

## School Tours and VTS

The following strategies may be used by an individual or a Docent team touring a group of students. Strategies include reducing the tour group size into a smaller number, dividing the tour into a rotation of “stations,” adding additional interactive techniques, and/or using a Table Activity or game as part of a tour’s rotation. Typically Docents try and keep the small group size to ten or less; however, this is not always possible. For example, if a school tour is 40 students, a team may divide the tour into three smaller groups that rotate in 20 minute segments, or four smaller groups that rotate for 15 minute segments. Ultimately, the Day Captain and team decide on the format to use. A Docent may tour the same small group through all rotation stations, or a Docent may do the same rotation station multiple times with different students.

**Rotation with Stations:** Sample stations using interactive techniques include the following:

1. The gallery may be divided in half, or the entire gallery may be toured in 15-20 minutes, depending upon the size of the gallery.
2. A storytelling station, with a maximum of three stories, five minutes each, focuses on techniques for oral presentation that students may use. All stories relate to the gallery.
3. A Table Activity that focuses on Interactive Learning Station objects. The objects chosen for students to handle reinforce what is shown in the gallery.
4. A Table activity with a specific purpose such as “Silk Road Trade: The Big Idea,” or “Take a Road Trip with a Camel” (also Silk Road) (*Ancient Arts of China*)
5. A game played in the outdoor courtyard. Walnut Shell Dice Game, Stick and Bone Game, and Roll a Hoop/Throw a Stick Game are all used with First Californians.
6. A different location is used to provide part of the tour content, often including Interactive Learning Station objects. Examples in the Historic Wing include the large fireplace for “Fire Station” (*Missions and Ranchos*), the ceiling in the Fluor Gallery, and the hallway for “Think Like an Archaeologist.” (*First Californians*)

### Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) is a touring method whereby students examine and discuss selected works of art when prompted by specific questions to support careful evidentiary observation. The technique requires the Docent to ask students to look at an artifact or work of art silently for a few minutes. Then the Docent asks only three specific questions, repeating them to obtain multiple answers:

1. What’s going on in this picture (or artifact)?
2. What do you see that makes you say that?
3. What more can we find?

The activity is designed to build students’ background knowledge and develop thinking skills that use detail or observation to enhance and support understanding. The Docent is expected to re-state students’ responses in a nonjudgmental manner that clarifies what has been said. It is important for the Docent not to use affirming language such as “I can see that,” “You are right,” or “That’s a good observation.” The questioning for one object lasts about 15-20 minutes.