

Leading Tours: Interpretation / Outdoor Ed Suggestions:

1. **Goal:** Having the visitors come away **feeling positive** about Armstrong Redwoods, trees, nature, conservation is more important than teaching them a lot of facts.

Especially for younger visitors, **DON'T HIT THEM WITH A LOT OF BAD NEWS.** Even if you do share something that is problematic (such as climate change, overuse, accumulated fuel, or something similar) be sure to provide some **suggestions as to how they can help.**

***** REMEMBER: WE'RE NOT JUST SHARING A BUNCH OF FACTS!**

2. **Let the visitors' questions and interest guide the tour** as much as possible. Try to make your walk **relevant to the visitors' lives.**
3. **Be aware of the visitors' interest...**If they are tuning out, move, do something else, ask them questions or ask if they have questions, or?
4. Look for **"teachable moments,"** such as when a banana slug is found, a deer seen, you come across a recently fallen tree, or someone asks a question.
5. It is **better to say "I don't know"** than to give misinformation. If you don't know, try to figure it out with their help. Actually, **even if you DO know the answer, it is often good to guide the visitors to let them figure it out.**
6. **The more you know, the more you can share.** But don't think that you have to know everything before leading a tour. See the FAQ sheet, Features Cards, Organism Cards.
7. Try to use **senses** in addition to sight. Include listening, smelling, touching. Probably not tasting unless you bring in something from outside the park. But you can discuss taste.
8. Visitors usually want to know the names of some of the plants. But **interesting information about the plants is more important than just the names.** Know about a few of the main plants.

9. Use whatever you know about the group to **plan your walk**. Most just say that they want a “Redwood Ecology” walk, which gives you a lot of leeway.

It is a good idea to plan a walk around a theme such as fire ecology, adaptations of redwoods for living here, the history of the park, or some other thing that is of interest to YOU. Then plan what features you want to be sure to include. (See Features Cards.) But remain flexible. Again, let the visitors’ interests and the environment guide your walk.

Don’t get locked into your plan!

10. Know the details such as **when and where to end the tour**. **Be aware of time as you go** so that you have time to get in all of the points that you want to share.

Mechanics:

Explain that **you will be in the lead** and why. They should not run ahead because then you will have to call them back and everybody will have to wait for them.

For school groups, the teacher or other **adult from the school should be in charge of discipline**. If a student is a problem, ask the adult to take responsibility for the child.

For larger groups, ask for an adult volunteer to be the **caboose**. Their job is to make sure that we don’t leave anybody behind and to keep the stragglers from falling behind so that we have to wait for them.

Don’t turn your back during stops. Use a pointer.

Don’t let one person monopolize the conversation. Be aware of anybody checking out or being left out.

Be aware of people **struggling to hear or keep up** and adjust your voice and pace accordingly.

Check to see whether they have questions, frequently.

Notes for Starting and Ending Tours:

These notes for starting and finishing tours are provided in two formats:

- two 3"x5" "cards" that can be printed and laminated back-to back and
- 8.5" x 11" that can be printed and folded

Like most suggestions for leading tours, you, the docent, should modify these to suit your style and the group that you will be leading. For example, these are written as if you are leading a school group. Starting and leading adult and mixed groups will vary from these suggestions.

BEFORE the tour, meet with the other docents to discuss routes, what is known about the group, or other ideas for effective interpretation.

At the **START of the tour**, The **LEAD DOCENT** must meet the teacher or group leader to:

- Confirm **number of groups/docents**
- Confirm **time and place to end** the tour
- Ask about any **special needs or requests (school group objectives?)**

When they have their groups, **ALL DOCENTS** must:

- Introduce themselves
- Explain that students are to stay behind the docent
- Decide which adult will bring up the rear
- Confirm that **teachers and parents are responsible for discipline**
- Show their enthusiasm** for the tour

Some **suggestions** for starting your tour:

- Ask** the teacher or students how the teacher gets students' attention.

Explain that A.R. is a Natural Reserve and **ask how we can protect it.**

• **Elicit or tell:**

- staying **on the trails**
- staying **off the fences**,
- taking any **trash home with us**
- **not picking** any leaves
- **leaving everything at the park for others to enjoy**

With **school** groups, explain that we need to be **respectful of each other and you** by:

- Only one person talking at a time
- not running or screaming

At the **END of the tour**:

- Ask if there are questions.
- If there were objectives, review by asking "Who can tell me xxx?" or "Who remembers xxx?"
- Or ask what they liked, saw, remember, learned, or?
- Ask how they can help protect A.R.
- Thank them for visiting Armstrong
- If appropriate, give volunteering or other Stewards literature to adults.

BEFORE the tour, meet with the other docents to discuss routes, what is known about the group, or other ideas for effective interpretation.

At the **START of the tour**, the **LEAD DOCENT MUST** meet the group leader and:

- Confirm **number of groups/docents**
- Confirm **time and place to end** the tour
- Ask about any **special needs or requests (school group objectives?)**

If it is a **SCHOOL** group, **YOU MUST**:

- Introduce** yourself
- Explain that students are to **stay behind the docent**
- Decide **which adult will bring up the rear**
- Confirm that **teachers and parents are responsible for discipline**
- Find out **how the teacher gets the students' attention**
- Show your **enthusiasm** for the tour

Some **SUGGESTIONS** for starting your tour

- Ask how the teacher gets the students' **attention**
- Ask** whether they have **been to A.R.**
- Ask** whether they have **questions**

(You don't have to answer their questions now...but keep them in mind.)

Invite adults to ask questions too.

- Explain that A.R. is a Natural Reserve and that **we need to protect it.**
- Ask how we can** protect A.R. Elicit or tell:
 - staying **on the trails**---and staying **off the fences**,
 - taking any **trash home with us**
 - **not picking** any leaves
 - **leaving everything at the park for others to enjoy**
- With a school group**, explain that we need to be **respectful of each other, you and other people** by:
 - Only one person talking at a time
 - not running or screaming---staying behind you
 - respecting the environment

At the **END of the tour**:

- Ask** if there are questions.
- Review** by asking "Who can tell me xxx?" or "Who remembers xxx?"
Or ask what they liked, saw, remember, or?
- Ask **how they can help protect A.R.**

