

# SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP

## TOP TIPS: ENGAGING FAMILIES

Families have unique needs compared with other audiences. Family learning engages both children and adults as active participants in their experience, each with their own learning outcomes.

We think of a family as any non-educational group consisting of at least one child and one adult, including extended family members and other caring adults.

Here we share some of our top tips and considerations for engaging families...

# 1

### ENGAGE THE WHOLE GROUP

Families like doing things together, so plan activities that encourage this. Remember to speak directly to children, bringing the adults into the conversation as active participants, rather than the other way round. Promote discussion and get them sharing their experiences with each other. Have a clear role and learning outcome for both children and adults.

# 2

### PREPARE SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Always have an activity to engage the youngest member of the family – they will dictate whether the family stays or goes. Prepare extensions of activities and discussion points for older children. Recognise that people are different and have had different life experiences; try to gauge their interests and current knowledge, and build on this.



# 3

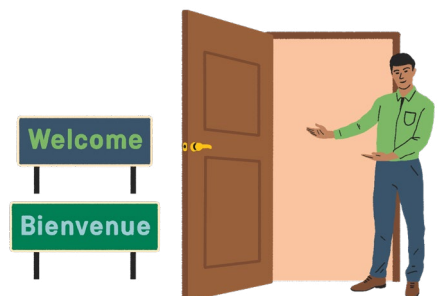
### BE WELCOMING

A good welcome is always the best start. Plan your introduction well, making sure you introduce yourself and what you do. Give people the opportunity to ask questions – they might just want to know where the facilities are rather than participate in your experience. Familiarise yourself with the space you are in and find out where to direct people to get answers that you can't provide.

# 4

### CONSIDER YOUR BODY LANGUAGE

Lower your body so you can speak to children at their own level. This helps them realise that they are a key part of the event. Be open and friendly and think about the gestures you use – could they help your audience to remember key points?



# 5

### ASK QUESTIONS

Plan some questions that will help facilitate discussion and gauge the families' level of understanding before you introduce any technical language. This can also help you find out what interests people have and allow you to personalise the experience using everyday examples, making it as relevant as possible.

# 6

## KEEP LANGUAGE SIMPLE

Don't overcomplicate things. Be aware of jargon and tricky, abstract concepts. Define technical terms clearly or find another way to explain them. Use examples from everyday life that families will be familiar with.

# 7

## SHARE INFORMATION IN DIFFERENT WAYS

Think about how you can link to and build on families' existing knowledge. Choose a variety of formats to share information, such as objects, images, videos, activities, demos, etc. Sensory activities are great for everyone – the more senses people use, the more they remember. They are also especially beneficial for audiences with additional needs and can help make your experience more accessible.



# 8

## CREATE A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

If families go away feeling they have had a great experience and confident that they can talk about and be part of STEM, it will create more of an impact than if they simply memorised a fact. People remember experiences they have enjoyed, felt involved in and that have inspired them to do or find out more.

# 9

## KEEP IT SHORT

Plan multiple activities that don't take too long to complete. This will allow families to choose how to participate and give them ownership over their experience. Value their time – they might try all the activities or just dip in and do one. Practise activities and demos to keep them concise and to help you feel confident in sharing the key details and delivering your outcomes.



# 10

## EXTEND THE EXPERIENCE

How can you help families build longer-lasting connections with the content? Can you suggest where they could go next or share links to where they can find out more? Can you leave them with a discussion-sparking question, take-home activity or challenge for the way home? Providing extensions will help families continue making connections after your experience.

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## EXPLORE MORE

To find out more about Science Museum Group Learning, including resources to use in informal learning experiences, at home and in the classroom, training opportunities, and insights and research around STEM engagement, visit: [learning.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk](https://learning.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk)

For further information, contact us at: [SMGAcademy@sciencemuseum.ac.uk](mailto:SMGAcademy@sciencemuseum.ac.uk)

Please write 'Top Tips: Engaging Families' in your email subject line.