

# *Museum Manners*

Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture

## *Preparing Your Students for a Visit*

The museum is a very special place, a home for rare and priceless objects, photographs, memorabilia, and works of art. Museum visits should be a fun and enjoyable experience for everyone. One of the ways to ensure a positive outcome is to use appropriate manners. Remind your students: We ask visitors to be extra careful in order to protect these collections for others to experience long into the future. Stay at arm's length away from exhibits, except where invited to interact with the displays. Some people like to fold their arms or put their hands behind their backs to help them remember. Unintentional damage may result from gesturing too close to objects and works of art.

It is acceptable to "touch" with your eyes, but not with your hands (this includes walls, labels, cases, and pedestals). Please be careful—museum collections, like people, are unique and irreplaceable. Natural oils on human hands can cause serious damage over time. Fingers placed on the surface of a picture can easily damage the paint layer or the canvas; a hand brushed against sculpture may leave a damaging trace of acidic perspiration.

Stay with your group, teacher or chaperone.

Walk respectfully throughout the museum. Talk in quiet tones. Use inside voices in all areas of the Museum in order not to disturb other visitors. A museum visit can be very exciting; just remember to be courteous of other visitors. They would like to have a good time too.

However, students may always ask questions of your teacher or tour guide.

Do not talk while the docent is speaking. If you talk while the docent is speaking, other people won't be able to hear. If you have questions or comments, raise your hand and the docent will call on you.

Listen to what the docent is saying. Guides and volunteers deserve the same respect and courtesy as your teachers or your parents.

Enjoy the museum and leave your camera at home during your field trip. Museums have rules about the use of cameras in the galleries. The bright light from flash photography is harmful to sensitive papers and fabrics.

Leave your backpack, large bags, and heavy coats in the first floor Classroom or in a locker near the Admissions Desk during tours of the Museum. Bulky objects slung over a shoulder may bump against displays or topple objects.

Food, beverages and gum are not allowed in the Museum except in the Museum Café. Please do not eat, drink, chew gum, or use tobacco products inside the museum or historic buildings.

If your group would like to stop by our Museum Shop, please limit the number of persons to five at one time.

### *Guidelines for Chaperones*

Keep students together at all times. It is the responsibility of the chaperone not only to stay with the group but also to keep the students together.

When in small groups, please encourage the students to ask questions. Please remember that the docent is in charge of the tour. Don't answer questions that are intended for students. A good chaperone needs to remind the student of museum manners and follow them, too.

### *Guidelines for Everyone*

**Relax and have a good time!** Ask questions, make observations, involve yourself in the tour. The Museum's collection and exhibitions are so diverse, there is sure to be something for everyone.

### *Guidelines for Teachers and Group Leaders*

When you call, you will be asked how many students you are bringing, how long your group will stay, how many facilitators you will bring, the specific educational focus of your group, whether you have any special requirements for your tour group, and whether you want a guided tour or self-guided visit.

We will discuss with you how we can enhance your educational goals within your available time. We urge you to consider extending the learning experience by using our pre- and post-visit classroom resources.

## *Organize Your Group*

**Please arrive on time, or call if there are any changes.** The docents are volunteering their time and have made arrangements to be here at the museum to give you a tour. Please help make the most of your visit by arriving promptly.

Plan to provide at least one adult for every ten students (one adult for every six pre-school, first and second grade students).

Hold a pre-trip meeting with the other adults to share management strategies and any trip guides or assignment sheets before the trip.

Adults must stay with their group at all times. Chaperones will circulate through the galleries with their assigned groups. And their assistance is welcomed at learning stations and interactives located throughout the Museum's permanent and special exhibitions. Teachers are good facilitators.

To expedite your visit, make sure everyone knows the time schedule and where to meet to prepare to leave the Museum.

If students are coming for a guided tour, we appreciate large and easily readable nametags so we can make students feel welcome.

Be sure students come to the Museum in clothing that will allow for both sitting and walking.

It is usually advisable to take younger children to the restroom before entering the exhibit. Older children need to know where restrooms are located.

It is not possible to see everything in one visit. Tours are available to permit a thoughtful examination of essential historic and cultural themes. If your visit includes all the exhibits in the Museum, try to work with several objects in-depth. Younger children will benefit from concentrating on only one to three learning stations during a visit.

Encourage students to think and work together in their small groups. Encourage students to talk softly about what they are experiencing.

Build in opportunities for a constructive release of energy in physical movement and opportunities to rest and reflect.

### *Supervise Your Group*

Teachers and group leaders are responsible for group's behavior and for keeping students together in the Museum. Discipline problems are rare, but we will contact the group leader should any occur.

Promote "Museum Manners" with your students. The Museum's exhibits have many hands-on features, including authentic artifacts. Some of these are breakable, and all should be treated with respect. Remind students that Museum exhibits must be respected so that visitors can enjoy them today and in the future.

To ensure a pleasant visit to the Museum for your group and the other visitors, please read and discuss the following rules to your students before your tour. Even the youngest children will act responsibly if they understand that the Museum and its collections belong to every visitor.

### *Simple Rules to Promote Good Museum Manners*

Do not touch exhibits, except where invited to.

Stay with your group.

Walk throughout the museum.

Use inside voices in all areas of the Museum in order not to disturb other visitors.

A museum visit can be very exciting; just remember to be courteous of other visitors.

Encourage students to think and work together in their small groups.

Use stairway along the Red Wall to visit the Museum's galleries.

Reserve the elevators for visitors unable to walk or climb stairs.

Do not enter areas where guided tours are taking place; return to these areas later.

Do not use any part of the exhibits as a hard surface for writing activities.

Refreshments are not allowed in the Museum.

### *Things You Can Do To Help Make Your Museum Visit More Enjoyable*

Talk with museum staff. Plan a focus for your tour. When booking your tour, let staff know about special needs. Find out what the museum has to offer, and what they ask of you (name tags, chaperones). Find out where you should meet museum staff when you arrive at the museum.

Share the map/parking information with your bus driver. Ask museum staff for a map or directions to the museum, and information about parking.

Prepare your students for their visit. Talk with them about their expectations. Make a list of things they would like to find out during their visit. Discuss unfamiliar words that relate to the museum visit. Explain museum manners. Encourage students to participate while at the museum, to ask questions. As Frank Oppenheimer, founder of the Exploratorium in San Francisco said, "No one ever flunks a museum."

Ask for resources to help you prepare your students. Some museums have pre-tour packets, or staff that can visit your classroom prior to a museum visit.

Check out a book from the library that will give you hints on how to prepare students for a museum visit. Many contain activities to help sharpen students' perceptual skills. (Several books also contain suggestions for post-visit activities). Check out a storybook that describes an imaginary museum visit. Here are just a few examples of these kinds of books:

*Where's the ME in Museum*, author

*Teach the Mind, Touch the Spirit: A Guide to Focused Field Trips*, author

*Ella's Trip to the Museum*, author

*The Field Mouse and the Dinosaur Named Sue*, author

*From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, author

*How to Take Your Grandmother to the Museum*, author

Have children wear nametags (first-name only). This helps docents to interact more effectively with students.

Find out what you can/can't bring. Leave backpacks, book-bags, lunch-bags, food and drink on the bus. Ask what writing tools are allowed if your students will be writing in the museum. Most museums only allow pencils.

Plan for a restroom break before arriving at the museum.

Arrive promptly for your tour. Bring the museum's phone number with you the day of your tour. Museums know that "stuff happens"! Call if you are lost, experiencing bad

weather, the bus has a flat tire, etc. This will help the museum adjust the tour accordingly, so that you can stay on your schedule.

Ask students to stay with their group. Stay with your students during their tour.