

BEST PRACTICES FOR GUIDED TOURS

As you prepare to lead *Americans and the Holocaust* guided tours, please keep in mind the following touring techniques and suggestions.

EXHIBITION CONTENT

- Familiarize yourself with the exhibition content
 - Explore the entire exhibition, examining images, text, and media pieces
 - Focus on the main themes and questions of the exhibition
 - The exhibition examines the motives, fears, and pressures that shaped American responses to Nazism, war, and genocide
 - The exhibition asks two main questions:
 - *What did Americans know about the Holocaust?*
 - *What more could have been done?*
- Study the [Script for Guided Tours of Americans and the Holocaust](#)
 - To ensure content accuracy and tour consistency, the script should be presented as written
 - Do not add outside information to the tour; this will disrupt the flow of the tour
 - Note script instructions to:
 - Ask questions
 - Point to specific content on the panel
 - Transition between sections
- Practice your tour
 - Once you feel comfortable with the script, complete a full practice tour in the exhibition (either on your own or with a friend)
 - Tours should be 20-25 minutes long
 - Practice your timing (include time for transitions and visitor questions)
- Strive for accuracy
 - If you do not know the answer to a question, say so. It is better to say “I don’t know” than to provide inaccurate information by guessing
 - If you cannot answer a visitor question, direct the visitor to additional resources:
 - Holocaust and World War II books at the library
 - The *Americans and the Holocaust* [online exhibition](#) on the USHMM website
 - USHMM’s [Holocaust Encyclopedia](#) (encyclopedia.ushmm.org)

TOUR TECHNIQUES

- Position yourself between your group and the exhibition
 - Face your group with your back against the panel; visitors should face the exhibition
- Use the exhibition to tell the story
 - This is a tour, not a lecture
 - Encourage visitors to look at the exhibition images and text while you present your tour
- Maintain eye contact with the visitors
 - You may use notes if necessary
- Ask Questions [as indicated in the script]
 - Choose questions that prompt conversation and curiosity
 - Avoid yes/no questions

- Avoid “quiz” questions that may make group members feel unprepared or ill-informed
- Practice active listening
 - Acknowledging and responding to visitor questions demonstrates that you value the group’s opinions and observations
- Wait for a response
 - Pause and allow the group to consider your question before providing an answer
- Get the group involved
 - Offer opportunities for visitor participation by asking a group member to read a panel information aloud [as indicated in the script]
- Be mindful of your volume
 - Speak loud enough for all members of your group to hear you, but be aware of patrons in the surrounding area
- Practice pronunciation
 - Phonetic pronunciations are included in the script

GROUP MANAGEMENT

- We recommend that tour groups do not exceed 10-12 visitors
- Ensure that the tour start time and starting location are clearly indicated
- Offer an introduction
 - Introduce yourself, explain your role at the library, and thank the visitors for attending the tour
 - Indicate the approximate length of the tour
 - Encourage visitors to ask questions
 - Introduce the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
- Use your introduction to get to know your group
 - Try to identify information that will help inform your tour:
 - What do the visitors know about this topic?
 - Why did they choose to visit this exhibition?
 - What do they hope to learn?
- Offer a conclusion
 - Restate your name and thank the visitors for attending the tour
 - Encourage visitors to extend their experience by sharing information about related library books or upcoming programming at the library