

# Field Trip Tips and Best Practices

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## “Best Practices” for ANY Fieldtrip

### 1) Contact Potential Fieldtrip Sites

- Use websites to find relevant tour ideas, visit sites in advance if possible
- Phone or e-mails sites to let them know your trip focus, student level of expertise
  - *Sites can create custom-designed trips to better meet your needs*
- Compile cost estimate (including buses, food)
- Download map, driving directions

### 2) Investigate Funding Ideas

- GATE funds (for AP classes; Title I funds)
- College & Industry Partnerships
- Booster clubs and PTA monies
- Form a science club, raise \$; candy, bake & t-shirt sales
- DonorsChoose.org project for field research equipment
- *Reduce bus costs by using early & late school bus runs*

### 3) Meet with your Principal to pitch the trip

- Justify the positive benefits of the trip for your students
- Present a brochure or info about the site, for District approval
- Include contact info, any cost involved
- Present an activity plan for approval (see below)

### 4) Create Activity Planning Sheet - include:

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| ➤ Date:                | ➤ What to Bring:                             |
| ➤ Time:                | ➤ What to Wear:                              |
| ➤ Transportation:      | ➤ Admission: (any fees, how collected)       |
| ➤ Lunch:               | ➤ Chaperones: (Names & Phone #'s)            |
| ➤ What We'll Be Doing: | ➤ Meeting Area: (lost kids, staging area)    |
| ➤ What to Turn In:     | ➤ Additional Info: (Phone, Address, Website) |

### 5) Contact Transportation ASAP

- Give yourself lots of lead time for loading, unloading, traffic
- School buses: *Call district transportation the day before to confirm time, buses*
- Tour buses: More expensive but have greater flexibility in time
- Car Pooling: Needs district release form signed by drivers
  - Arrange for a meeting site; try to arrange for free parking
  - On long hauls, car “chain;” drivers needs cell phone to keep in touch

### 6) Gather necessary forms

#### *Mandatory forms for the teacher*

- Permission to be absent from the District (*for insurance protection*)
- Overnighters: Permission to be absent from the District (*sub pay; reimbursements*)

#### *Mandatory forms for the students*

- Parental consent form (**2 weeks prior to trip**)
- Driving/Transportation form if carpooling (*liability waiver*)
- Permission to be absent from class (signed by content teachers, **1 ½ weeks prior**)
  - *Include a short note about the trip and it's importance to your course content*
- Overnighters: Overnight agreement, Emergency medical information

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- 7) **Collect money** (if there is a cost to the student)
  - Set up a fieldtrip account with the banker
  - Overnighters: arrange for day-rate insurance for students (\$2.00/day?)
  
- 8) **Make a Pre-trip “To Do” list**
  - Design a schedule for the day
  - **Promo** the trip to students
  - Get chaperones (off-track teachers are best for multi-track schools)
    - Most sites require 1:10 chaperone: student ratio
    - Develop a chaperone guide sheet with rules and responsibilities
  - Order lunches for any students on *Federal free lunch program*
  - Send an informational letter home to parents. Include
    - The day's schedule
    - Any special rules and regulations
    - Contact phone numbers
    - Any fees involved
  - Assign **“buddy pairs”** and/or groups
  - Select a “meet-up” site if anyone gets lost
  - Optional: Send a confirmation form/e-mail to the fieldtrip site
  
- 9) **PERSONALLY check up on details**
  - Make sure your office has cut any Purchase Orders, mailed deposits
  - Make sure cafeteria will have lunches prepared
  - Check periodically on buses
  
- 10) **Design Pre & Post Trip Activities**
  - Field experiences should complement and enhance current course content
  - Students should be:
    - Well-prepared to get the most out of every experience
      - Prep kids in field techniques, agenda in class
      - Divide into research groups
        - ◆ Assign equipment to groups
        - ◆ Assign any snorkeling, hiking partners
    - Held accountable for learning
  - Possible outcomes: essays, critiques, journaling, data collection & analysis, verbal or written reports, class presentations, follow-up service learning
  - Send thank you letter to site
    - Book for next year, if possible
  
- 11) **Inform Students What to Bring & Wear**
  - Dress in the “Layered Look”
    - Close-toed jogging shoes
    - Long pants and hat on hikes
    - Jacket or heavy sweatshirt
    - Hat and sunglasses
  - Back-pack & water bottle
  - Notepad and pencil
  - Fieldtrip worksheets & field guides
  - School emblem, colors and/or tags for ID.

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### 12) Discuss Safety Issues with Students

- OBEY ALL RULES & ORDERS OF THE SITE INSTRUCTOR
  - Never wander from the group: no hiking or swimming without adult supervision
  - Don't touch/harass wild animals
- **First aid:** Bring a portable first aide kit with you on the bus and/or to carry

### 13) If Hiking or Camping, Discuss Wilderness Hygiene

- *Giardia* is virtually all surface water - boil water on camping trips
- Carry tissue paper for bathroom emergencies
  - Tell someone you are leaving
  - Pee at least 100 yards off trail
  - Dig 6" deep in humus under a tree; do your business, scrape dirt and humus over the site and any tissues if they are to decompose

### 14) **THE DAY BEFORE THE TRIP**

- Check all paperwork
- Gather student slips in folder to take
- Check w/ transportation for buses
- Re-confirm reservation/food
- Remind students:
  - Time to leave
  - Dress, lunch requirements
- Load an optional “pace” car (that follows the bus) with field guides, equipment

## TRY THESE STRATEGIES AS WELL...

### "Do-It-Yourself" Fieldtrips

- Teacher
  - Investigate site, develops activity plan, worksheets, maps
  - Decides on credit to be awarded
- Students
  - Attend sites on their own, with family or friends
  - Pay any fees, parking
  - Turn in “proof” (ticket stub, photos, docent-signed pamphlet) and any worksheets

### "Virtual" Fieldtrips

- Attend sites on-line
  - Independently, at a tech lab, library or home
  - In class, on projected computer linked to the internet
- Visit exotic, international locations
- Share data with schools in other countries
- Use virtual sites to prep field techniques prior to a real field trip

