly. It often helps to say, "*we work hard to preserve our site and ask that nobody, including staff, touch our objects.*"
8. **If there is an emergency**, stay calm and follow site protocol. If the guide is calm, visitors will be more likely to stay calm as well.
9. **Be sensitive to any special needs in your audience**, whether hearing or vision difficulties, the different attention spans of children and adults, or physical challenges.
10. **If a visitor becomes unruly or disruptive**, be polite but firm in requesting that they respect the needs of the other visitors and the site.
11. **Remember, you are the warm, engaging person who makes personal contact with visitors.** Visitors tend to remember their guide as much as the specifics about the site. Be a great ambassador and you will create a positive and memorable tour experience for visitors!