



---

# MUSEUM PARENT TOOLKIT

---

*A guide for before, during, and after  
your family trip to the museum!*



Leadership support for Blue Star Families programming and promotional materials has been provided by MetLife Foundation.

# WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO!

Art museums and science centers can be scary places. But they don't have to be!

These, along with children's museums, nature centers, and zoos, are all part of one large network of places that you and your family can have fun, learn new things, and build memories together.



**HERE ARE A FEW KEY TIPS TO HELP YOU MAKE THE MOST OUT OF YOUR VISIT TO ANY MUSEUM.**

## CHOOSE WISELY

You don't have to visit an art museum on your first outing with children. Visit a Zoo or Children's Museum. These are comfortable places that you may have memories of from your own childhood. Or, be adventurous and challenge yourself to a new experience. Sometimes the best memories are created when you do something unexpected together. Remember, the museum will have guides and resources to help you have a great visit. You don't have to know anything about Renaissance art to have a great time exploring and learning together.

## DECIDE WHAT TIME OF DAY TO GO.

When works best for your family's schedule? Do you or the kids get cranky in the afternoon? Are you an early riser? Choosing the time that works best helps you enjoy the visit when energy levels are highest.

## CHECK OUT THE LOGISTICS.

While on the museum's website, check out the hours of operation and the parking situation. Are strollers allowed? Is the parking nearby? Is there a cafeteria or should you pack snacks? Is there a gift shop that you will want to visit...or avoid?

## DO SOME RECONNAISSANCE.

Check out the museum's website for special programs and Family Day events. Often you will find special tours and activities geared for families or films and music events that will complement your visit. Choose to visit the zoo when they feed the animals or have keeper talks. See what exhibitions are on view. Does the museum have a painting by an artist that you like or that your child studied in school?

## GATHER SUPPLIES.

Take some plain paper and colored pencils with you. A clipboard is handy if you have one. This way, your family can draw in the gallery or along the nature path. Often crayons and pens are not allowed, but pencils are always good. Throw some snacks in there and you have a ready made art pack that will work anywhere you go.

## KEEP IT SHORT!

Pick one exhibition to view or one area to explore. You can always return! If your family demands more time, you have succeeded! Congratulations.

# AT THE MUSEUM



You have arrived! Whether you are visiting a children's museum, a science center, a historic house, a battleground, or an art museum, these tips will help you have a memorable time.

Now the FUN can begin.



## FIRST THINGS FIRST

Your first stop will be the Welcome Desk. This area is often supported by volunteers or staff who know everything about this museum. And, they want to share it all with you! Pick up a map and find out where the restrooms, the cafeteria and the gift shop are. Let the staff help you design your visit. Ask if there are family guides or activity books for your children.

When you head off, it can be overwhelming. These tools and games will put you at ease. Remember, there are no wrong answers in museums when you look at art, explore new ideas, or see new things.

## MIND YOUR MUSEUM MANNERS

Look with your eyes and not your fingers! Sometimes it is helpful for young children to put their fingers in their pockets or hold someone's hand.

Loud voices and running are for outdoors, soft voices and quiet steps can be fun and mysterious.

If there are areas that allow touching, find those! If you are at a zoo or children's museum, be aware of the rules for safety. You want to leave in the same shape you arrived!

## SPECIAL MILITARY DISCOUNTS

First, ask if there are additional fees for any special exhibit or experience at the museum. Often, an IMAX movie costs extra, but there may be a military discount. Also, there may be a discount in the café or the gift shop that you want to take advantage of during your visit. Always ask!

# AT THE MUSEUM

## GAMES TO PLAY WITH YOUR FAMILY

For young children (K-2)

**Choose 3 activities for a 1- hour visit.**

These suggestions are designed for art museums as they are the most challenging for first time visitors. However, you can play these games anywhere with simple changes.

**I SPY:** Pick a painting or object in the gallery, but don't tell. Say, "I spy with my little eye," and give some hints. "It's red." "It's round." "It's really big!" Let everyone guess. Whoever guesses correctly goes next.

**ALL YOUR SENSES:** Choose one painting and pretend you are in it. What noises would you hear? What smells would you notice? What else might you see just beyond the frame? What would it feel like to be there? What might you taste? Adapt this for a zoo and pretend you are one of the animals. In a science center, pretend you are a wave or a light bulb. At a military museum, what would it feel like to be the airplane or ship as it moved at top speed?

**STORY CHAIN:** Pick a painting, an object or an animal exhibit and gather around it. Begin your story with just one sentence. "It was the happiest day of my life." Let the next person continue with a few more sentences. Keep building on the story until you get to the end. Draw a picture of what the end looks like.

**SHAPE AND COLOR SURVEY:** Look at paintings and try to find as many shapes and colors as possible. Draw the shapes you see. Do the colors make you feel a certain way?

**WHAT IS THIS?:** Find something you have never seen before. Try to guess what it is or what it was used for in the past. Is it similar to something you have today?

**ACT IT OUT:** Pose like the people in a painting or move like an animal you see. How does that feel? Can you make up a dance to go with the painting or act out what the people may be saying to each other? Become a pack of lions and roar at one another!

# AT THE MUSEUM



## GAMES TO PLAY WITH YOUR FAMILY

For children (grades 3-5)

Choose 3 activities for a 1- hour visit

**GUESSING GAME:** Pick a work of art or something you see nearby, but don't tell. Choose 5 adjectives to describe it. See if anyone can guess correctly.

**MEMORIES:** Pick a work of art that reminds you of something or someone in your family. Maybe it's Mom's favorite color, looks like the water you swam in one time or a holiday you celebrate together. It can be a person, place, or event that you share now with your family.

**WHAT TO BUY:** Divide into 3 teams. Two teams look around and find one work they would buy. The teams present their work to the "jury" and argue back and forth over the merits of their choice. The jury decides who has made the better case.

**WHAT TO TAKE AS A SOUVENIR:** Think about what you would take home if you could. Should you choose a giraffe or a bear? Would you take a bed from a submarine or some moon rocks? See if your whole family can agree on something.

**BLIND DRAWING:** Choose one person to be the talker and the others will draw. The talker will choose something they can see and start describing it. The others will all draw. Compare the drawings with the real object and discuss the results.

**QUICK TAKE:** Take a quick look around the gallery. What do you think? Was there anything that grabbed your eye? Was there something you like and want to look at more closely? If not, move on. It's ok to walk through and not be interested in everything!

**WHAT'S NEXT?:** If you were in the painting, what would happen next after this scene? What do the animals do when there are no visitors? Do the exhibits come to life like in the movies? Pretend you are one of the characters in a painting and create a story that takes place in the next 10 minutes, 10 days, or 10 years. You can act it out, draw something, write a story or just talk together.

# AT THE MUSEUM

## GAMES TO PLAY WITH YOUR FAMILY

For children (grades 6-12)

**NEWS BULLETIN:** Choose something you see. Write a news update for this work, this object, this animal, or this place. What is the headline? When did this take place? Who was involved? What was the outcome?

**PORTRAITS:** Before there were selfies, there were portraits. Choose one to look at. Would you like to meet this person? Describe the person you chose. What is the facial expression? Can you see the hands? How is the person posed? What is the setting of the portrait? Why do you think this portrait was painted? How do you think this person wants to be remembered?

**SYMBOL SEARCH:** Look for symbols in works of art. You probably know lots of symbols from your life already....religious symbols, restaurant symbols, military ribbons, pins, and flags. These are found in works of art too. Search these out and see what they tell you about the painting. A stack of books means the person was literate and well read. A map may hint that the person traveled a lot. Fancy clothes and jewelry tell us that the person had wealth and wanted us to know it today. Sometimes you see animals that represent something else. Eggs and young animals symbolize birth. Wings on people or animals can symbolize freedom.

# BRINGING IT HOME

Now that you have enjoyed time at a museum with your family, keep the experience alive at home.



## ACTIVITY:

Have your child draw a picture of their favorite artwork, animal, object, or experience.

## ACTIVITY:

Find a book at the library on a topic that your family learned about at the museum. Perhaps you discovered a new artist, a new culture, or a new invention. Read about an animal and its habitat or a new place you would now like to visit.

## ACTIVITY:

Cut out and decorate cardboard frames and display your child's masterpieces at home.

## SHARE:

Look at and share photos you took at the museum to relive the experience.

## ACTIVITY:

Go back to the museum's website. Many museums have resources online like games and puzzles that are specific to that site.

## SHARE:

Post online or tweet using the **#bluestarmuseums** so that we can hear all about your experience.

Start planning your next visit. If you just went to a zoo, think about a historical site or battlefield to visit. If you went to an art museum, check out a science or nature center. The wide world of museums is waiting for you!

And, if you took your kids, think about making your next trip adults only. There are wonderful programs designed for adults that are social and great for making new connections in your community.

*This resource is brought to you by Blue Star Families and is one of the numerous benefits you receive as a member. Please share with anyone you know that would enjoy these benefits as well.*

PRINTABLE ACTIVITY:

# MAKE A SOUVENIR



Artist Name:

Title of Work:

Caption/Description:

Signature:

Date: \_\_/\_\_/\_\_

# MASH UP

Choose the head from one work of art, the body from another and the feet from a third. Remember, you can mix in animals or objects! Wouldn't you love to have tractor wheels for feet or the body of a tiger?

## HEAD

Inspiration came from:

---



---

## BODY

Inspiration came from:

---



---

## FEET

Inspiration came from:

---



---