



HOW TO VISIT A MUSEUM





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Get Your Children Museum-Ready

There are tons of benefits to taking your children to a museum or art gallery, including education, exposure to culture, and good old fashioned fun — but are your children ready to go? If you have wiggle worms, reluctant learners, or easily distracted kiddos, you may want to take a few steps to prepare your children before introducing them to spacious, echoing halls filled with priceless artifacts.

It's a good idea to first introduce your child to the content, concept, and concrete building of a museum, so they know what to expect and what's expected of them. We recommend trying our three simple steps before you experience the real thing.



1. Look at Children's Art Books

First, introduce your children to the content of a museum. Children's art books are a great way to reinforce the idea that looking at and learning about artwork (the stuff that fills museums) is fun for kids as well as adults. Looking at these books together will get kiddos in the mindset that they are going to have an exciting adventure with the family.

2. Visit a Children's Museum

Next, introduce your kiddos to the concept of a museum. The great thing about children's museums? They were made for children! These spaces are similar to regular museums in that they're all about learning and celebrating things like art and science, but they're way more hands-on. This means your kids will be discovering how to explore and navigate a museum in practice, while getting to touch, create, and play.

3. Attend Family Programming

Finally, introduce your children to the actual concrete building! Lots of museums offer family programming like art workshops, language lessons, and community celebrations. Attending one of these programs as a family is like a trial run — it reinforces what your kiddos learned about the content and concept of a museum, while allowing them to see the difference between pictures in a book, a hands-on children's museum, and traditional museums filled with priceless works of art we're not allowed to touch.



Museum Etiquette

Museums are special places where people who are passionate about art can come together and enjoy masterpieces originating from all over the world and throughout history. However, museums, galleries, and other places that display priceless art and artifacts cannot function correctly without help from the patrons who visit them.

Most of us have heard the basic rules — like “don’t touch the artwork.” But have you ever wondered why it’s not allowed? We’ve put together a few DOs and DON’Ts to ensure all your museum trips go smoothly, but that’s not all. We’ve also included explanations of why these rules are in place. This gives your family a better understanding of the museum environment and how to make the experience great for everyone. Now get ready to plan your trip!



Do:

1. Pack Light

A large backpack or purse is a surefire way to accidentally bump into the art or other museum-goers, and most of the time you'll be asked to check those items at the door anyway. Carry a small purse with just the essentials, or — even better — fill your pockets with the bare necessities. Otherwise, be prepared to leave your sack lunches and knapsacks with the front desk staff.

2. Stick With Your Group

The more time your family or tour group has to spend searching for stray sheep, the less time they have to see the artwork! Not to mention, many museums are very large and it's easy to get seriously lost on your own. Sticking together allows you to focus on what you came to see — art — rather than finding your way back to the group.

3. Keep Your Distance From the Art

Rules at each museum vary, but it's good practice to stay at least an arm's length, or 12-18 inches away from any walls, podiums, or sculptures. This may sound like a lot, but rest assured, you're still close enough to see all of the detail. Keeping your distance not only helps prevent accidents, but also ensures everyone gets a chance to admire the artwork.

4. Take Notes and Sketch

Museums may not have the best lighting for photography, which can be frustrating since using a flash is prohibited. However, why not embody the artistic spirit and make a pencil sketch of what you see instead? You can also jot down notes about the piece, such as how it makes you feel or the artist's name and title to look up pictures later.

5. Talk About the Art

Although it may not be the place to hold a class-length discussion, there's nothing wrong with stopping to discuss a piece of art. It's a great way to gain new insights on the piece and share your appreciation. Just be sure to remember to use your inside voice.

6. Ask Questions

Museums are a place for learning, so ask away! Your tour guide is specifically there to answer any questions you have. If you aren't taking part in a guided tour, try to find a nearby docent or perhaps even a security guard. If no one knows, make a note of it to research later.

7. Research Before You Go

Every gallery, museum, or other institution is different. While these are great ground rules for anywhere you go to see art, it's always best to play it safe and research the museum you're visiting before you go. You may find that they have rules unique to their space, but that's not the only reason to call ahead or visit their website — you'll probably also come across maps, catalogs, ticket prices, and other information to help you plan your visit.





Don't:

1. Bring Food or Drink

When food and drink enters the gallery, so does the possibility for it to spill on the art. Not to mention, any crumbs left behind will cause a more widespread problem in the form of rodents and other vermin. Many museums will have a food court or lobby snack bar where you can break for lunch.

2. Run

Running, jumping, exercising, and other horseplay can be dangerous for you, other visitors, and the artwork. Calmly walking through the museum keeps you safe and prevents you from harming any priceless artifacts.

3. Touch the Art

It's easy to see why we may not be allowed to hold small sculpture pieces we could break, but why can't we touch large or two-dimensional pieces? No matter how often we wash them, our hands are covered in oils that are dangerous to the artwork displayed in museums. Over time, the oils from our fingers will attract dirt and degrade paintings, making them a lot less beautiful.

4. Use Paint, Ink Pens, or Charcoal

Though it may be tempting to set up shop and attempt to recreate *Mona Lisa*, bringing these and other messy, permanent mediums into a museum is a no-go. Instead, opt for a pencil with an eraser when sketching or taking notes.

5. Talk Loudly

While whispering is ideal, it's okay to speak at a normal or low volume in museums or galleries. It's not okay, however, to speak loudly, yell, or scream — unless, of course, there's an emergency. You're inside, so use your inside voice.

6. Take Flash Photography

Much like the oils on our skin, a camera flash works slowly, over time, to harm the artwork. Although you cannot see the effects immediately, the vibrant colors of paint, ink, and other mediums will fade if they are exposed to too much light, such as bright flashes from a camera.

7. Use Your Cell Phone

You should never talk on the phone in a gallery or museum. If you need to make or accept a call, return to the lobby to do so. And while a quick text is fine, be sure you aren't spending more time looking at your phone than the artwork! Take your (flash-free) photo now, but wait until you're outside the museum to post it online.





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