



Tips for Outdoor Teaching

Tip #1 – Keeping the Goals in Mind

Outdoor activities are very exciting and a lot of fun. We want visitors to connect with nature but we also want them to come away from the experience having learned something. Discussing all the parts of the activity with visitors will help them develop a deeper understanding.

- Ask questions while you set up the activity.
- Don't answer questions right away; wait to see if they find their own answers.
- Have visitors predict the outcome of the activity or the experiment.
- Give visitors a chance to add too or adapt to the activity.
- Sit down and discuss the results.
- Ask visitors for real life examples that relate to the activity.

Tip #2 – How to ask a Question

The more questions you ask, the less you talk and the more they talk. Try different ways to ask questions so that all of the visitors have a chance to answer.

Examples of Questions:

"Everyone tell the person next to them a wild animal that lives in Massachusetts."

"On three, everyone shout out the answer"

"If you think that 10 is the right answer, raise your right hand. If you think it is 5, raise your left hand."

"Okay, everyone name one type of bird. If you can't think of an answer, ask your neighbor for help."

"Everyone nod your head if you think this statement is true or shake your head if you think this statement is False."

"I want everyone in their head to picture one part of a plant. Raise your hand if you pictured a leaf, a stem, the roots, a flower? Today we are going to discuss the parts of a flower.



Tip #4 – Basic Needs

Always be aware of your visitors' basic needs. Abraham Maslow theorized that when a person's basic needs are not met they will not be able to learn, at least not well.

Make sure to give your visitors:

- Bathroom breaks
- Water breaks
- A feeling of safety – do not force anyone into tasks they are not comfortable with. You can find other ways for them to participate.
- A heads up. Some visitors may become anxious when they don't know what is going on. Let your visitors know the schedule.
- Appropriate clothing. Before going outside check that your visitors are dressed for the weather and the task.

Tip #5 - Beware!

When you are outside with people, you should always be aware of the natural elements that can interfere with learning. Uncomfortable visitors are less likely to pay attention.

- Don't stand in front of the sun when you are talking. No one likes to squint.
- If you decide to wear sunglasses make sure to take them off once in awhile. It can be intimidating to people when they can't see your eyes.
- Be aware of noise level. If you are standing next a busy street or on a windy hilltop, visitors will have a difficulty focusing on the activity.

Tip #6 - Reflection

The definition of reflection: a fixing of thoughts on something useful; careful consideration. Reflection should be a part of all our learning experiences. It is a time where we can sit quietly and process everything seen, heard or experienced.

Try to work in some reflection time for your visitors. Sit them down for a moment in a scenic spot.

Remember: Understanding grows over time and that repeated exposure to native plants, habitats and ecosystems can foster a deeply rooted curiosity which will improve science literacy in youth now and as adults.