



Skills for life

ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)

Information for tutors and group leaders

Pre-visit activities

1. The visit and its objectives

Group discussion:

- What is a museum and what is in it? – displays, shop, cafes.
- What will we do on our visit? – meet the staff, go on a tour, choose individual galleries and do worksheets, have a cup of tea.

Students should discuss in advance which galleries to visit.

- How are people expected to behave in a museum? – quietness, not touching exhibits unless invited, not being allowed to carry bags, security checks.

2. Discussion of previous experience of museums

Group discussion

- Have you visited a museum before? Where?
- Did you enjoy it? Why?
- What are museums for?

There are two worksheets on this. One looks at a museum from the point of view of function (collection, conservation, exhibition, education etc) and begins with the question 'What do you think a museum is for?'. The other takes a critical look at western museums and their right to hold many of the objects in their collections, asking 'Should European museums return the valuable objects they hold from other countries?'.

3. Planning the journey and getting information about the V&A

This is an activity based on group work, reporting back and question and answer sessions.

Students choose the task they would like to do, and divide themselves into two groups according to their chosen task.

Each group will:

- collect information
- report back to the other group
- be ready to answer any questions from the other group
- prepare questions to ask the other group about their topic

Group 1. Planning the journey

The group could find information on:

- Where the V&A is
- Possible bus routes and price/length of journey
- The journey by tube- the stations/lines/changes/price/length of journey

Students could use an A-Z, V&A leaflets, the V&A website, bus and tube maps or telephone the V&A for information.

Group 2. Getting information about the V&A

The group could find information on

- Opening and closing times
- Cafe facilities
- Entrance fees
- Prayer facilities

Students could use printed information about the V&A, the V&A website, or telephone the V&A to listen to the recorded information (it is not possible to talk to an operator).

4. Information about the V&A and the Great Exhibition

There are two information sheets on this, one at a simple level, and the other at a higher level, with corresponding worksheets. These cover:

- The V&A and its history
- A brief outline of the Great Exhibition

5. Museum vocabulary

This resource also looks at general museum vocabulary. It is not assumed that the students will have enough language/vocabulary to read all the information given about exhibits in the V&A. However, the visit is a good chance to extend vocabulary to include the sort of words that are not so common in every day use.

1. General museum vocabulary

This includes words such as gallery, display case, object etc.

Activities for teaching the vocabulary could include:

- Using a drawing/photograph of a gallery to elicit/teach the new vocabulary
- Tutor writing the words on card and students finding/matching cards
- Students labelling the picture

2. Vocabulary relating to media and shape

Depending on the students' oral and literacy levels, activities to help students understand the meaning of individual words relating to material and decoration could include:

- The tutor bringing in a collection of interesting objects
- Students handling the objects
- The tutor eliciting/teaching new adjectives relating to the objects
- Oral practice - activities in pairs or in the whole group:
 - o true/false statements about the objects
 - o questions only requiring yes/no as answers
 - o describing an object without naming it - other students find or draw it
 - o students feeling objects in a bag and describing the shape
- Literacy work: tutor writes key words on card:
 - o Students find/match the cards to the objects

- o Students write descriptions of the objects. Other students find/draw the object
- o Students build a dictionary of new vocabulary with pictures

Museum vocabulary, materials and processes

metals

alloy
bronze
brass
copper
gold
iron
silver

ceramics

china
earthenware
clay
fritware
porcelain
stoneware
terracotta
glazed

stone

alabaster
gemstone
basalt
granite
limestone
marble
sandstone

fabrics

brocade
cotton
linen
muslin
silk
velvet

other materials

crystal
fur
ivory
leather
glass
wood
jade
paper
plastic

processes

carved
embroidered
enamelled
lacquered
woven
glazed
decorated
inlaid
Painted

general

gallery
display case
objects

6. The worksheets

There are worksheets at two levels of literacy skills for the following galleries:

- China
- Glass
- India
- Islamic Middle East
- Japan
- Silver

There is also a worksheet for students to use in evaluating their visit. Further worksheets are developed regularly. Contact the V&A to find out more.

The aims of the worksheets are both to encourage the use and understanding of language in a new context, and to provide a focus for looking at individual items in some detail, as the wealth of exhibits in a museum can be overwhelming.

Activities on the worksheets include

- Yes/No statements
- Finding objects and ticking boxes
- Matching words and pictures
- Un-jumbling spellings
- Drawing
- Yes/No questions

Students will need some understanding of:

- Present continuous and simple past tenses
- Simple question forms
- Prepositions of place
- Adjectives of colour
- Names of animals and birds

Using the worksheets

- Students may need support finding the objects in the galleries, and understanding the activities and language on the worksheets
- Students could work in pairs or individually using the worksheets
- Time will need to be given for students to compare and discuss answers with each other and the tutor
- Homework activities are included on some worksheets

The visit

You can book a visit with a V&A ESOL tutor by contacting the Education Bookings Office on +44(0)20 7942 2211, email bookings.office@vam.ac.uk, or write to:

Bookings Office
Victoria & Albert Museum
London
SW7 2RL

Your group will be met at the V&A by an ESOL tutor from the V&A's Learning and Interpretation Division, who will stay with your group during your visit, help with finding the galleries, answer questions and support students using the worksheets.

(S)he will welcome the group and give a brief introduction to the V&A. Students will have the opportunity to ask any questions they have prepared about the V&A or their visit.

Students will be given a brief tour of the galleries. The group can decide, then or in advance, which galleries they would like to return to, and use the worksheets to look at objects in more detail.

Activities after the visit

According to students' level, these could include:

- Homework activities on the worksheets.
- Evaluation of the visit.
- Writing a thank you letter to the V&A's Learning and Interpretation Division, individually or as a group.
- Looking again at the 'Critical Look at Museums' worksheet.

Students could look again at the statements about whether European museums should return the valuable objects they hold from other countries, and consider

- Do students feel any differently now that they have spent some time in a large museum?
- Do they still hold the same views?
- Would they like to add statements to the 'speech bubbles' sheet?

A short essay, putting forward the different arguments, could follow this.