

Working with Children

Introduction

An effective Junior Ranger program will:

- Get the children interested in the subject
- Teach them about the subject
- Involve them in the subject
- Encourage their stewardship in our parks and at home
- Make them want to know more!

There are many ways to lead a Junior Ranger program, but some styles will make more of an impact on kids than others. Probably the least effective style is the lecture format.

Children in the 7 to 12 age range generally won't be able to follow a long stream of adult lecturing without getting lost. Moreover, children who learn by listening alone will retain much less of the content of the program than they would if they were taking a more active role in learning (asking and answering questions or taking part in activities).

A far more effective way of leading a Junior Ranger program is an inquiry-discussion format. The interpreter who uses questions and answers to lead a discussion draws on the child's natural curiosity and enthusiasm for new ideas and experiences. The effective leader of an inquiry-discussion will be open and responsive. He or she will be most likely, in this format, to change attitudes, since this format builds on the Junior Rangers' interests, perceptions, responses, and questions.¹

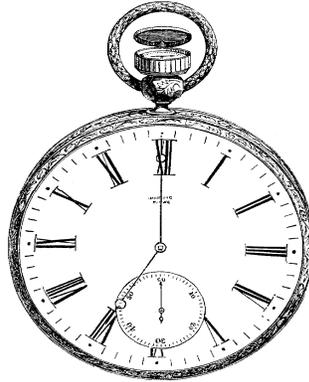
A cautionary note: When using the inquiry-discussion format, it is important for the leader to maintain control of the direction in which the discussion is going. To achieve this, the interpreter should direct the questions and answers toward the objectives of the session. Any material the leader needs to convey that cannot be presented in the inquiry-discussion format should be given concisely, enthusiastically, and at a level the group can understand.



¹ Information on interpretation styles is from *The Good Guide* by Alison L. Grinder and E. Sue McCoy. Scottsdale: Ironwood Press, 1985.

Tips from experienced program leaders:

- Remember to be accurate. If you don't know the answer to a question, admit it and discuss how you'll find out.
- If you enjoy what you're doing, the children probably will, too.
- Don't try to include too much in your program. It should not be more than one hour long.



Returning Children to Nature²

Paul, a fourth-grade student in San Diego, commented, “I like to play indoors better, ‘cause that’s where all the electrical outlets are.” His viewpoint is swiftly becoming the prevailing opinion among today’s children, rather than the exception. Children are no longer experiencing the wonder of nature the way they once were able to.

As the lifestyles of Americans become increasingly fast-paced and structured, spending time in nature has become a low priority for families. Tree fort building and exploratory expeditions have been replaced by soccer practice, music lessons and computer games. A 2002 British study discovered the average eight-year-old was better able to identify characters from the popular Japanese card trading game Pokémon than native species in their own community—Pikachu, Metapod, and Wigglytuff were names more familiar to them than otter, beetle, and oak tree. The combined impact of overdevelopment, increasing park rules, environmental and building regulations, community covenants, and fear of litigation is also sending a disconcerting message to children that free-range play in nature is no longer acceptable. As a result of this growing isolation from nature, children are beginning to suffer from what Richard Louv, in his book *Last Child in the Woods*, has termed “nature-deficit disorder.” This non-medical condition describes the human costs of alienation from nature, among them: diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illness.

In the last ten to fifteen years, in correlation with a decrease in children’s exposure to nature, medical studies have documented a large increase in childhood obesity and

² Richard Louv. *Last Child in the Woods*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 2005.

prescription drug treatment for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. According to a study done by the Center for Disease Control, the “U.S. population of overweight children between ages two and five increased by almost 36 percent from 1989 to 1999. And two out of ten of America’s children are clinically obese...In the United States, children ages six to eleven spend about thirty hours a week looking at a TV or computer monitor.” This study also found that the amount of television children watched directly correlated with measures of their body fat. Analyzing mental illnesses in children, a 2003 survey, published in the journal *Psychiatric Services*, found the rate at which American children are prescribed antidepressants almost doubled in five years; the steepest increase—66 percent—was among preschool children. While these statistics are shocking, scientists are beginning to recognize that nature is vital to the health and well-being of children, reducing the propensity for childhood obesity and minimizing the symptoms of ADHD.

Junior Ranger programs that get children active in and with nature, both physically and mentally, are important. Not only can the activities have a positive effect on the health of a child, but as an interpreter you can present opportunities for children to increase their awareness of nature and its wonders through their senses. Thomas Huxley made the insightful analogy, “To a person uninstructed in natural history, his country or sea-side stroll is a walk through a gallery filled with wonderful works of art, nine-tenths of which have their faces turned to the wall.” As part of the Junior Ranger Program, we need to facilitate guided discovery among the participants, so that when they reach that “work of art,” they are able to fully experience and appreciate it, to have that sense of awe and wonder.

On a family vacation to the Grand Canyon, Jared, a ninth-grader, was impressed by the beauty and majesty of the surroundings, “But after seeing the canyon from several different vantage points, I was ready to leave. Although the canyon was magnificent, I felt that I was not part of it—and without being part of it, it seemed little more than a giant hole in the ground.” On the same trip, Jared and his family were driven by a thunderstorm into the cliff dwellings at Walnut Canyon National Monument. Jared related, “We found shelter in one of the ancient Indian caves. Lightning lit up the canyon and the sound of thunder reverberated in the cave. As we stood waiting for the storm to end, my family and I talked about the Indians who once lived here. We discussed how they cooked in the caves, slept in the caves, and found shelter in the caves—just as we were doing...I finally felt that I was a part of nature.” The young need only a taste, a sight, a sound—or, as in Jared’s case, a lightning strike—to reconnect with the receding world of the senses. It should be our mission, as part of the Junior Ranger Program, to provide an opportunity where children might make the one discovery that captures their attention and creates a bond with nature.

One California survey found that more than eight of ten campers became interested in the outdoors when they were children. The Junior Ranger Program is your chance to get today’s youth hooked on nature and its exciting discoveries. It may be the only chance many children have to experience nature. Many of the games and activities

found throughout this handbook are ideal for stimulating the senses and nature awareness of a child.

Sample Program Format

I. Introduction

A. Warm-up

- Introduce yourself, giving some brief personal information.
- Say something about why you like what you do.
- Stress your personal interest in Junior Rangers.

B. Focus

- Introduce the topic for the day.
- Get the group focused on the topic with a thought-provoking question or an attention-getter.

C. Objectives

- Let the Junior Rangers know what they will be doing (hiking, drawing, playing games, etc.).
- Let them know what they will have learned by the end of the program.

II. Body

A. Inquiry/Discussion

- Interpreting with a question/answer (vs. lecture) format.

B. Guided Discovery

- Interpretation using games, activities, walks, etc: Putting the concept into action.

III. Conclusion

A. Application

- Discuss how the Junior Rangers can apply what they have learned while in the unit and at home.
- Encourage good stewardship of the parks.

B. Administration

- Stamp log books
- Announce next Junior Ranger session, campfires, nature walks, etc.

About Questions³

Effective interpretation using questions will lead from the simple to the complex. Keep in mind that while children of the Junior Ranger age are good at naming,

³ Information about questions has been adapted from *The Good Guide* by Alison L. Grinder and E. Sue McCoy. Scottsdale: Ironwood Press, 1985.

discriminating and classifying, they may have a more difficult time in making inferences and evaluating.

There are four main types of questions:

Memory Questions

There is one right answer. “How many . . .” or “Name the . . .”

Convergent Questions

There is a most appropriate or best answer.

Divergent Questions

Multiple answers are possible, and questions open ended. “What if . . .” or “Imagine that . . .”

Judgmental Questions

These questions get people to evaluate and choose, or to formulate values, opinions, or beliefs. Answers will be personal and unique.

Waiting for Answers

A 5-6 second or longer wait gives time for Junior Rangers to formulate a thoughtful reply. An unhurried attitude is important. If you get no response, consider restating the question or giving more information. Asking questions too rapidly may imply that no response is expected. Silence, while sometimes frightening for the interpreter, gives opportunity for contemplation and encourages comment.

Welcoming Questions

It is important to convey to the Junior Rangers that all questions are worthy of consideration and will be treated respectfully. Stress that questions are not impolite, will not waste time, and that there are no dumb questions.

Instead of asking questions the kids cannot answer, try giving them some information and then asking them to compare the information to another concept. Always make a positive comment that encourages participation, such as:

“Thank you for sharing that idea;” or
“That’s a really good insight.”

Validate the children by using their ideas in discussion:

“What Brandon was saying about rainforests affects us here in the U.S. as well.”

Directing Questions

If you do not get the answer you are hoping for, do not keep pursuing it until you get the right one. Rephrase the question, provide more information, or even give the answer yourself.

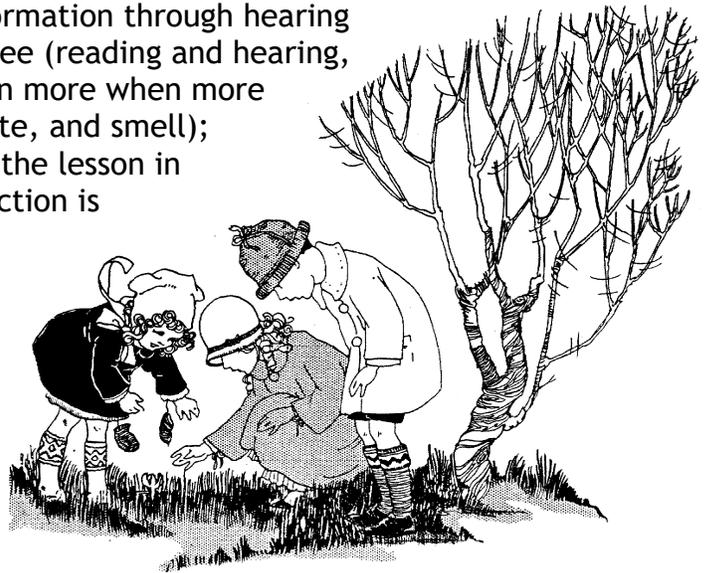
Acknowledge participants who give an unexpected answer by saying something like, “That’s a good thought” and redirecting the question or asking for more responses. If the answer is misleading, say something like, “I’m glad you said _____, because I bet a lot of people think that, but that’s not exactly it,” and then gently correct the child.

If the same people keep answering the questions, direct the next question to another person or ask for someone who has not answered yet.

Guided Discovery

One of the most effective ways to interpret to children is to include an activity that reinforces your message. Studies on memory have shown that children retain the least information when they receive the information through hearing only; they retain more when they hear and see (reading and hearing, visual aids, watching a skit); they retain even more when more senses are involved (the senses of touch, taste, and smell); and they remember most when they act out the lesson in some way. Discovering something through action is the most fun way to learn.

In addition to the Directed Activities section of the Handbook, you will find games and activities that reinforce the interpretation material in most subject sections. In addition to these, try to include role playing, nature walks and “hands-on” activities whenever you can.



Maintaining Order

Wendy Harrison (at Calaveras Big Trees State Park at the time of this writing) said, “The best defense against discipline problems is to have an interesting program and a sense of humor!” Since the length of a Junior Ranger segment is relatively short (30 minutes to 1 hour), disruptive behavior will not usually be a big problem. You will, however, occasionally have a child in your group who will draw attention away from

Junior Ranger Program Handbook: Working with Children

the program and toward himself. If you have this problem, experienced Junior Ranger leaders (Wendy Harrison, Stephanie Price, Stacey French, and others) have offered the following suggestions:

If some of the children talk while you are speaking, include them in the discussion by asking them a question. This lets them know you've noticed their talking, and gets them refocused on the topic. If you know them by name, you might say, "Why do you think plants have flowers, Cindy?" or simply, "A mortar and pestle were used to pound acorns. Right, Peter?"

Have back-up activities planned so that if you have a particularly energetic group you will be able to adapt your program to make it more active.

Before you begin your program, set up parameters for when talking will be allowed and when it will not. Tell the Junior Rangers that when you hold up your hand, that means "be silent." This signal is useful, for example, when a Junior Ranger is answering a question and other children are talking, or when the group is on a nature walk and you have spotted a deer.

Another approach is to use the energy of a disruptive child in a positive way. For example, on a hike you could have the child be the leader for awhile and then take turns so all the Junior Rangers have a chance to play "follow the leader." Another way you could solve the problem quickly would be to have the child participate in an impromptu role-play in front of the group. Giving a disruptive child something to do will usually give him the attention he wants while channeling his/her energy in a more positive direction.

If the problem continues, identify the behavior that is disrupting the group, and warn the offender that if the behavior continues, he or she will have to be removed from the group. That threat will usually be enough to curtail the behavior, but you may occasionally need to separate the child from the group until he or she is ready to participate in what the group is doing.

If you are firm about limiting the size of the group to fifteen, you will not only ensure that each participant has a chance to be involved, ask questions, and see and hear everything that is going on, but you will also reduce discipline problems by keeping the group at a manageable size.

The challenge of maintaining order in your group is knowing when a child's energy has crossed the line from exuberance to disturbance. Having just "escaped" from school for the summer, a child will not want to attend a program in which he or she is required to sit still, be quiet, and listen. However, if a child's energy swings too much to the other direction, to the point where he or she is disturbing the other children, the worst thing you can do is to ignore the behavior. If you allow behavior that is clearly disruptive and rude, the rest of the group will either resent the fact that you do not control the disruptive child or join in the disruptive behavior. In either case,

your program will have lost its effectiveness. Don't be afraid to use the authority you have as the leader if the quality of your program will be compromised by disruptive behavior.

Despite the occasional disruptive child, most Junior Ranger Program leaders find that children are too interested in the program and too eager to participate in the exciting discoveries you have planned for them to have any time to make trouble. If you plan your session so that the group is active and busy, you won't have many problems in this area.

How to Focus Kids' Attention

- Stay a child yourself.
- Remember that adults talk at 100-120 words a minute and think at 170—at that speed, it's hard for kids to stay interested.
- Children are students before they are born. They absorb information like a sponge. Their early development is in bits and pieces, but at age 8 or 9 the pieces come together.
- Be careful what you say and do around kids: often we teach children things we don't mean to.
- You will have the children for one hour. That single event could be something they remember all their lives.
- Include hands-on involvement whenever you can (feeling seaweed, grinding acorns, etc.).
- Ask questions to make children think and teach them to reason.
- Begin your program by talking about something they know. For example, compare interactions between people with interactions between animals. What do people need to survive? What do animals need to survive?
- Follow kids' energy and interest; find the teachable moment.
- Make discoveries; encourage them to look and find.
- Be enthusiastic; make nature study fun!
- Give kids recognition—it helps with problem children.

- Repetition of concepts is important; pick a few to stress. It's important to tie together what you find; bring each thing you see into the theme.
- Drama is important. When attention starts to wander, change your tone or the loudness of your voice; pull a surprise out of your pocket; act out what you're describing or grab a kid to help.
- When it comes to discipline, take it easy. Be able to laugh with and at the children and yourselves, but don't be afraid to tell children to stop doing any behavior which can harm them or the environment. You need to know that some children are trying for negative attention; help them discover something to make them look good in front of the others.

Ten Ways to Bore the Dickens Out of Children

1. Insist that they ignore the red-tailed hawk and pay attention to your lesson on decomposition.
2. Give them scientific names for everything and have children memorize them.
3. Talk incessantly and don't give children a chance to say anything.
4. Make them write a test on every topic you cover.
5. Make children understand how hopelessly we have polluted the environment.
6. Let thirty children run wild with no direction.
7. Tell them not to run today. Keep nagging about poor behavior.
8. Allow no jokes and no laughing.
9. Ask them not to touch anything.
10. Act bored yourself. Yawn a lot.



From Manure, Meadows, and Milkshakes. Jorgensen, Black and Hallesy. Los Altos, CA: Hidden Villa Environmental Education, 1986.

Including Children with Disabilities in the Junior Ranger Program ⁴

An awareness of the needs of children with disabilities will help you plan your program to include children who have visual, mobility, hearing, or mental impairments. Focus on what these children can do rather than what they can't, and how you can adapt your program to meet their special needs.

Mobility Impairments

Characteristics

Children with mobility challenges may require the use of wheelchairs, crutches, or canes; they may walk with difficulty, lack coordination, or may not have full use of their arms or hands. Children in wheelchairs will be concerned about steps, slippery surfaces, maneuvering through narrow spaces, going up and down steep paths, and moving over rough surfaces. Children who have difficulty walking may walk with aids such as crutches, canes, walkers, braces, or artificial limbs. Reduced agility, speed of movement, difficulty in balance, reduced endurance, or a combination of these may contribute to impaired mobility. These children will be concerned about steps or steep slopes, uneven walking surfaces, slippery surfaces, walks filled with debris, areas that collect standing water, sand, etc. Having to stand or walk for extended periods of time also presents a problem for many of these children.

Guidelines

The program should be held in a physically accessible location. There should be an accessible path of travel from camping or parking areas to program areas. Interpreters should be aware of pace in a conducted walk which includes wheelchair-using children. The interpreter should physically locate himself/herself next to the disabled child (or children) in the group to assure visual/auditory access to the interpretive message. Park staff should be familiar with how to provide safe assistance if needed to children who may be using wheelchairs.

Tips

- Review your program site and tour route. Make modifications in your walk to accommodate children who are unable to climb stairs or walk long distances, or who may need wider doors to allow for wheelchair passage, etc.
- Rough terrain may aggravate painful conditions, especially for some wheelchair-users. Rough terrain may also present tripping hazards to some children who use braces and artificial limbs. Review your site and trail with this in mind, then adjust your approach, the distance that you expect to travel, and your speed of travel.

⁴ Adapted from *All Visitors Welcome: Accessibility in State Park Interpretive Programs and Facilities*. California State Parks, Interpretation and Education Division, 2003.

- Allow your disabled children, who are aware of their own abilities, capabilities, and possible limitations, to make their own decisions about what they can or cannot do.
- Don't rule out games and activities without looking at all the possible approaches and alternatives.
- When offering assistance, ask the child exactly how you can help. Don't insist if your offer is declined—sometimes it isn't really necessary.
- Don't lean or automatically hold on to a child's wheelchair. It is part of the person's body and should be treated as such.
- Don't be sensitive about using words like “walking” or “running” with kids using wheelchairs. They use the same words.

Visual Impairments

Characteristics

There are many kinds of visual impairments, each with a wide range of ability, disability and limitation. A child described as legally blind may be able to read large print and ambulate without mobility aids in many or all situations, while another child might not have these skills. Children who were once able to see but have lost their sight may retain visual memory (concept of space, color, etc.), whereas those who have been blind from birth may have a different frame of reference for these same elements. Because of all the possible variations, it is difficult to generalize visual impairment into one problem with one solution.

Tips

- Plan activities that include several senses (i.e., touch, taste, sound, smell).
- Review the route of an interpretive trail and plan to describe points of interest with descriptive adjectives.
- If you are demonstrating a skill, allow the visually impaired child to hold your hands as you work. Explain clearly and in concrete terms what you are doing as you do it.
- If you distribute printed materials, describe what is on the materials for those who are unable to read it at the time you distribute it.
- Give clear verbal directions when moving from one area to another. “We are going to turn right and go down a flight of ten stairs to the living room area” is more helpful than “follow me to the living room area.”
- When approaching visually impaired children, introduce yourself and identify yourself as a California State Parks employee.
- It is appropriate to lightly touch the arm of a person who is blind after you speak so that person knows you are addressing him/her.
- Offer assistance if it seems necessary, but don't insist if your offer is declined. If your offer is accepted, ask the child to explain how you should help.
- Look at and speak directly to the blind or visually impaired child, not through a third person. Don't shout—use a normal tone and speed of voice.
- Don't avoid using the words “look,” “see,” or “blind.” Visually impaired kids use the same words.

- When guiding a child who is blind, offer your arm. Grabbing a blind child's arm to lead him/her is dangerous as well as frightening and even insulting. The blind child will walk about a half step behind you, following your motions. Be sure to identify steps, curbs, or obstacles which may be encountered.

Hearing Impairments

Characteristics

Hearing impairments range from mild hearing loss, which may be compensated by some kind of amplification, to total hearing loss.

Tips

- Face the light or sun as you are speaking. Light from the side or from behind you will cast shadows on your face, making speech reading difficult.
- Stand where everyone can see you and provide a clear view of your entire face and upper body. This is particularly helpful to hearing-impaired children who rely on body gestures and facial expressions as an aid to understanding what is being spoken. Keep your hands and visual aids that you may be holding away from your mouth as you speak.
- If at all possible, have a sign language interpreter available for programs. Remember that the sign language interpreter will be a few words behind, so speak accordingly.
- Speak expressively. Hearing-impaired children may rely on facial expressions, gestures, and body movements to understand you. However, be careful not to exaggerate or over-pronounce words, which will distort lip movements.
- Repeat questions or statements made by other people in the group. Remember that deaf persons are cut off from whatever happens outside their visual area.
- Get a deaf child's attention before speaking to him or her by a light tap on the shoulder, a wave, or other visual signal.
- Maintain eye contact when speaking with a deaf person. Even a slight turn of the head may make speech reading difficult.
- If a deaf visitor is accompanied by an interpreter, speak directly to the deaf person.



Developmentally Disabled/Learning Impairments

There are three general categories of mental disabilities: Developmentally Disabled, Learning Disability, and Emotional Disturbance. While common behavioral characteristics may sometimes be found among members of these groups, each disability is marked by distinctive features and should be considered separate from the others.

Some of the most severe barriers a person with a mental, learning, or emotional disability faces are attitudinal barriers. They are commonly least understood by the general public. This often results in apprehension and avoidance of persons with this type of disability. Consequently, the mentally, learning, or emotionally disabled person will frequently keep his often “invisible” disability to himself.

Developmentally Disabled Characteristics

In children described as developmentally disabled, learning develops more slowly than normal. Reasoning and judgment capabilities may also develop at a slower pace. For most children with mental retardation, it is not that the ability to learn is missing, but the speed and ease at which things are learned is slower. Developmentally disabled people are often over-protected and discouraged from exploring the world or interacting with others. Often they are limited to participating in programs that are designed “especially for their needs.”

Tips

- Allow participants to set their own pace. Most children with a development disability learn just like everyone else but usually at a slower pace.
- Use as much demonstration as possible with your verbal explanations. Repeat directions or information as often as necessary. Reinforce your information with tactile experiences and media aids. Don't rely solely on verbal methods.
- When talking, keep your concepts clear and concise using concrete rather than abstract examples. Try to repeat concepts using different words and phrase them in different ways to facilitate understanding.
- Be sensitive to interest or lack of interest in your program and be flexible enough to change or modify your program accordingly.
- Be aware that some children with a development disability may be taking medication which may make them sensitive to long exposure to the sun. Plan your program so shade or shelter is available.
- Be aware that some children with a development disability may have problems with coordination, balance, agility, strength, or stamina.
- Don't “talk down” to the developmentally disabled child, but keep your talk on an understandable level.
- Program content for developmentally disabled children should be at a level which will facilitate comprehension. Interpretive information should be delivered concisely in short segments, encourage participation, and be reinforced through repetition.

Learning Disability Characteristics

Researchers estimate that 2.9 million school age children have learning disabilities.⁵ The 1968 National Advisory Committee on Handicapped Children stated that “Children with special learning disabilities exhibit a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written language. These may be manifested in disorders of listening, thinking, talking, reading, writing, spelling, or arithmetic.” A learning disability can take many forms, but unlike mental retardation it is generally confined to one aspect of learning. Because there are no reliable clues to indicate a person may be learning disabled, any programmatic adjustment for this group will be largely dependent on sensitive and alert interpreters who can adjust presentations to meet individual needs.

Tips

- Review your programs. As much as possible, provide demonstrations as well as verbal interpretation. Use media aids to reinforce your information.
- Don't interpret a lack of response from a learning-disabled child to be rudeness. In some cases a learning-disabled child may have a processing problem which might affect social skills which in turn may produce unconventional responses.
- You may find that some learning-disabled children may seem to be standing too close to you or staring at you as you talk. This action is not uncommon for some learning-disabled children as they attempt to block out competing noise or activity and concentrate on what you are saying.
- Difficulties in coordination are a major problem for many children with learning disabilities. Therefore, fine motor tasks such as picking up a pebble or handling a moving insect may be difficult. Balance may also be a problem and interpreters should exercise care in moving a group through an area requiring balance.

Emotional Disturbance Characteristics

Like other mental disabilities, emotional disturbance defies easy and specific definition. It may be said that, in general, emotionally disturbed children may display an inability to concentrate, an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships, inappropriate behavior or feelings under normal conditions and, frequently, a general, pervasive mood of unhappiness.

Tips

- Accept participants as people and don't expect violent or unpleasant behavior.
- Be supportive and friendly. Remember that children with emotional impairments may be very sensitive to stress and new environments.
- Be enthusiastic about your program, while maintaining a position of authority and respect.
- Children with emotional impairments may become frustrated easily. Activities that ensure success for each participant are important.
- Choose program activities that promote cooperation between individuals to achieve common goals.

⁵ Statistic from National Center for Learning Disabilities. www.nclld.org.

Junior Ranger Program Handbook: Working with Children

- Encourage group members to actively participate, but do not pressure them. Choose activities that allow opportunities for spectators as well as active participation.
- Allow participants to choose the activities that they would like to do. Don't let your expectations and fears limit the opportunities you provide.
- Some participants may be taking medication which may affect their responses. They may appear to be uninterested or unable to understand your program. Relax and work with them at their own pace.

General Tips for Interpreting to Children with Mental Disabilities

- Flexibility is essential. You may need to change or modify elements of the program on the spot for a variety of reasons.
- Program content for learning-disabled or emotionally disturbed children does not have to be at a lower comprehension level. Focus should be instead on the best method of communication to enhance comprehension for a particular individual.
- Demonstrate specific concepts rather than verbalize.
- Engage as many senses as possible in order to involve participants actively.
- Use as many touchable items as possible. Keep information concrete rather than abstract (use materials that are visible as a point of reference).
- Use repetition to reinforce important points.
- Repeat concepts using different words and rephrase the interpretive message in different ways.
- By asking the participants to rephrase concepts, the interpreter can assess the group's comprehension level and can change his/her approach if necessary.

Needs of Special Audiences

Audience	Characteristics	Special Needs	Interpretive Requirements
Visually Impaired	The may range from those whose vision has been corrected by glasses to those who “see” by hearing and touch.	Address these children directly, not through another person. Provide descriptions of objects, scenes, etc. Ask what help they want if you are uncertain.	Involve these children via handling of objects.
Hearing Impaired	Almost 4% of our population suffers from hearing impairment. Although many of these are older people, many children have partial to total hearing impairment.	These children need to see the face of the interpreter. They need to see objects and be given visual outlines.	Include these children by keeping your hands away from your mouth when speaking. Face the visitor. Repeat important points and questions. Speak slowly.
Mobility Impaired	Those who must use a wheelchair, crutches, leg braces, or walkers and canes in moving.	To be allowed equal access.	Limit walks to areas that are accessible. Avoid steep slopes and rough terrain.

Adapted from The Interpreter's Guidebook by Kathleen Regnier, Michael Gross, and Ron Zimmerman. Stevens Point, WI: UW-SP Foundation Press, 1992.

Interpreting to Minorities and Non-English Speakers

The United States as a whole is composed of many different ethnic groups. All of these groups desire and deserve to have their voices heard through and within park sites. Audiences bring various meanings to the resource and often feel strongly about the story. Their values, traditions, and experiences all shape how they view and relate to the site. To facilitate a connection between the visitor and the resource an interpreter must be knowledgeable about the site, the different cultural and ethnic groups represented there, and their values and traditions. Incorporation of this information into programs, or the involvement of an ethnic group in the interpretation of their own culture, will not only lead to a richer interpretation of the site, but also will attract and reach a wider audience.

Changing population and visitor demographics present additional challenges to interpreters as an increasing number of park visitors are limited or non-English speakers. Even if no language interpreter is available, non-English speakers can still be included in the Junior Ranger program. You will be amazed by how much non-English speakers can learn from an English-speaking interpreter. Through the use of visual aids, hand gestures, and hands-on activities, you can convey quite a bit of information. Logbooks and Adventure Guides in Spanish are also now available.

Tips

- Demonstrate specific concepts rather than verbalizing them. Keep information concrete rather than abstract (use materials that are visible as a point of reference).
- Involve as many senses as possible in order to involve participants actively.
- Use standard English and avoid using slang.
- Try to interpret through your body language as well as your voice.
- Use pantomime. It is fun and often engages the group to try it themselves.
- Build a library of foreign words or phrases that pertain to your topic. Keep them on notecards and refer to them when appropriate.
- Use as many touchable items as possible.
- Use clear visual aids (photographs, drawings, charts, maps, etc.) as much as possible to illustrate your points.

Junior Ranger Cub Program

Some parks have developed Junior Ranger Cub programs geared to children under the age of 7. During the presentation of the park's Junior Ranger programs, it was found that younger children were attending with their older siblings. This appeared to be a problem for several reasons:

- The younger children did not have the attention span for the prepared program and were becoming disruptive.

Junior Ranger Program Handbook: Working with Children

- The older siblings could not focus on the program because they were attempting to contain their younger siblings.
- Younger children were not physically able to participate in hikes with the older children, resulting in very short hikes or canceling the day's program.
- Parents who brought the younger child usually either participated in the program for the child, or overshadowed their older child, who felt it was no longer "his/her" program.

To try to resolve some of these issues, a program called the Junior Ranger "Cubs" was created just for the younger children and their parents. Several guidelines were developed to try to ensure the program's success.

- The program would be for children 4 to 6 years old.
- Parents or older teens would accompany the children, not older children.
- The program would be approximately 20 minutes long, changing focus every 7 minutes or so.
- The program would be very visual and hands-on.
- Teaching goals would be simple.
- Learning goals would be focused on the local park experience.

So, what can you teach small children in 20 minutes about the park and their role in exploring, protecting, and appreciating it? Keep the program simple. Here are some examples that Gail Berry developed for the San Simeon Junior Ranger Cub Program:

Example 1

1. Teach a simple song about nature with hand gestures. I have taught the "Bats eat Bugs" song (Appendix B: Directed Activities Handouts) and made up my own gestures.
2. We then go on a very short walk around the maintenance shop and campfire center to look for places where bats may be sleeping. You may not see any bats, but it gives the children a visual sense of where the bats are during the day. I then encourage them to bring their parents to the campfire center in the evening and watch the bats. (I know the bats are out every summer evening around the campfire center).
3. We then go back to the campfire center and I have pictures of bats to color and take home (I provide the crayons), as well as stuffed bats to play with. While the kids are coloring and playing with the stuffed bats, I ask if anyone can remember one new thing they learned about bats, or if they have any questions.

Example 2

1. Another program I do is wild animals. I bring animal mounts and skins that the kids can touch. Each animal is introduced and we talk about size and color. I bring out the stuffed animals with similar coloring as well as brightly colored stuffed animals. We talk about real and pretend.
2. Next I hide the stuffed animals—bright colored and life-like—in the bushes and trees around the campfire center. The kids are not watching. We

then look around and try to find the animals. The kids collect the animals and bring them back. We talk about camouflage and why animals would want to blend in to their surroundings.

3. We then have animal coloring sheets. The kids can decide to color the animals in real-life color, or in bright colors. While they are coloring, we talk about safety, pets versus wild animals, and feeding wild animals.

Again, keep it simple and change focus and activity every 6 or 7 minutes.

There are some programs where I can combine “Cubs” and regular Junior Rangers. When I do a scavenger hike, the kids are given lists and we walk through the park trying to locate things like a blue tent, a pine tree, a piece of trash. These are marked off the list as we see them. This is an easy program for the cubs and parents because we are moving and continually changing focus. The older kids like the game of finding things and it really gets them into observing what is going on in the park.

Other thoughts: I usually schedule the “Cubs” the 20 minutes before the regular Junior Ranger program. Then they are “done” when the older children arrive. Always have something for the kids to take home with them, whether it is a scavenger hunt list, a plastic cup and screen bug jar, or a coloring sheet. This way they can share their experience with other family members.

Suggested Resources: Working with Children

Alderson, William T. and Shirley P. Low. *Interpretation of Historic Sites*. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1976. The authors travelled around the U.S. and Canada, and present in this book the best of the interpretation they saw.

Beck, Larry and Ted Cable. *Interpretation for the 21st Century*. Champaign, IL: Sagamore Publishing, 1998. The authors update and build upon the interpretive philosophies of Freeman Tilden and Enos Mills, and present fundamental principles in a modern context.

Cornell, Joseph. *Sharing Nature with Children*. Second Ed. Nevada City, CA: DAWN Publications, 1998. Written by a leading environmental educator, *Sharing Nature with Children* shares some of the environmental games Joseph Cornell uses in his children's interpretive programs.

Cornell, Joseph. *Sharing the Joy of Nature*. Ananda Publications, 1989. A complement to *Sharing Nature with Children* with additional environmental games to use in children's interpretive programs.

Junior Ranger Program Handbook: Working with Children

Grater, Russell K. *The Interpreter's Handbook: Methods, Skills, and Techniques*. Southwest Parks and Monuments Association, 1976. A veteran interpreter shares interpretive techniques that have proved themselves through the years.

Grinder, Alison L. and E. Sue McCoy. *The Good Guide: A Sourcebook for Interpreters, Docents and Tour Guides*. Scottsdale, AZ: Ironwood Press, 1985. Good information on interpretation, particularly the section "How People Learn." Discusses stages of learning development, and is a good reference for finding out what methods of presentation are most effective for interpreting to children at various stages of development.

Gross, Phyllis. *Teaching Science in an Outdoor Environment*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.

Ham, Sam H. *Environmental Interpretation: A Practical Guide for People with Big Ideas and Small Budgets*. Golden, CO: North American Press, 1992. A "how-to" book focusing on different aspects of interpretation. "Being able to communicate well with limited resources" is the author's primary concern.

Interpretation for Disabled Visitors in the National Park System. National Park Service, Special Programs and Populations Branch, 1986. A detailed, informative reference. Although some of the chapters have been incorporated into this handbook, the book provides more information and diagrams, and is recommended.

Jorgensen, Eric, Trout Black, and Mary Hallesy. *Manure, Meadows, and Milkshakes: Hidden Villa Environmental Education*. Ed. Dr. Elizabeth Hone and Eric Jorgensen. 2nd. Ed. Los Altos, CA: The Trust for Hidden Villa, 1986. Fun ideas for environmental education. Includes lots of activities and games.

Knudson, Douglas, Ted Cable, and Larry Beck. *Interpretation of Cultural and Natural Resources*. State College, PA: Venture Publishing, Inc., 1995. An excellent general reference on interpretation.

Krumbein, William J. and Linda Levya. *The Interpreters' Guide*. Sacramento: Department of Parks and Recreation, 1977. This booklet addresses general interpretive techniques for campfire programs, leading hikes and tours, interpreting to children, and interpreting to the disabled. Although this guide is out of print, it is available in most park libraries.

Lewis, William J. *Interpreting for Park Visitors*. Eastern Acorn Press, 1980. This book was written by a career-seasonal employee of the National Park Service who was also a Professor of Communication at the University of Vermont. He combines an academic knowledge of the theories of communication, many years of personally communicating with park visitors, and a wide experience helping other interpreters communicate more effectively.

Junior Ranger Program Handbook: Working with Children

Louv, Richard. *Last Child in the Woods*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 2005. An excellent book that addresses why it is important to reach today's children who have little or no contact with nature.

McDonald, Linda L. *Aiming for Excellence: an Evaluation Handbook for Interpretive Services in California State Parks*. Illustrated by James A. Maddox. Sacramento: California State Parks, Interpretation and Education, 2000. This handbook presents measures and measurement tools to help assess the quality of the department's interpretive offerings. It also contains helpful guidelines for evaluation planning, an explanation of data-gathering principles, official policy information, resource lists, and sample evaluation forms.

Porter, Erika R. *All Visitors Welcome: Accessibility in State Park Interpretive Programs and Facilities*. Third Edition. Sacramento: Department of Parks and Recreation, 2003. This handbook has three purposes: to inform park staff about access requirements, to explain common disabilities, and to provide guidelines for making interpretive services more accessible to everyone.

Regnier, Kathleen, Michael Gross, and Ron Zimmerman. *The Interpreter's Guidebook: Techniques for Programs and Presentations*. Stevens Point, WI: UW-SP Foundation Press, 1992. An excellent, easy to read interpreter's guide. Filled with pictures and useful ideas for all kinds of interpretation.

Sharpe, Grant W. *Interpreting the Environment*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1976. Over twenty nationally recognized experts contributed to this fine book.

Tilden, Freeman. *Interpreting Our Heritage*. 3rd Edition. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977. A classic, written by the pioneer of interpretive philosophy and the recognized father of modern park interpretation. Although it was first published in 1957, this book is still relevant today, since it is not about the methodology of interpretation, but rather the guiding principles and underlying philosophy of the interpreter's art and craft.

Van Matre, Steve. *Earth Education: A New Beginning*. Warrenville, IL: The Institute for Earth Education, 1990. This book proposes a new direction for environmental education called the "earth education path," which aims to accomplish what environmental education set out to do, but didn't: to help people improve upon their cognitive and affective relationship with the earth's natural communities and life support systems, and begin crafting lifestyles that will lessen their impact upon those places and processes on behalf of all the planet's inhabitants.

Ward, Carolyn J. and Alan E. Wilkinson. *Basic Interpretation Learning System: Making Connections: the Essence of Interpretation*. Sacramento: Department of Parks and Recreation, 2003. An important resource for all state park interpreters.

Other Sources of Information

North American Association of Environmental Education. www.naaee.org.

INSERT *ANIMAL LIFE* TAB HERE