

The Playful Museum activity card system

This document explains how the museum can manage its different playful activities with the Visitor Team using a card system. There are some activity card examples below, followed by an explanation of how and why this works and a little bit more information about the benefits of the activities.

We hope it is useful

Bryony and the Visitor Team

Example Playful Activity CARDS

Dinosaur Egg Game

How-To-Play:

1. Get your dinosaur egg (a blown goose egg, or a model)
2. Tell the story of this dinosaur egg to a young visitor
3. Challenge them to take this precious dinosaur egg to a staff member in a different part of the museum without disturbing the creature inside
4. Repeat

This is best used when:

The museum is busy	[Y]
There are school groups visiting	[X]
There are other events running on the gallery	[Y]
During quiet times around the Museum	[Y]

Note: This can be modified according to theme, e.g. Ancient Artefact Game, Rare Bird Egg Game, Box of Spiders Game.

The Floor Is Lava

1. Provide some 'stepping stones', e.g. three round pieces of card per visitor
2. Challenge them to get from point A to point B without touching the floor (or they'll melt!)
3. Co-ordinate with staff member at point B who is able to collect the pieces of card and send people back to point A in the same way

This is best used when:

The museum is busy	[Y]
There are school groups visiting	[X]
There are other events running on the gallery	[X]
During quiet times around the Museum	[Y]

Chinese Whispers

1. Think of a phrase – perhaps a silly fact, perhaps '(insert staff member here) smells'
2. Ask them to go and tell it to someone else (e.g. someone else in their party, or in the case of the latter suggestion particularly, a staff member)
3. Ensure this message is passed around the museum as much as possible

This is best used when:

The museum is busy	[Y]
There are school groups visiting	[X]
There are other events running on the gallery	[Y]
During quiet times around the Museum	[Y]

Stick-A-Note (onto a visitor)

1. Carry post-it-notes and a pen
2. Either you scrawl a word (or encourage the visitor to) onto the post-it
3. Encourage the visitor to stealthily stick the note to another member of their party

This is best used when:

The museum is busy	[X]
There are school groups visiting	[Y]
There are other events running on the gallery	[Y]

Stick-A-Note (onto a staff member)

1. Carry post-it-notes and a pen
2. Scrawl a word (the sillier the better) onto the post-it
3. Stick the notes onto each other to create a playful atmosphere

This is best used when:

The museum is busy	[X]
There are school groups visiting	[X]
There are other events running on the gallery	[Y]
During quiet times around the Museum	[Y]

Drawing activities

1. Find a place that is out of the way on a gallery
2. Provide a large sheet of paper and some pens
3. Supervise people drawing on the paper

This is best used when:

The museum is busy	[Y]
There are school groups visiting	[X]
There are other events running on the gallery	[Y]
During quiet times around the Museum	[Y]

Hopscotch

1. Find a place that is out of the way on a gallery
2. Set up a hopscotch pattern (e.g. on a large sheet of paper or cloth)
3. Encourage people to use it (and if you can't resist, you can write the numbers as Roman numerals or hieroglyphs)
4. You can also provide a counter or other light durable object to throw onto the pattern to skip squares and make it more difficult

This is best used when:

The museum is busy	[Y]
There are school groups visiting	[Y]
There are other events running on the gallery	[Y]
During quiet times around the Museum	[Y]

Example Log of activities

Date	Name/Gallery	Game
23/04/15	Fossils	Hopscotch
23/04/15	Babak	Stick-A-Note Dinosaur Egg
23/04/15	Luke	Stick-A-Note
23/04/15	Bryony	Stick-A-Note
23/04/15	Michelle	No participation today (delivering tours)

Explanation

I originally designed the card system as a way to make it easier to implement certain games, and have agreement between the management and the people on the museum floor about what was appropriate, using a collaborative approach to define boundaries. It had the added bonus of providing structures to ensure that games did not cause any problems between staff and visitors (for example, the Stick-A-Note game originally did not have the stipulation that visitors must be 'got' by other visitors who already know them and what their boundaries are) and that they remained non-invasive, avoidable by visitors who did not wish to take part, and simply 'harmless fun'.

The management originally left it up to the judgement of the visitor team to decide which games were appropriate and to monitor the amount of games that were being implemented on the galleries, but the card system also allowed them to decide to decrease the amount of options available when they felt this was appropriate – for example, removing the options that required gallery space or a lot of supervision on days when the museum was expected to be particularly busy, for example.

As the Visitor Team all sign themselves in and collect their badges, radios and so forth from the same place, this was a logical place to display that day's options. If they needed to review the cards themselves while out on the galleries, they could access copies through the Google Drive on the iPads.

Who was doing what game could be logged in a table like the one above. For those games taking place in a specific gallery, this was decided beforehand by the management team and written in the table. For those that require a single prop that is passed around (e.g. the Dinosaur Egg Game), the first name to claim this will suffice to make sure the game can be played across the whole museum – ideally, any staff members who are not comfortable with being included in this (or not able) can write it into the table and either inform people over the radio system themselves, or inform a manager who will then inform the rest of the team more discreetly by, for example, mentioning it on the rota.

One example of how these games benefit staff is through the Stick-A-Note game – when this game is being played, staff have a chance to interact with each other in a playful way, creating a nice atmosphere out on the galleries that they can then use to encourage visitors to be more playful using the same system. If we need to concentrate on other duties, this game is easy to transport and does not interfere with our duties by hampering our movement, but it encourages us to seek each other out and have fun. The visitors can see us having fun, which adds to the effect of lightening the atmosphere and helping everyone to feel more relaxed and mischievous, which then helps with play.

Visitors see the benefit of many of these games too – a visitor remarked that the hopscotch game gave her children a nice break from the heavy load of information they were trying to take in, leaving them feeling refreshed and happier afterwards, and feeling more able to appreciate the experience of the museum on their day out. Many people found the experience of having something practical to do a nice bit of variety that enhanced their experience and improved their mood.