



WHAT IS A DOCENT?

The word docent comes from the Latin word “docere” meaning to teach. During the 1800s it was used to describe lecturers who were not on the salaried staff of an institution or a private/volunteer tutor. Today the term is used by many museums to describe the trained volunteers who provide educational services for the museum visitor. Other terms include tour guide, interpreter, and volunteer educator.

The role of a docent is three-fold. **1.** They serve as hosts, to provide a welcoming atmosphere. In many cases they are the museum’s “front-line” or main human representatives. **2.** They serve as interpreters of the museum’s exhibitions, helping to give the visitor a deeper understanding and appreciation of the exhibits. **3.** In addition, docents assist in preserving the collections by providing auxiliary security in exhibition areas. The interpretive or educational role of the docent is the most important and challenging aspect of the job. In order to be effective, a docent cannot just lecture to an audience. Docents must strive to actively involve visitors in the interpretation, giving them the tools of visual literacy. A docent should help the visitor attain some sort of “ownership” of the exhibit, and enable them to include it in their own lives. In order to do this, the docent should provide a broader understanding of the exhibition’s concepts and provide a context for the collections with which they are working. In their role as interpreter a docent must be careful not to force value judgment or opinions on a visitor. Docents should strive for objectivity. The goal of a good children’s museum is to enable the visitor to think for themselves about art & science. In addition, a docent must be sensitive to visitors’ differences – learning style, cultural backgrounds, age level, and special needs. Today’s audience is as varied as the artwork and exhibits in the museum and requires open-mindedness, flexibility and respect.

The following characteristics make a good docent:

1. A sincere and genuine interest in people of all ages.
2. A love for and excitement about learning and teaching.
3. Attention to detail and accuracy.
4. A sense of flexibility and cooperation.
5. An attitude of tolerance and respect for all people’s points of view.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD DOCENT

1. **Prepared** – This means not only knowing your material, but also being on-time (actually a bit early is better, since your group may show up early), and having everything you need for activities/projects in the museum.
2. **Friendly** – You are the hosts and hostesses; the front line of the museum. Enthusiasm is contagious
3. **Good voice and good dress** – This relates back to being a good host/hostess. You may want to practice speaking with a tape recorder or have someone follow you to see if your voice is loud enough, and always remember to face your audience so that those who lip read can see you and for the best projection. Communication includes the eyes and face! *Appearance is important but so is comfort!*
4. **Interactive** – The best museum is one in which the audience feels that they have fully participated. Not only does it help them to remember more of what they have seen and heard, it gives them a sense of ownership. In addition, a docent should be responsive to the audience’s interests and needs.
5. **Open-minded and Respectful** – We all come from different backgrounds and have unique beliefs and opinions. It is important to respect each person’s views and be open-minded to new information. Our role is to help them understand art & science and connect it to their own lives. Whether we like a particular work or not, it is our duty to present it in a positive, informative manner.
6. **Able to Read your Audience** – Age levels, learning styles and cultural background enter into every guest interaction. With practice you can learn to read your audience and see what methods suit them best, what learning styles are represented, and if you are keeping their attention.
7. **Exercise Good Judgment** – This will help to control visitors and help in emergency situations.
8. **Admit that you Do Not Know Everything** – While preparation is mandatory, we can’t know everything. Admit when you don’t and assist the visitor in finding out!



DOCENT POSITION DESCRIPTION AND VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

The purpose of this document is to clarify the mutual responsibilities of the Volunteer Docent and Leonardo's Children's Museum that enable each volunteer to provide meaningful and competent service to the visitors of the Museum.

Docent Position Description

Upon successful completion of the basic orientation, Leonardo's docents agree to serve by volunteering for a minimum of one year. Leonardo's Docents have a strong interest in serving the Museum's visitors and demonstrate an ability and willingness to communicate with different audiences. Docents should display flexibility, responsibility, and respect with regards to Museum visitors, staff, and their fellow volunteers.

Docent:: _____ Date: _____
(Please Print)

As a Volunteer Docent I agree to:

1. Complete an Availability Form by dedicating the same day each week as my primary volunteer day. Once I have been scheduled, *I am responsible for finding my own substitute.*
2. Commit to a minimum of 8 hours per month.
3. Attend exhibition briefings and staff meetings as scheduled by the Museum, and carefully review all materials provided in preparation for the Museum Floor.
4. In case of sudden illness or emergency, consult my team list and make every possible effort to find a substitute to cover my scheduled volunteer time. Following that, I will immediately notify the Museum (233-2787) of the substitution or (last resort) vacancy.
5. Submit a monthly record of my volunteer hours worked.
6. Read and adhere to the policies and procedures stated in the Leonardo's Volunteer Handbook.

Leonardo's Children's Museum will agree to:

- 1 Provide the opportunity to serve the public through hands-on Arts & Science exhibits and curriculum.
 2. Provide a safe workplace and supportive atmosphere that emphasizes professional standards, active inquiry, constructive debate, personal growth, and meaningful interaction among docents, staff, and the public.
 3. Provide an "open door" policy and time for one-on-one appointments with staff for docents seeking assistance, guidance, or wanting to discuss any ideas or concerns and working with visitors who have disabilities and/or specific needs.
 4. Upon request, provide a job reference based on the docent's Museum service.
- **I have read my position description and volunteer agreement** and agree to these terms as a docent at Leonardo's Children's Museum beginning _____ and ending _____.
 - * I will make this personal commitment to enable the docent program to function effectively.

Docent:: _____ Date: _____

- * I have read the position description and volunteer agreement for a docent and agree to provide the support for docents working at Leonardo's Children's Museum.

Tracy Bittle: _____ Date: _____
Executive Director

Docent Information

"At Leonardo's, we enrich and inspire children of all ages by creating fun learning opportunities..."

Please take a few minutes to fill out this questionnaire.

We would like to utilize your time and talents effectively—while ensuring an enjoyable volunteer experience.

Name: _____ Address: _____ Date: _____

Phone: _____ Cell Other E-mail _____ Birthday _____

Emergency Contact _____ Phone: _____ Cell Other

Name of organization you represent (if any): _____

* Specific Days/ Times of your docent commitment: _____

* Do you have office experience? Yes No * Do you have computer experience? Yes No * Do you speak any languages other than English? Yes No

* Have you ever been a volunteer at Leonardo's before? Yes No If so, where have you worked and in what capacity?

* Any hobbies, skills, interests, etc. that you would be willing to share knowledge about? _____

** Do you find any of the following easy or fun to do?

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interacting with visitors to the museum | <input type="checkbox"/> Assisting with Events | <input type="checkbox"/> Running Errands and Delivering Flyers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Office Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Assisting with Groups and Field |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tinkering | <input type="checkbox"/> Garden Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Moving Crates, Tables, etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Animals | | |

PERSONAL MEDICAL FORM AND RELEASE STATEMENT

Participant Name: _____

IN AN EMERGENCY NOTIFY

Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____ Cell Other

EMERGENCY MEDICAL INFORMATION

Please list any medical conditions or physical limitations we need to be concerned of:

PARTICIPANT STATEMENT

I voluntarily assume all risks associated with activities of the Leonardo's Children's Museum Volunteer Service Program and agree to hold harmless Leonardo's Children's Museum and their employees from any and all liability or claims which may arise from my participation in these volunteer activities. In the event of an accident or illness from such activities, I authorize that measures are taken by the judgement of medical personnel.

Please return application to:

Front Desk

200 East Maple Ave, Enid, Ok 73701 _____

Email volunteer@leonardos.org or call (580) 233 - 2787