

Interpretation Tips – top ten ways to connect with visitors

1. Tell who **you** are – and find out who they are.
 - Give your name and your title.
 - Wear your nametag and “official” shirt (if applicable).
2. Make them **feel welcome**.
 - Incorporate everyone - Ask for their names, ask if they are from this area or visiting.
 - Avoid saying ‘no’ if someone takes a guess at one of your questions.
 - Use humor.
 - Avoid mentioning religion, politics.
3. Make sure your audience can **hear** you.
 - Speak as if talking to the farthest person in the group.
 - Move to the middle of the group.
4. Make sure your audience can **see** the object you are pointing out.
 - Hold objects up high, or pass around objects if possible.
5. Use **friendly** body language.
 - Use occasional eye contact.
 - Smile occasionally.
 - Try to face everyone when talking if possible.
 - “Lose the sunglasses” – (Dr. Jay Barnhart)
6. Make sure they are **physically comfortable**.
 - Point out bathrooms, water fountains. If mosquitos are numerous, tell them ahead of time.
 - Stop the group in the shade when possible.
7. Use information that **your audience can understand**.
 - People can easily relate to topics such as food, medicine, water, shelter, work, young animals, harmful, and things that are colorful, fragrant, soft to the touch, etc.
 - Use storytelling tools (relate personal experience, convey emotion, use metaphors/analogies, etc.)
8. If you don’t know the answer to a question, say so! (It is OK to say ‘**I don’t know**’)
 - Offer to look up the answer when you return.
9. Use **props NOT NOTES**
 - (Use an ID sheet to show pictures of the lizard they just saw, pick up a seed, a stick with lichen, a fallen airplant, etc. off the ground and let them pass it around).
10. Know the **main idea** you want to get across.
 - Humans and nature have been forces of change throughout history; Nature sanctuaries benefit humans too; Native plants can help turn your yard into a miniature nature sanctuary; The Florida Scrub-Jay is the sentinel of the scrub; The bald eagle is the symbol of our nation; etc.)