The purpose of Docent 101 is to provide you with the tools and techniques to help you give an interesting and educational tour, no matter the topic.

Giving tours is an art and a skill. As with any new skill, it’s crucial to learn a basic set of skills and then build on them with practice and continued learning.
Night 1 Itinerary

- Tour Structure
  - Introductions
  - Framework
  - Organization
  - Transitions
  - Conclusion
- Presentation Techniques
- Object-Based Learning
- Inquiry-Based Learning
Docent Expectations

- Manage your schedule on Volgistics

- Be on time- Docents are expected to arrive at least 15 minutes prior to their tour in order to prepare and be in place five minutes before the start time.

- If you are late, or must cancel last minute please call the Information Desk at 202-272-2448 & alert Kristen via email at ksheldon@nbm.org

- Behave in a professional manner; you are representing the National Building Museum.
Tours are advertised in our Visitor Guide, by volunteers and staff at the Information Desk, and by signs.

Before you can even begin a tour, you need to attract people and gather them around. In the case of public tours you might want to walk around before, or make an announcement or two that a tour is about to begin.
Introductions

- Take a look at your audience before you start the tour. Might anyone have special needs? (Elevator use, hearing impairment) Think of your audiences’ needs. (We will discuss the needs of different audiences during night 2)
- You might have time to chat with members of tour about where they’re from, what brought them to the museum, what caught their eye when they walked into the museum/gallery.
• A welcome to the National Building Museum
• Your name and affiliation (I’m a volunteer, I’ve volunteered here for 3 years, I’m a lifelong DC resident, whatever is relevant to your tour or makes a personal connection)
• What the tour is: Historic Building, House and Home, etc.
• How long: 45 minutes to 1 hour
• Reminder of the rules; no photos in the galleries, no food or drink, silence your cell phone (recommendation).
When you will take questions: ie.

- “Feel free to ask questions during the tour”
- “Please hold questions until the end of the tour.”
- “There will be time for questions at the end of each section.”

Remember, you are setting the tone for the kind of tour that you want to have. Taking a few moments to get to know your audience will help you tailor your tour to their interests.
Tours should not be scripted, but you still want to have a strong sense of organization. This organization will depend on what you are giving a tour of and what theme you choose.

Exhibitions can lend themselves to a structure by their layout. Other themes might be chronological or thematic.
As part of your introduction you can lay out a broad overview of the tour ahead and some of the important themes you will cover.

Each section can be structured with a mini introduction, body, and conclusion. This helps you focus your tour. Remember, a 45 minute tour cannot possibly hope to cover everything; structure can keep you focused on the highlights and provide an arc to your tour.
Tours offer a unique challenge in that transitions are from topic to topic AND place to place.

“Our next stop will be on the second floor where will visit the office of the head of the Pension Bureau. We’ll talk more about the original purpose of the building and see more interesting design elements.”
Introductions - General to specific

General Topic
Ie. House and Home

In this gallery we will be looking at different techniques of building houses

This first model is Adobe brick
So we looked at 6 models of house construction.

Houses are made to reflect their environment and many other factors.

So as we have seen throughout the exhibition while a house is a structure dependent on environment, economy and other factors, and it has very strong emotional ties to the concept of home.
- Tell them what you will see
- Tell them about what they are seeing
- Tell them what they saw

Bookends
Tour guide

Qualification
Venues
Historical itinerary
Museums
Precise skill
Tourism interpretation
Information
Tour
Religious
Dock
Interprets
Audience
Organized
Contemporary guide
Literature
Terminology
Guiding
Educational operator
Workers
Contemporary
Audience
Regional
Practically
Recognized
Overheard
Earning
Tour
Audience
Regional
Contemporary
Literature
Terminology
Guiding
Educational operator
Workers
Contemporary
Audience
Regional
Practically
Recognized
Overheard
Earning
Tour
National
Broken
Tour
Religious
Dock
Interprets
Audience
Organized
Contemporary guide
Literature
Terminology
Guiding
Educational operator
Workers
Contemporary
Audience
Regional
Practically
Recognized
Overheard
Earning
Tour
National
Broken
Docent Tool Kit: Voice

Voice Don’ts
- Speak in monotone
- Mumble
- Use jargon or acronyms
- Talk too fast or too slow
- Talk with your back to visitors or while walking
Voice Do’s

- Speak clearly

- Change your tone and dynamic

- Enunciate your words

- Use the appropriate volume level for the situation
  - Size of group
  - Background noise
Docent Tool Kit: Body language

Tips:

- Watch where you are standing in relation to the group and to the object you are talking about.

- Don’t fidget or stand stock still, be natural.

- You can motion or talk with your hands, just not too much.
  - I have hit someone while making a wide, sweeping motion.
Aggressive  Closed  Confident, but possibly off-putting
Object Based Learning

AKA- why museums & historic sites are awesome
This
This is taking it a bit too far and poses serious moral and ethical questions, plus, we all know how this ends.
To spark and interest, interpreters must relate the subject to the lives of the visitors.

The purpose of interpretation goes beyond providing information to reveal deeper meaning and truth.

Interpreters must concern themselves with the quantity and quality of information presented. Focused, well researched interpretation will be more powerful than a longer discourse.
Interpretation

- Interpretation for children, teenagers, and seniors—when these comprise uniform groups—should follow a fundamentally different approach.

- Passion is the essential ingredient for powerful and effective interpretation—passion for the resource and for those people who come to be inspired by the same.

- From “Personal Interpretation- Connecting your Audience to Heritage Resources.”
Did applicant set the stage for issues to be covered in meeting?
Did applicant provide an agenda?
Did applicant work in the name of his/her organization?
Did applicant avoid distracting body movements?
Did applicant use visual aids appropriately?
Did applicant stick to issue at hand?
Did applicant finish with a strong, definite conclusion?
Did applicant talk with enthusiasm?
Did applicant maintain eye contact with audience?
Did applicant speak in friendly, conversational tone?
Did applicant avoid speech mannerisms like fillers (“uh”) and repeated phrases?
Did applicant use appropriate language for the audience and explain technical terms?
Did applicant adapt volume so all could hear?
Did applicant pronounce words correctly and distinctly?
Did applicant seem aware of audience reactions and feedback?
Did applicant show respect for others?
Did applicant make an effort to include all members of the audience?
Did applicant respond to audience questions appropriately?
Did applicant adequately resolve issues and accomplish objective(s) of meeting?
Did applicant start and finish on time?
Using Objects on Tour

- Talking about an object's qualities: What is it made of, who made it, what was/is it used for, who used it. Color, material, texture, shape.
- Tell the object's story
Ironic: Talking about Object-Based Learning with no object....
Gently guide questions and answers to stay focused on the themes of your tour. This can be done with directing questions or steering responses. Sometime you simply have to get things back on track.

You cannot know the answer to everything, and it’s ok to say so. Offer alternative sources, ie. NBM’s website, the bookstore, the Information Desk.

You may want to offer to stay for a few minutes following your tour to answer questions. This will allow you to conclude the tour, and revisit the point you made in your introduction, while satisfying the visitors’ desire to ask questions.
Open ended questions get visitors involved and avoid being right or wrong or “feeling stupid.”

- “What was the first thing you noticed when you walked into this room?”

Memory questions can highlight important bits of information, keep visitors involved, and can connect ideas

- “Does anyone remember how many bricks make up the Pension Building? (15.5 million) In this room there is a feature that flies in the face of a fireproof building.”

- Yes/No or multiple choice questions can help shy groups warm up.
There are very few problems on tours.

If there is a medical emergency find one of the Gallery Representatives (red shirts) with a walkie talkie or a member of security. If no help is readily available, call 911.

If there is a security issue or you feel uncomfortable, find a member of the security team, located at the entrances of the building.

Evacuations/fires- In the event of an evacuation or move calmly to the nearest exit and follow the directions of security officers.

Unruly student/child- encourage the chaperone/adult to handle the problem, or ask the student to leave the tour with a chaperone.

Any issues or concerns, big or small, please share them with Kristen so improvements can be made.
I'm Tour Guide Barbie!  
Please keep your hands, arms, and accessories inside the car, and no flash photography! Thank you!

See you Wednesday Evening!
DOCENT 101- NIGHT 2
MUSEUM AUDIENCES & EDUCATION THEORY
NBM VISITATION

- Family - 40%
- Senior (65 & older) - 12%
- Student (18 & under) - 15%
  - Includes school groups
MASLOW’S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

Self-actualization: achieving individual potential

Esteem: self-esteem and esteem from others, confidence in abilities

Love/Belonging: love/affection and being part of a group

Safety: shelter and removal from danger

Physiological: bodily needs, food, and water
Allow group to have in depth discussion on a particular topic.

Pose questions the group will have to use problem solving skills or past experiences to answer. Validate responses and contributions.

Ask questions and show you are interested in their responses. Welcome opinions. Use humor.

Say hello/acknowledge the security guards if your tour passes them. Let the group know about walking on the 4th floor balcony.

Point out the cafe and nearest bathroom. Advise audience that you will be standing/walking for 45 minutes and ask if anyone will need to use the elevator.
FAMILIES

- Multigenerational - different learning styles and levels of comprehension
- Looking for social interaction between family members
- Interest in learning - children interested through achieving a task (parents interested in helping child succeed).
FAMILIES- TOUR APPLICATION

- Overview what they should expect on a tour- how long, where you’ll go, what you’ll talk about
- Provide orientation to the building and the exhibitions before or after the tour
- Engage the family by asking them to come up with an answer to a question (How many bricks are in a column?) or to point out something that interests them in the Great Hall
SENIORS

- Physical needs - most physical needs tend to be invisible so offer services to everyone in blanket statement.
  - Offer elevator, slow your walking pace; position yourself close to seating when possible. Be aware of caregivers’ needs as well
- Lots of diversity within the “senior” age group (some super comfortable w/ technology, etc)
- Looking for social interaction between friends and others and contemplative moments
- Interested in learning more about their interests and hobbies
- Want to make connections with their existing knowledge and experience
- Like to share experiences and knowledge
- Aware (and possibly sensitive to how) their physical needs are changing
SENIORS- TOUR APPLICATION

- Take note if anyone is having trouble walking or standing to adjust your tour.
- Engage the senior by asking if their past experiences have any connection to the concept/tour. This may require chatting after the tour.
- Speak loud enough so all can hear.
Caught between wanting praise and acceptance from adults and wanting independence

- the younger the child the higher desire for praise and acceptance, the older the child the higher desire for independence

- Very social with peers while wanting some privacy from adults
SCHOOL AGE

- Lots of questions to deepen understanding but have to feel comfortable to ask them
  - WAIT TIME!!!
- Until around high school, needs concrete examples to help understand a concept
- Excited to be in a new place and out of the classroom or out with the family
  - Older children might be more likely to be withdrawn if they are not with their peer group
SCHOOL AGE- TOUR APPLICATION

- state what you want the main take away of your tour
- encourage students to look around the hall before starting the actual tour
- Utilize classroom & teacher’s control methods
- Ask questions to keep students engaged
INTERNATIONAL VISITORS

- Various backgrounds and levels of comfort with English
- Interested in learning more about the U.S. and seeing connections with their home countries
- Looking for social interaction between fellow audience members and with staff
- Possible presence of translator (allow more time between pauses to allow for translations)
INTERNATIONAL VISITORS-TOUR APPLICATIONS

- Point to hardcopy of a map when describing museum features
- Avoid slang/colloquialisms and jargon
- Speak clearly but not necessarily louder
- Engage the visitor by asking if what they see relates to anything they’ve seen in their native country
EDUCATION THEORY & APPLICATION IN MUSEUMS
SPIRAL CURRICULUM

Jerome Bruner created the idea of the spiral curriculum— the idea that any topic can be taught to any age range of person with the base of the spiral containing a topic’s most basic and essential pieces and the top of the spiral containing the most abstract elements.

- 1. bricks
- 2. building with geometric shapes
- 3. process of constructing the Pension building
- 4. the multiple uses of the building
- 5. how the design and art reflect these uses
Howard Gardner created the theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) which proposes that we all have different ways of understanding the world around us. Multiple intelligences relates to how we process and share information.
MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

**Linguistic**
- Love: reading, writing, telling stories, playing word games
- Need: books, tapes, writing tools, paper diaries, dialogues, discussion, debate stories

**Musical**
- Love: singing, whistling, humming, tapping feet and hands, listening
- Need: sing-along time, trips to concerts, music playing at home and school, musical instruments

**Logical-Mathematical**
- Love: experimenting, questioning, figuring out puzzles, calculating
- Need: things to explore and think about, science materials, manipulative, trips to the planetarium and science museum

**Spatial**
- Love: designing, drawing, visualizing, doodling
- Need: art, LEGO, video, movies, slides, imagination games, mazes, puzzles, illustrated books, trips to art museums

**Interpersonal**
- Love: reading, organizing, relating, manipulating, mediating
- Need: friends, group games, social gatherings, community events, clubs, mentors/apprenticeships

**Intrapersonal**
- Love: setting goals, meditating, dreaming, being quiet
- Need: secret places, time alone, self-paced projects, choices

**Bodily-Kinesthetic**
- Love: dancing, running, jumping, building, touching, gesturing
- Need: role play, drama, movement, things to build, sports and physical games, tactile experiences, hands-on learning

Developed by: Dr. Howard Gardner
TOUR APPLICATION

- **Bodily-kinesthetic**
  - have audience physically interact with object or act out concept/be aware of body language to gauge your audience’s needs or desires

- **Musical**
  - use tone and rhythm for call and response when working with young students

- **Naturalist**
  - relate tour materials to how the built environment affects the natural environment

- **Linguistic**
  - be aware of word choice and how to best express your main concepts
  - Teach new terms
PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER