“Communicating for Understanding” Docent Training Quick Reference

Presented by Steve Sparks and Heather Sabin on March 29, 2021

**1. To get your audience’s attention back, use questions to focus attention.**

“Now, would you like to know how it’s possible to grow trees on the roof?  
“Have you wondered how a building is constructed over water?”

**2. When asking your audience if they have questions, the following two generate responses:**

“What questions do you have?”  
“Tell me your questions.”

DON’T USE “Do you have any questions?

**3. Ask your audience to demonstrate their understanding through a technique called Teachback.**

“I’ve just given you a lot of information. What is one thing in this room that you found surprising?”

“What will you remember most about this…room? (if at tour end: “This building”)

“I want to be sure I explained everything clearly. How would you say the design of this room illustrates principles frequently used by Frank Lloyd Wright?”

DON’T ASK: “Do you understand?”

**4. Define terms you use on tour in plain language, avoid jargon.**

How would you define Organic Architecture? Symmetrical? Curvilinear?

**5. “Chunk” your information at a tour stop into similar, related groups.**

See the powerpoint for examples.

**6.** **Preview information to let visitors know what’s in store. This will better prepare them to understand what you’re about to communicate.**

“Today I’m going to share with you how Frank Lloyd Wright changed the way we experience buildings. We’ll take a look at specific examples here at Monona Terrace.”

“Now let’s move to the Grand Terrace to see how Frank Lloyd Wright connects us with our beautiful natural setting.”

**7. Use transitions to carry themes through your tour and reinforce main messages.**

“Earlier I mentioned that one of the three purposes of Monona Terrace is as a community gathering place. The youth dance demonstrations we hold on this Rooftop Garden is a great example.”

“Now as we go indoors, let’s take a look at how circular shapes continue be an important part of the design.”

**8. Repeat key phrases across sentences.**

“Frank Lloyd Wright chose curvilinear forms, exterior color, and building symmetry in homage to the State Capitol. Tony Puttnam continued curvilinear concepts in his interior design. Note the circular elements in the ceiling and the carpet.”

**9. Use number analogies to put dates and numbers into context.**

“Frank Lloyd Wright was born in 1867, just two years after the Civil War ended.”