

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Personal Guide

Developing a Style • Audience
Interaction • Verbal Communication •
NonVerbal Communication: What We
Don't Say

Art objects, historic objects and unique environments communicate to viewers even without an interpreter. The meaning of the experience, however, depends upon each viewer's prior experience and knowledge. When we, as tour guides or docents, communicate exhibit information, we must consider (1) the nature of the exhibit, (2) the familiarity of objects to visitors, (3) the ways information is presented to visitors and (4) the interpretations visitors make of the message. Tour guides and visitors must share an understanding of the "communication system" in order to exchange information efficiently and effectively with one another (Winner, 1984). In Chapter Seven we deal with how we communicate information, verbally and nonverbally, and how we can help visitors understand it correctly.

When we communicate, we must be sensitive to cues important in interpersonal interaction. How successfully we recognize and utilize these cues determines whether or not we convey our message. Each of us can cultivate a personal style of interaction by mastering verbal and nonverbal

communication skills. Verbal communication can be garbled by word choice, bad organization, or poor delivery. Nonverbal communication "sends" subtle but powerful messages. While we speak, our facial and body gestures may emphasize or conflict with our spoken words. A well-modulated voice and relaxed posture will underscore a message. We should use audience reactions to evaluate ourselves and our tour effectiveness. We must be confident and sufficiently flexible to alter the tour plan wherever it seems appropriate. When verbal and nonverbal messages are coordinated and presented in understandable fashion, tour guides and visitors alike are able to use the same social benchmarks for communicating with one another.

The goal of Chapter Seven is to help interpreters become better "performers" via style and technique so that the information they offer during tours will become "real and meaningful" to visitors. "Style" may be defined as the manner in which our personality and behavior affect the tour. The way in which we communicate, how we appear to the visitor, and the "body language" we use influence the success of a tour. "Technique" is defined as the format, content, and other related activities associated with the presentation. There is no single definition of the perfect tour, but definitely there are methods that can improve the quality of a presentation. With practice, it is not difficult to combine "style" and "technique;" to be in control of both, is the hallmark of "the good guide."

DEVELOPING A STYLE

Should tour guides be concerned about how visitors regard them? It is not necessary to appear "learned" before groups, to be "the leader," or to impress other docents. Personal style, however, can be improved consciously through rehearsal of various techniques of communication, both visual and verbal. Style can be improved by watching performers in action, live or on television, or by noting the style of other successful tour guides. Sometimes it may be helpful for those who have "quiet" personalities to adopt some of the skills of the extrovert when touring; perhaps an expressive voice and more appropriate body language should be acquired, without being too unnatural. The essence of a successful interpretive "performance" stems from a sincere, personal style.

THE GUIDE AS A PERFORMING ARTIST

Guides, like good teachers and actors, interact with an audience. They present exhibit interpretations in a specific setting. At times, tour guides must feel they are on stage, performing for visitors. Since interpretation is an art, guides really are actors. The "performance" is intended to inspire, enthuse, and inform the audience about the subject. However,

guides must not simply deliver a soliloquy and wait for applause. Effective communication with audiences involves more than memorized phrases spoken in a prescribed manner. Stimulating visitor enthusiasm and interest is the goal of the presentation; whether the goal is realized will be influenced greatly by style of presentation. Good teachers know that their attitudes influence student attitudes. Maintaining a high level of enthusiasm all day in a classroom can be demanding, but it is rewarding for both teacher and students. Similarly, in a museum, guides must sustain a high level of enthusiasm, for visitors deserve stimulating presentations.

We need to learn special techniques to involve our audiences, just as performing artists learn to project energy and draw in their audiences. The art of interpretation is comparable to any other performing art: skill in performance is acquired via experience, study, and observation. Guides, as interpreters, are the artists who make artifacts meaningful to visitors. The importance of the art of interpretation is described well by Lessinger and Gillis (1976):

Everything you wear, the house you live in, the cars you ride in—even the space capsule our astronauts went to the moon in—all of these were transferred from the abstraction of an idea into visualizations which enabled the abstract to be transformed into the real. Between the inventor and the manufacturer, there is an artist. Remember that, for we are living in a civilization which relies on art to act as the medium through which ideas are changed into objects. (p. 13)

REHEARSAL

The techniques actors use in preparation for performances can serve guides successfully, too. Rehearsal is the most important activity for both performing artists and tour guides. Preparation of the material, planning of the techniques or activities to be used, and designing ways to move the group from place to place, are part of tour readiness and rehearsal. Rehearsal is essential for dealing with stage fright, a disease shared by beginning actors and beginning guides! The only handicap to a rehearsal is lack of an audience, because for actors and guides alike, the presence and response of an audience can be inspiring and motivating.

MENTAL REHEARSAL

Speaking, moving, and interacting with the group in one's imagination can be extremely helpful. It is possible to rehearse the entire tour, imagining reactions to various situations, problems that might arise, and answers to questions. Tour guides should begin by planning how a specific group will be greeted (visualize the group's size, average age, etc.). Nothing in the tour should be left to chance. How will the group be moved into the gallery? Will they sit or stand in a specific place? One should visualize the space. Has the tour been planned so that all can see and hear?

How will the discussion go—one should imagine talking and asking questions, waiting for responses, and how replies will be made. What activities have been planned? Are there instructions that should be given before the group moves at will? How will they be brought back together? If pencils and paper are used, will the group have directions for their use? We can imagine our facial expressions, posture, and gestures as we walk through the tour. Finally, how can group reactions be encouraged through improvements in our voice quality, gestures, and questions?

VERBAL REHEARSAL

An actual run-through of a tour, using questions, stories and all planned events, before friends or fellow docents (without an audience) is helpful. If the practice audience understands the rehearsal plan and offers advice, such a rehearsal of verbal material can be valuable. Often the performer-guide can only "come to life" when interacting with "real" visitors. There is no substitute for the inspiration and challenge of a live audience, eager for a satisfying experience in the museum setting. We learn quickly which verbal styles work best for us by touring many groups in a reasonably short amount of time. (Perhaps beginning guides would benefit if allowed to conduct tours frequently.) Practice audiences or observation of other guides is helpful, but they cannot substitute for first-hand experience.

Tour guides, however, should avoid memorizing the tour or presenting it verbatim to either their mock or real audiences. Rote presentations destroy rapport with a group and deny visitors spontaneity of interaction.

AUDIENCE INTERACTION

It is important for us to remember that touring involves interaction. Quality of interaction affects whether our interpretation is enthusiastic and whether visitors learn meaningfully at appropriate levels of understanding. To evaluate quality of interaction, tour guides must monitor visitors by watching their body language and facial expressions, by listening to their questions and comments, and by being flexible enough to alter aspects of the tour plan to meet their needs. "The mastery of content should be matched with an equal mastery of presentation" (Lessinger and Gillis, 1976, p. 14).

LEADERSHIP

Throughout our school years, teachers have traditionally assumed leadership roles. Visitors tend to treat guides similarly; they see them in charge of the group as knowledgeable "teachers." When leading groups,

guides should accept the authority role willingly. If an audience perceives fear in a leader, the leader's credibility suffers. Fears common among most beginning guides must be put aside. Much of the anxiety among tour guides is due to self-doubt and insecurity about what the visitors will think of them. They may worry about how they look, whether they have enough information to answer questions, whether the group will prove hostile or restless, or how they will handle problems. Rehearsal is the best strategy for overcoming such fears and for gaining self-confidence.

Tour guides project their fears through the different ways in which they communicate with visitors. The worst aspect of fear is the inhibition it produces. Fear affects all aspects of delivery—voice, posture, memory, energy level, and so on, and guides should learn every technique possible for overcoming fears that might hinder a tour. Otherwise visitors may feel uncomfortable, which in turn, might ruin the museum experience for them.

SPACE AND DISTANCE

Visitors to museums, especially adults, usually stand six to eight feet away from the tour guide who is speaking to them. This "social" distance contributes to the image of the guide as a formal leader. It is a good idea to reduce the space between visitors and oneself by stepping forward two or three feet, for it is easier to make eye contact from closer range and to promote a sense of intimacy with the group. With groups of young children, tour guides can sit, kneel, or stand so that they can look directly into their eyes. It is also acceptable to touch younger children on the shoulder, especially when such gestures are part of one's personal style. Sometimes a light touch establishes personal contact and settles squirmy, inattentive youngsters.

When a group is seated, guides can move about freely, speaking to the group from many locations, but they must be careful not to obstruct the visitors' views of the collection. When groups disperse to look at an exhibit individually, guides might walk around to encourage visitors to ask questions that they might otherwise be reluctant to ask. Visitors find their museum experiences especially satisfying when they have opportunity for individual and group contact with guides.

TWO-WAY FEEDBACK

Feedback moves from visitors to guides and from guides to visitors. It can tell us, by a number of cues, how well we are doing in inspiring visitors and in communicating information to them. As we observe visitors during touring, we can note whether they seem critical of our delivery and style. Are they interested, or are they simply pretending to be interested? Do they appear distracted? Guides also can enhance their contact with audiences by offering them feedback. They should react with constructive, helpful responses to visitor questions and comments. Positive

feedback reinforces visitors' interest in participating. People think that their questions and comments are of value and that they should be treated with respect.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Verbal communication is complex. As the guide thinks, thoughts are translated into words, and it is only the words that are communicated to visitors. The visitors, as listeners, in turn, consider the words and relate them to their experiences and knowledge. As straightforward as this seems, many disconnected areas of person-to-person communication may arise. Some common problems are listed below:

1. The presentation may not be organized properly or be offered in simple, clearly understood sentences.
2. The speaker and listeners may not share common understanding of either the subject or the words being used.
3. The listeners may fail to understand some of the words because they are pronounced incorrectly.
4. The speaker may express words and ideas too rapidly for the listeners to follow.
5. The listeners may not be able to hear.
6. The listeners may not be paying attention.

Guides should ask themselves, therefore, the following questions:

1. What are the characteristics of listeners for this tour?
2. Am I assuming too much knowledge on the part of the listeners?
3. What thoughts do I want to put into words?
4. Are my sentences easy for listeners to think about and understand?
5. Are my statements complete sentences?
6. Do the words I use say what I really mean?
7. Will my words mean something to the listeners?
8. Should I define any of the words in my sentence?
9. Will I pronounce all my words clearly and correctly?

SAYING WHAT WE MEAN

Today, unfortunately, many persons often mumble, abbreviate, and use repetitious, meaningless words and phrases. The result is often incomprehensible, disconnected, and ungrammatical. The frequent use of "you know," "er," "um," "like," and "basically" are disastrous for public speakers, but less offensive in personal conversation. Phrases like "I think" and "sort of" make it appear that the speaker is uncertain about facts. Catch words change often in the popular vernacular, and although these words demonstrate to young people the tour guide is "with it," they

may confuse visitors in general. Furthermore, tour guides sometimes lose their train of thought in using unfamiliar, descriptive adjectives. A recent study, for example, found that as many as 28% of the respondents at an art lecture did not know the terms and concepts presented (Fischer, 1984). The lesson here is that, whenever possible, familiar words should be used.

SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Tour guides should think carefully about sentence structure. They might practice using complete, reasonably brief sentences that make their point precisely. Visitors find it more difficult to listen and translate words into meaning than to read and translate them into meaning. Written words can be read and re-read until they are understood. Practice is the best method for improving one's verbal communication skills. The best sentences are short.

When speaking, it is better for guides to work from an outline than a script. The presentation is likely to be more spontaneous. The outline encourages natural ways of speaking that reflect each tour guide's own personality. Rehearsal of the tour outline is essential in improving sentence structure. Taping several versions of the tour and listening to one's own sentences is especially helpful. Guides can think about what they want the visitor to know, and they can construct sentences accordingly. It is usually necessary to elaborate on various facts, and when sentences containing "nuggets" of information are brief and easily restated, visitors are more likely to remember the information. The interpretation of specific aspects of subject matter in the museum setting calls for specific, clearly stated sentences.

THE RIGHT WORDS

Although the tour outline may be carefully planned, guides should be as spontaneous as possible when speaking to visitors. Unpredictable circumstances often arise during open discussion, which may leave guides with a loss for words. Guides cannot know everything, and should not be afraid to say "I don't know." Naturally, memory can also fail, leaving guides without specific facts when they are needed. When a loss of words occurs, guides should admit it forthrightly in a normal, conversational manner. Fortunately, effective coping with the questions and comments of visitors increases with touring experience.

SPEAKING IN PUBLIC

Almost any voice can be developed and strengthened into a public speaking voice through practice in projection and enunciation. It is essential for guides to project (make the voice heard at a distance without yelling or changing its quality) so that the people in the back of a group can hear them. Nothing is more discouraging to visitors than to have to struggle to hear an interesting presentation. This problem is the primary reason that

tour groups break up and drift away from their guides.

An appropriate voice level not only helps visitors stay interested; it can also help in controlling large or restless groups. Along with the quality of projection, however, tour guides need as well to change the pitch of their voices throughout the tour. Changing the tonal quality of the voice offers interesting variation, and prevents falling into a monotone, or speaking on the same "note," or level, all of the time. When there is a need to be emphatic, a voice change is important, as it causes people to become attentive.

It is helpful for tour guides to record their voices—to analyze critically projection, pitch, conversational habits, and overall quality. One might try reading conversationally from a book with some dialogue in it. Special qualities of one's voice, such as nasal tones, whining, or monotone tendencies, can be detected on recordings. Some women's voices are "light" or "high" in pitch. This is fine for conversation, but should be altered for projection. Tour guides should not be too harshly critical of themselves, however, because most of us do not find listening to our own voices very pleasant.

An interesting technique for using one's voice to keep a group's attention is to insert a rising inflection at the end of important sentences. This technique has been used by orators for many years and it is used effectively today by public speakers to sustain interest. It suggests that there is a comma at the end of the sentence and it draws people's attention to what is being said. It functions like a silent "and."

The following exercises are offered as helpful techniques tour guides might adopt for improving voice quality and projection. Such improvement also contributes to development of positive self-image.

Posture and the voice

When standing in a relaxed posture, one's feet should be slightly apart (aligned with the pelvic bones), knees relaxed, and weight slightly forward on the balls of the feet. (This requires flat shoes.) Weight should be evenly distributed on both feet. Weight distribution can be tested by "bouncing" lightly on the balls of the feet, keeping the knees flexed. One's rib cage should be elevated slightly, with shoulders back, but not strained, and arms hanging loosely at one's sides. This posture will improve voice quality, allow for better projection, and also will build self-confidence. Those who practice it can concentrate on the tour and forget how they "look," for good posture projects a positive image of personality. Problems to watch for: locked knees, weight unevenly distributed over one hip, slumped abdomen and chest, and head thrust forward. Not only will these affect voice quality, they may eventually cause physical discomfort.

Voice support

Practice contraction of the abdominal muscles (those that stretch

horizontally and vertically across the abdomen and are attached to the back). One should pull in and tighten these muscles while breathing normally.

Breathing

While breathing, the diaphragm (near the upper abdomen, just under the rib cage) should go in and out. One's chest should not go up and down. (Singers learn to use the diaphragm for voice support and control.) When we sleep, we breathe naturally with the diaphragm. When only the lungs are used, the chest moves up and down in shorter, more frequent movements. When the diaphragm is used, air can be released slowly while talking, which means that more breath is available. A good test of proper breathing is to lie down, relax, and breathe normally. By placing one's hand just below the rib cage, one can practice breathing with the diaphragm. Soon it will be second nature.

Speaking

While breathing with the diaphragm and standing correctly, one should speak a sentence in a normal, conversational tone. Next, practice the same sentence by consciously lowering the voice and projecting it forcefully. We may think of this technique as "pushing" the voice, without shouting, toward either the back wall of the room or speaking to someone who is at a distance.

One should imagine that words are coming from the diaphragm rather than the mouth and that they are being "pushed" upward and outward. This exercise will produce a stronger, louder voice that can still fluctuate up and down in tone. This exercise should be practiced frequently in a variety of locations and surroundings—large open rooms or galleries, small carpeted areas, or out-of-doors. Acoustics may vary a great deal, even when going from one area to another in the same building, and delivery must be adjusted accordingly. Most institutions have periods of time during which visitors are not admitted. Staff and volunteers usually have access to the galleries and outside areas during these periods, and they may provide opportunities for rehearsing speaking skills.

Enunciation

In addition to sentence structure, guides should concentrate on enunciation (the art of pronouncing words clearly). Enunciation is important for two reasons: visitors need to **hear** what the guide is saying and to **understand** what the guide is saying. Hearing sounds and hearing words are not the same thing. The voice may carry well, but it doesn't help if enunciation is careless. In most instances, we fail to understand words because they are not clearly spoken rather than because they are not spoken loudly enough. Actors, public speakers, teachers and guides all must remember that clear pronunciation depends upon energetic use of the

tongue and lips.

One might try reading a book aloud for the purpose of concentrating on the movements of the tongue and lips. In ordinary conversation we all suffer from "lazy tongue." We learn our native language as children, and this early training determines how we use our lips and tongues. Habits may be so strongly developed that we sometimes have trouble learning another language; we cannot easily change our speech habits to accommodate new combinations of sounds. Guides who are able to offer tours in another language may have to speak very slowly, unless they are extremely fluent. We might practice exaggerating lip and tongue movements while reading aloud. The exaggeration may feel strange at first, but if we watch ourselves in a mirror, we will not see unnatural contortions while we move our lips. Enunciation will improve noticeably; visitors, however, will not notice anything unusual.

Posture

Erect, attentive posture projects an image of leadership (see also the exercise, "Posture and the Voice"). Most of us tend to stand erect when in front of a group, perhaps the result of an inner voice from childhood admonishing us to stand up straight! We should approach a group confidently and purposefully, in a relaxed manner, and greet visitors with a smile. (Holding one's arms loosely at the sides indicates an openness to others.) We might anticipate how we would greet guests in our homes and adopt the same tone of voice and gestures. A calm, assured attitude is best; after all, we are "at home" in the museum setting, and we want to make visitors feel comfortable and welcome.

Tour guides are expected to be leaders and to be responsible for everything that happens during the tour. However, it is important not to present an authoritarian stance that threatens visitors—especially small ones. Leaders can be polite, sympathetic, friendly and approachable and still be in charge of groups. As a tour progresses, a guide should avoid leaning or slumping against walls, doorways, or exhibition structures. It can be disconcerting to watch a tour guide shift constantly from one posture to another; moreover, it seems to give visitors permission to behave similarly.

Jokes, ethnic comments, sexist remarks

Tour guides should choose humorous anecdotes or jokes carefully. Children are particularly sensitive to cynicism and have difficulty coping with it. Jokes and cynical remarks at someone's expense occur all too often in classrooms. Considering the cross-section of people who travel and visit museums, it is important to avoid making any seemingly prejudicial statements or derogatory comments about minorities or other cultures. A tour guide should never indicate that the European or American culture is superior in any way. This may seem obvious advice to anyone who speaks

in public, but sometimes we are oblivious to our offensive remarks. Sometimes sensitivity to others is all that is needed. A good way to test for prejudicial implications in a presentation is to remove oneself completely from it and attempt to look at one's words and attitudes objectively. The worst offenses, however, may occur when comments are spontaneous. Guides should treat every group politely and equally. They must be careful to avoid unwarranted assumptions about anyone's background and occupation, relationships of visitors to each other, and shared values, beliefs, and tastes. They must not assume that only a certain type or class of people will enjoy or understand exhibits; such stereotyping inhibits efforts to reach out to the entire community.

Sexist remarks are especially offensive. Unfortunately, many of us are also oblivious to the sexist comments we make. For example, we sometimes forget that the traditional family unit is a minority and many women are heads of households. Over 50% of today's workers are women, and an equally high percentage of women are now the sole supporters of their families. Women as well as men are mathematicians, doctors, stock brokers, lawyers and owners of businesses in our modern society. Women are particularly proud of the progress that they have made in many aspects of society and of the recognition that they have received in the past two decades for their abilities and contributions. An unconscious slight of women, an implication that men possess the more influential and dominant sex in our society, or a suggestion that men more than women can understand "technical" subjects, may set the wrong mood for a tour. For example, a female guide was heard to say "I don't know how this works, could one of the men in the group explain it to us?" What happens when visitors offer tasteless jokes or make ethnic or sexist remarks? It is difficult to predict what form these remarks might take. Sometimes they can be ignored, but it is always wise to have a few prepared responses ready. A polite rebuttal, "Well, not all of us agree with your viewpoint" may be satisfactory.

THE ARGUMENTATIVE VISITOR

Simple responses to an argumentative visitor are always more effective than arguing at length to prove who is right. Guides should offer a brief, simple reaction ("Perhaps historical facts prove otherwise."), or suggest a specific source of information ("I recently read about that in _____, and I found it helpful. You might enjoy it, too."), and move right on to another topic. However, there may be times when it is better to be unresponsive and move along. Most visitors will make incorrect statements unintentionally, but occasionally someone deliberately wants to start an argument or continue a disagreement at length with either the guide or members of the group. Such people cannot be convinced in a few minutes that they are out of line. Other members of a group usually feel embarrassed along with the guide, and they are glad to change the sub-

ject. Each circumstance will be unique, but with a little experience, a tour guide should have little difficulty fending off an argumentative visitor.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION: WHAT WE DON'T SAY

"Nonverbal communication is a basic, primitive form of conveying information from one person to another. It has been estimated that in a normal conversation between two people, only one-third of the meaning is transmitted on a verbal level, and nearly two-thirds on a nonverbal level" (Brill, 1973, p. 36). To have the meaning of a tour understood completely requires using nonverbal communication skills well—body language, gestures, and facial expressions. Guides can inspire enthusiasm and can involve visitors with an exhibit by nonspoken communication as well as oral delivery. During the tour, it is important that nonverbal communication be congruent with the verbal presentation.

A great deal of personal interaction has to do with nonverbal communication skills. First, the environment of the institution conveys messages about comfort or discomfort to visitors that may be with them for their entire visit. Second, "silent" messages from the interpreter support or interfere with the meaning of the presentation. Guides "talk" to people through facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, voice, touch, ways they move their bodies, appearance (clothing and jewelry), and physical proximity. What kind of message, for example, is communicated when guides are late for a tour and visitors are kept waiting? Obviously, visitors are being told that something other than the tour has higher priority.

Every culture has unwritten rules of body language that are understood by others in that culture. Smiling, crying, and other facial expressions are generally universal. When touring visitors from other countries, tour guides cannot be certain that the visitors understand familiar forms of nonverbal communication. Even within the United States, people who grew up in the East may behave somewhat differently from Westerners. Those who live in cities exhibit slightly different behavior from people who come from rural areas. City dwellers, for example, are accustomed to carrying on their daily activities in the midst of large numbers of people, whether shopping, eating meals in restaurants, driving in traffic, or engaging in recreation. Predominant clothing colors differ from region to region depending on climate. When we are speaking with family members or close friends in private conversation, we may assume that they have the same background of knowledge and experience that we have, and therefore, we know much of what we communicate to one another is intuitive and unspoken. In tours, however, we cannot make these assumptions. We must be conscious of our nonverbal expressions in order to

ensure that they convey the meaning that we intend.

BODY LANGUAGE

Interpreters can evaluate how well the tour is proceeding by observing the visitors' body language. For example, people may show rejection by folding their arms or moving or turning away (Schefflen, 1964). Students may be restless when they move about or whisper. Sometimes, however, the museum environment restricts the behavior of visitors. It calls for relative quiet to enable people to look at exhibits and read labels; therefore, visitor reaction may be subdued and difficult to diagnose. People often believe that they should not express their feelings in such a setting. Students sometimes stand ill at ease and appear disinterested because of the unfamiliar environment, the presence of a guard, or an overbearing adult. (Contrast the demand for a quiet environment with a hands-on science museum, rock concert, or sporting event where conversation and enthusiasm are encouraged.) Docents should establish allowable behavior with visitors at the outset, and, if possible, encourage natural conversation and discussion.

The private distance which people establish around themselves is called "personal space." It is a barrier of different dimensions. Although there is some variation world-wide, generally four distances are relatively significant everywhere.

1. **intimate**—under 18 inches—this is the distance we use for lovemaking, close friends and relatives, and with children.
2. **personal**—divided in two parts—a close personal (18-30 inches) and far personal (2½ to 4 feet)—within these zones we deal with persons whom we know well.
3. **social**—4 to 12 feet—this is the distance we use for relatively formal or business communications.
4. **public**—beyond 12 feet—the distance we maintain with strangers except in buses, elevators, and tour groups, where it must be disregarded. However, strangers in close proximity will establish their own private space by standing quietly, being careful not to touch anyone, and not looking into anyone's eyes (Sielski, 1979).

Interpreters work usually within the social distance category of 4 to 12 feet. When the distance goes much beyond ten or twelve feet, eye contact may be interrupted for too long, and guides risk "losing" the group. Guides thus should take care not to move away from a group of visitors too quickly.

FEAR CAN BE CONCEALED

Fear while guiding tours is generally called "stage fright"—the nervous condition that precedes any public appearance. Seasoned artists and guides often suffer from stage fright, but the minute that they are "on stage" before an audience, all goes wonderfully well. To some extent, this

nervous condition may help promote a rush of adrenaline that actually will enliven the presentation. The energy generated by fear can be redirected positively to style and delivery. One way we can overcome fear is to know so much about a subject that we are not afraid of running out of things to say. Another remedy for fear is to become so interested in visitor questions and responses that we forget our self-consciousness. Also, tour guides who practice communication skills will find that the overwhelming symptoms of fear become manageable or disappear in time.

Acting skills can help disguise fear also. Children are very good at playing "let's pretend." Adults can "pretend," too, when faced with unusual and difficult situations. They may simply carry on as though they knew what they were doing. A firm grasp of the material for the tour and several practice sessions will alleviate feelings of panic. Guides soon learn that they really do know more about the subject at hand than most visitors, who, for the most part, are eager and willing participants in the tour.

PERSONAL IMAGERY

People judge each other by appearances, so we try to project favorable images to others. It is possible to alter one's projected image through changes in body movements and dress. However, body language cannot overcome lack of concern for the visitors. If we do not truly enjoy talking to strangers, the quality of the tour will be compromised. We need to be ourselves, polite, honest, unaffected, and natural, as well as aware of the unspoken messages we communicate. We should enjoy meeting people and exchanging ideas. Sincere enthusiasm for the subject and for the museum is important element in successful touring.

Arms, Hands, and Gestures. Arm movements ought to be used sparingly and naturally. The most comfortable and natural way to hold hands and arms is at one's side. Sometimes it is helpful to clasp them loosely in front of one's body. Those who like to put their hands in their pockets should try doing so one hand at a time. Having both hands jammed into one's pockets appears as a nervous gesture, whereas having only one hand loosely in a pocket conveys relaxation.

Tour guides should use sweeping arm gestures or pointing sparingly and only when the discussion requires such action. When specific, hard to see areas are being talked about, pointing carefully directs attention toward them. (In art museums, pointing is especially discouraged because of the potential hazard to art objects.) When discussing a free-standing object, sweeping gestures can be avoided by standing in a position that allows visitors appropriate access to it. If pointing is necessary, hands should be kept at least twelve inches from the object. Flashlights with arrows of light are the most satisfactory pointers. Tour guides must not touch objects if the museum has rules that visitors are not to touch

them. When tour guides are allowed to handle an art object, gloves should be worn to protect the object and to convey the "no touching" rule.

Guides should not have to look at objects in order to talk about them. They should point only occasionally at specific areas. They should stand so that visitors can easily see the objects under discussion. If folders, baskets of materials, or any other objects are to be used as part of the tour, they should be placed in areas where they are to be used before the tour begins. Guides should not carry objects or papers, including purses, in their hands during a tour.

Laughter. Laughing together breaks down barriers. Finding a joke or comment that helps the guide and group laugh together early in the tour establishes rapport and friendship. There is a certain innocence in laughter—children laugh easily, but adults often need to be coaxed. (See "Jokes, Ethnic Comments, and Sexist Remarks earlier in this chapter.)

Eye Contact. Eye contact is probably one of the most important and influential factors in establishing rapport with an individual or group. When welcoming the tour group, it is best to make eye contact with most individuals right away by slowly looking from one person to another, hesitating slightly at each person, and smiling while talking. (Students may feel somewhat uncomfortable with eye contact.) Direct, personal contact will produce a one-to-one relationship with visitors. The sense of friendship and familiarity will encourage visitors to ask questions and make comments. There may be several occasions during the tour when the tour guide makes sweeping eye contact.

When talking to a group at large, should direct eye contact be disconcerting at first, tour guides may try looking just over the tops of heads in the back row, moving their eyes from one head to another. This technique gives the appearance at least of eye contact. As confidence grows in the content and format of the tour, guides can begin making actual eye contact with individuals. Direct eye contact, in any case, is essential for question and answer formats. Guides must be careful to share attention throughout the group, not giving too much attention to one or two visitors. Eye contact also is helpful in drawing a visitor's attention back to the discussion.

Clothing. Personal appearance is important. How we look tells people how we feel about ourselves and about the institution we represent, even before the tour begins. The most important aspect of clothing is that it not be distracting. Guides should not be overdressed, or dressed in such an extreme style that the museum objects are less attention-getting than the guide's appearance! Jewelry can be distracting, too, if it is excessive. Both clothing and jewelry can be worn to advantage, however, if they complement or illustrate the exhibits. Some guides wear Native American jewelry, shirts, woven sashes, or scarves as examples of cultural art and decoration. Or, they may wear costumes of a historical period to illustrate some aspect of an exhibit. These can all be very effective when carried

out in moderation.

The color of a tour guides' clothing can help or hinder a tour in an art museum. If we wish to emphasize color in paintings, it might be advisable to wear a solid color that will demonstrate some color property. If color is not significant, colors in clothing which are highly intense will be distracting. In open settings, or when large groups are toured, we may wish to wear brightly colored shirts, jackets, or caps in order to be seen easily. European tour guides, for example, often carry red umbrellas! Some museums prefer that guides wear uniforms or an article of clothing that serves as an identifying symbol. Clothing should be, above all, comfortable. It is essential that we are able to relax without concern for our appearance. Neatness, in this case, is more important than fashion. Feeling good about our outward appearance allows the inner self to function more efficiently.

The same basic characteristics of touring or teaching hold for both children and adults. Above all, thoughtfulness and politeness should be the most important personal qualities of tour guides. They must not be blatantly authoritarian, but still they must be in charge. Content should unfold steadily. Tour guides should be certain that everyone understands as the presentation ensues. In addition to tour techniques, content, and vocal skills, guides should give thought to maintaining nonverbal interaction with visitors. Smiles, shared laughter, and steady eye contact are essential with children and adolescents and important with adults (Fines, 1982). Guides should be poised and self-confident; they should model excellent speaking skills and grammar. All these stylistic considerations and interpersonal skills are important, for the overall appearance, knowledge, and personal style of tour guides affects visitors' willingness to participate in museum learning experiences.